Welcome home
Atwater Veterinary Center
2015 GENERAL PRACTICE HOSPITAL OF THE YEAR

Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists
2015 SPECIALTY HOSPITAL OF THE YEAR

Specialty spaces:
Ideas you can implement anywhere

In memoriam:
Remembering business guru Bob Levoy

Chill out:
10 ways to reduce stress at work

And the winners are:
This year’s Merit Award hospital design winners

What irks owners?
Tips for simplifying tasks at the office

Learn to Lean:
Why you should cut the fat at your practice

38 TIPS TO STEAL
From two award-winning clinics

Lighting
Natural lighting & fixture ideas

Personal Artwork
Photos of staff pets

Client-Friendly Design
Coffee station for clients

Low Maintenance
Easy-to-clean tiles

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Elegant central seating
Think of profi$t$olver® as your clinic’s really smart best friend.
Centre Animal Hospital found $70,316 in new profits.

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Profit Solver is a patented, scientific financial management service that helps a clinic make informed, accurate decisions on setting service fees. This allows owners to achieve desired profit and assure their practice’s legacy of quality patient care. It has a proven formula to boost a clinic’s profitability and it comes with a money-back guarantee.

Learn more at zoetisUS.com/ProfitSolver.
Vote for the 2015 Hospital Design People’s Choice Award

The Veterinary Economics Hospital Design Competition has been showcasing the best in veterinary hospital design for decades. Now that the winners and finalists have been chosen, it's your turn to crown your own winner. Check out photos and floor plans of all the entries, then vote for your favorite veterinary hospital at dvm360.com/peoplechoice.

VIDEO: America is No. 1 in pet care ... why not pet insurance?

Dr. Jeff Werber says that in a country with the most advanced veterinary medicine in the world, it's amazing how few pets are covered by pet insurance. Pet owners always need it the most when they don't have it. He encourages pet owners and veterinarians to talk about all the insurance options out there. To hear more from Dr. Werber and compare features of some of the top plans, go to dvm360.com/werbertalksinsurance.

Stay on top of pain

Go to dvm360.com/painhandout to get printable information to help pet owners recognize and manage an animal's discomfort before it becomes a problem. You can also share the video "6 things you need to know about your pet's pain" at dvm360.com/painvideo with your clients on your clinic's website or social media channel.

Are you ready to manage?

Take this quiz to find out if you’re management material. From financial forecasting to writing protocols, ask yourself these questions to know if you have what it takes to be a successful practice manager. Get started at dvm360.com/readytomanage.
Veterinary Economics
The business of client and patient care

Mission
To give practicing veterinarians the business tools, insights, ideas and inspiration they need to fuel their passion for practice; run a well-managed, profitable business; enhance client loyalty and satisfaction; and maximize their patients’ well-being.

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March 2015 | Veterinary Economics | dvm360.com
In memoriam: Bob Levoy

Renowned speaker and writer bridged the worlds of human healthcare and veterinary medicine. By Brendan Howard

Your invisible employees

Bob Levoy once shared words from a book he read about “invisible employees”—team members who felt underserved, unappreciated and ignored. It’s his advice to counter that sadness and resentment that reminded me of the very best Levoy brought to the veterinary profession and Veterinary Economics. As he once wrote, “When is the last time you ...
- thanked an employee at the end of the day for a job well done?
- gave a staff member a raise without being asked?
- had fresh flowers delivered to your team after a hectic week at work?
- sent a fruit basket or small gift to an employee’s home in appreciation of his or her extra efforts?
- sent an e-mail or thank-you note to a staff member who went above and beyond the call of duty?
- celebrated the achievement of practice goals or the completion of special projects with plenty of public pats on the back?
- told your staff how important they are to your practice and how much you truly appreciate them?”

To read more from Bob Levoy, please visit his author page at dvm360.com/levoy.

In the world of veterinary practice management, Bob Levoy was an oddity. He studied best practices in the offices of physicians, optometrists, podiatrists, dentists and more, and he shared his insight with veterinary practice owners and managers.

He gently reminded our industry full of folks who focus on pets to take a breath and consider the human beings on the other end of the leashes to make sure their needs were being met.

He regularly asked practice owners to find out whether their team members were happy, and he encouraged doctors to look inward and ask themselves the same question. And he usually did it with a rare humility, quoting directly from the books, the speeches and the thinkers he most admired.

The work of this Veterinary Economics Editorial Advisory Board member appeared for decades in these pages and more recently on dvm360.com in monthly columns as well as more in-depth features. Writing for so long, it’s guaranteed he changed lives—for the better.

For Bob, business offices, human hospitals, doctors’ offices and veterinary practices were never good enough. They could always be better. He led the charge to show us how.

