



## Bellwether Magazine

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# Pet Survey to Determine Threat of Rabies in Philadelphia

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## Pet Survey to Determine Threat of Rabies in Philadelphia

In order to determine the potential threat of rabies to pets and people in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine has launched a study to assess the total pet population of the city. The study, funded by a \$35,000 grant from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, is believed to be the first comprehensive survey of a major city's pet population.

The number of dogs, cats, birds, lizards, snakes, turtles, and ferrets owned by Philadelphians should be known when the survey is completed in May. Dr. Lawrence Glickman, chief of the epidemiology section of Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Alan Beck, director of the School's Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society, and the Center's staff have designed a questionnaire which uses telephone sampling techniques to obtain population estimates. Extrapolating from the number of owned pets, it will be possible to estimate the pet population of the city (owned and unowned), according to Beck and Glickman.

The purpose of the study is to determine the danger that rabies would pose to the city, if it were to spread among the city's pet population. "The study is particularly important because rabies is rising in the United States and in this region. The Department of Public Health is funding the study in recognition of the increasing threat of rabies in Philadelphia and has



developed regulations that require all dogs and cats to be vaccinated," according to Harriet Williams of the Department of Public Health.

There were over 300 cases of rabies in Pennsylvania in 1987, and over 100 cases have been reported in Pennsylvania so far this year, according to the State Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry. Fewer than four percent of cats and 20 percent of dogs in this country have been vaccinated against rabies. In many cases, pets received an initial vaccination but have not received the necessary booster shots to maintain their immunity to rabies.

Puppies and kittens should be vaccinated at three or four months of age, and again when they are a year old. Dogs require booster shots once a year or every three

years, depending on the type of vaccine used. Cats should have boosters every year. Because the degree of protection afforded by either vaccine declines over time, some pets may need more frequent vaccination. "Dogs that stay indoors and are not exposed to wildlife are adequately protected with vaccinations every three years if a triannual vaccine is used," said Glickman. "Animals that run free, and hunting dogs used in the field, however, should be vaccinated every year to provide maximum protection against the disease, regardless of the vaccine used." A pet is never too old to need rabies shots, he added.

Cats have surpassed dogs as the pet species most affected by rabies. In 1985, cats surpassed dogs as the most popular house pets in the United States—there were about 59 million house cats and 49 million dogs in the United States last year, according to a recent survey by the Pet Food Institute of Washington, D.C.—yet only 15 states require rabies vaccinations for cats, compared to 47 states that require them for dogs, said Glickman. The greatest risk to humans comes from cats because many owners allow them to wander, mistakenly believing that it is cruel to keep them indoors at all times, Glickman said. Last year, over 330 cats and dogs were stricken with rabies. "Of great concern is the fact that there were 1,311 rabid raccoons in the United States last year, mostly in Pennsylvania and Maryland," Beck said. "Raccoon rabies has been identified recently in nearby Chester County, and it is important to understand the city's pet population to develop a rabies-control program if necessary."

—Margaret Barry



## Pennsylvania Farm Show

The largest farm show in the country is held the second week in January in Harrisburg. The huge Farm Show Building is filled with exhibits of machinery, livestock, fruits and vegetables, and everything else one would see at an agricultural fair, only more. Penn's Vet School has been part of this busy week for many years with a booth. This year the School's theme was "Research, Teaching, Service," and photos from these areas were displayed in the exhibit. In addition we prepared a special Farm Show Bellwether and gave out bags and magnets. Twenty-two faculty and staff members from New Bolton Center campus volunteered their time and staffed the booth for the six days.

## Scavma Fund Raisers

Fridays around noon, the student lounge in the Rosenthal Building is a hub of activity. Students, faculty, and staff wait in line to buy a hoagie fixed by future veterinarians. These culinary delights are one of SCAVMA's many fundraisers for student activities here at the School. Students sell T-shirts, not only on campus but also at the Penn Annual Conference and at the K.C. of Philadelphia Dog Show. The biggest fund raiser of them all is the raffle held during the Penn Annual Conference. This year \$2,500 were raised through the sale of tickets and generous donations by participants in the Conference. Prizes consisted of cash, pet food, gift certificates, books, hair cuts, dinner for two, and other interesting items.

And what is done with the money? It is used to pay the expenses of a large student delegation to attend the SAVMA Symposium, held annually at a veterinary school. This year 35 students went to the University of California at Davis to participate in the event. The students pay for their own accommodations, while SCAVMA funds raised throughout the year cover the air fare.

The students of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine wish to thank the following individuals and companies for the gifts contributed to the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association Raffle held at the 1988 Penn Annual Conference: The UpJohn Co.; Hills Pet Products, Inc.; Pitman Moore, Inc.; SCAVMA; A.J. Buck and Son, Inc.; ALPO Petfoods, Inc.; Urban Outfitters; Smokey Joe's; Tradewinds; Beecham Laboratories; Daniels Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; Eden Restaurant; Steve's Ice Cream; Marty's; Nautilus; Radio Shack; Salad Alley Restaurant; THF Publications, Inc.; Omnivet; Lea and Febiger; Friendly Flowers; Michael's Custom Cuts; Jos. Anthony Hairstyles.

## Phi Zeta News

The Reptile House of the Philadelphia Zoo was the location of the Phi Zeta Induction Dinner on March 17. The 27 new members and their families and friends listened to an entertaining and informative talk by Dr. Peter Dodson about dinosaurs. Another part of the festivities was the announcement of the Phi Zeta competition winners. Jaime F. Modiano won the V.M.D.-Ph.D. category with his paper entitled *Requirement for extracellular calcium or magnesium in mitogen-induced activation of human peripheral blood lymphocytes*. In the V.M.D. category, two students tied for first place. Diane J. Deresiensky won with her paper entitled *Yohimbine reversal of ketamine-xylazine immobilization of raccoons (Procyon lotor)*. Thomas M. Niedermeyer was the other winner with his paper *Selectoandrogen insensitivity of hepatic drug metabolizing enzymes in senescent mice*.