Veterinary Economics and its readers will miss him. VE
Our practice is located in New York City, and the waiting room is small. So when we run in-clinic diagnostics, we give owners a wooden nickel that we designed with our logo and a local coffee shop’s logo. The token is good for a free cup of coffee or tea at the cafe around the corner.

Our clients’ trips to the cafe keep the waiting room clear and keep them from getting too worried and restless.

The nickels work out great for our clinic and the coffee shop. We have an arrangement with them for the coffee, and it makes for free advertising for them as well. Clients often buy a pastry while they’re visiting, and they come back relaxed after their short walk.

The nickels were relatively inexpensive, and once a month we pick up the coins redeemed at the cafe and recirculate them for reuse. VE

Ginger Hughes is practice manager at Northside Veterinary Clinic in Brooklyn, New York.

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Why software fails in veterinary practice: You

Bad data entry is losing you revenue and wrecking patient records in your animal hospital. Here’s how to fix it. By Jeff Rothstein, DVM, MBA

“Garbage in, garbage out”—that’s what I think every time we update prices in our veterinary practice software. When you start to examine your software’s treatment and inventory lists, you may quickly realize there’s a lot of junk in the files: outdated entries, wrong fees, wrong codes, etc.

Here’s just one hypothetical example of a costly price mistake: Hospital ABC carries three ear infection medications. The pricing protocol requires you to apply a special “P” inventory code to add a $12.50 pharmacy fee for prescription medications. One day, the practice owner notices on an invoice that a particular dermatologic solution seems to be cheaper than she remembers. The solution was invoiced at $28.50 because no P was applied—the cost should be $40.

This three-doctor practice uses approximately five bottles a week—that’s 250 per year. One year’s loss equals $3,125, which could be $10,000 to $15,000 over the next few years. The mistake could be attributed to a simple oversight or a team member mixing up the reasoning behind the handling fees (medication counted out vs. the pharmacy fee applied to all prescription medications).

Bring order to the chaos with these four steps:

**Lock down duties**

Designate one team member to be your data entry specialist. In a perfect world, this will be a long-term employee because consistency in this position is important. The data entry specialist needs to understand your philosophy on pricing as well as what treatments and inventory receive codes for pharmacy fees, injection fees, quantity discounts and minimum fees.

Data entry specialists need to be able to make changes to your password-protected price and treatment lists. There’s not much risk of embezzlement because this is just one function they have access to and it doesn’t really impact actual intake of funds. A manager or practice owner should still spot-check on occasion.

**Cut the fat**

The data specialist shouldn’t be shy about removing outdated codes or making them obsolete. Remember, though, that removing a code means you can no longer search to see how it was used. The code will usually remain in clients’ medical records but won’t show up on financial reports anymore.

Lab results can be lost forever when a lab code is removed. At my practices, our procedure is to use preset codes in the veterinary software to render the unused codes obsolete.

**Make price updates a time for rechecks**

Use the time to do a thorough review of your codes when you update your practice prices. VE

Veterinary Economics Editorial Advisory Board member Dr. Jeff Rothstein is president of the Progressive Pet Animal Hospitals and Management Group.
'Show, not tell' carries over from English class to practice

Remember when your teacher told you to spend less time in your short story telling her what’s happening and more time showing her the action? Well, for some veterinary practices, what’s good for junior high students is also good for veterinarians in the exam room.

Take the case of Ivy Oakley Heath, DVM, owner of Faithful Friends Veterinary Hospital in Grifton, North Carolina. She built this practice in a town of less than 3,000 on a commitment to team training, high-quality medicine and lots of visual aids to educate clients.

Scheduling, showing clients videos, sharing diagnostic results and showcasing before and after photos are made easier with big-screen monitors and iPads in every exam room.

If a client could meet another satisfied client in the exam room to talk about a successful procedure, that would be great. Because that can’t happen, stories of improved patient health and the pictures to prove it do the job. “I show them the digital radiograph with exactly the problem we’re looking at,” Heath says.

“I may pull up someone else’s pet [anonymously] to show how diagnostics helped us catch chronic renal failure early,” Heath says. “I want them to see how the animal trended back into normal range [after changing a diet]. I want to show why I’m asking clients to spend the money.”

**Picture this**

And pictures of success for that pet help Heath’s client education too: “We do before and after pictures of all our dental and dermatology cases. A client will say, ‘Well, doc, I don’t know if this dog has really gotten better.’ I can say, ‘This was the first time you came to see me…”

“I am not a betting girl,” Heath says. “I’m a girl that likes to see what’s wrong with your pet.” That’s why she spends the time to explain the importance of diagnostics to clients.

**By the numbers**

She also shares data on diagnostic trends and other pet health information in the clinic with an IDEXX smartphone app and other visual tools: “I can connect with the client on multiple levels, going over diagnostics and showing the trends, not just the blood work from today. Everyone has a smartphone, so I also e-mail it right to them.”

Heath and her team ask clients to sign a photo release so they can share cute photos of their pets’ visits to the practice. Nearly everyone agrees: “You get all these other people seeing us sharing the bond,” Heath says. “Whatever the visual is and staying connected with your clients with social media, Instagram and Youtube—all of that equals better compliance,” she says. “All the little things and those small visuals, they develop trust.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. IVY OAKLEY HEATH

PHOTO: Diagnostic results and trends collected in a smartphone app help Dr. Ivy Oakley Heath explain why testing is important for well and ill pets.
Phase training teaches new employees with outlined guides and tips

These programs introduce new hires to a clinic’s patient care, client service and practice operations. With training time-tables and detailed goals, phase training programs offer practice managers a plan for welcoming new staff members. The programs identify specific skills for a veterinary team member’s job and explain how to develop them. Whether phone protocols, vaccine guidelines or staff policies are covered, the process ensures employees are immersed in the hospital’s culture and understand the rules. There are customized outlines for different positions from kennel assistant to practice manager. 

CONGRATULATIONS!

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We are proud to be a part of your winning veterinary center! If you can DREAM it, Shor-Line can make it!
On the next pages, Drs. Marty Becker and Steve Noonan share five tips each to keep energy high and stress low.

Learn how to clear your mind and live in the moment

Rather than appreciating the present in our personal lives and in our veterinary hospitals, we often find ourselves reliving the past or anticipating the future with painful regret and paralyzing worry. But there’s a possible solution: To be mindful is to be purposefully in the present moment and without judgment.

To achieve this mindfulness, positive psychology educator Jon Kabat-Zinn PhD focuses on relaxation and breathing techniques, meditation, yoga, gratitude journals and positive events logs. Using these modalities, his classroom participants scored better on psychological tests with lower pain scores. In every measure there was an increase in quality of life.

Currently, these tools of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) are part of the curriculum at more than 100 North American medical schools, including Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Tennessee’s veterinary college. Mindfulness training has tremendous potential to improve the quality of life for veterinarians, practice managers and veterinary team members.

5 ways to put mindfulness to work for you right now

1. Slow your breathing.

Before entering an exam room to see a client and/or patient, stop and take five slow cycles of respiration (five seconds to breathe in, five seconds to breathe out), feeling the air enter and leave your body.

2. Do a little stretching.

Got the breathing down? With closed eyes, reach slowly to the sky while breathing in for five seconds then slowly return your arms to your side and exhale. Repeat five times.

3. Feed your focus.

Try eating your lunch as slowly as you can, savoring every bite and body sensation. You may be surprised at the flavor and your sensation of fullness.

4. Study the simple.

Choose a random object in your immediate environment such as a pen, a flower or your stethoscope and observe it very carefully for 60 seconds. See what you can observe that you may never have seen before.

5. Walk the walk.

Take a 10-minute walk and synchronize your inspirations and expirations with your footsteps. This can be amazingly relaxing.

Dr. Steve Noonan, CPCC, is a veterinarian, management consultant, counselor, mindfulness instructor and professional life coach living in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
**PRACTICE with heart**

How to rise up when your energy is sinking

By nature, I’m a high-energy, positive person. But like everyone else, I have times when I feel like a human piñata, beaten but not quite broken.

Extensive travel, too many days/hours of work in a row, too few hours of sleep, or several back-to-back practice gut punches (a missed diagnosis, a patient’s death, an angry client, employee complaints) can leave me stuck in a lower physical gear. Energy is low and stress is high.

But as one of the leaders of the practice—owner, associate or manager—you’re typically responsible not just for setting the example for a strong work ethic, dedication, attention to detail and excellent customer service. Team members and pet owners alike look to feed off and match your energy.

Palpable energy is important, so what can you do to refuel the tank when the caution light is flashing in your body and others can sense it?

**5 things I do to recharge during busy workdays**

1. Pray hard. When I’m feeling down, I get down on my knees and pray—prayers of thanks for my many blessings, prayers to be able to handle difficulties, prayers for compassion and prayers for energy and strength.

2. Take 5 or 15. I’ll go into my office, take my shoes off, light a scented candle, enjoy a cup of coffee, tea or other beverage and just veg out.

3. Laugh: I love to tease, pull practical jokes and laugh. I can get a quick fix by visiting a humor website, calling one of my friends who are always good for laughs (Dr. Chuck Wayner and Fritz Wood) or reading *Mad Magazine*. I can’t be down reading *Mad Magazine*.

**4. Give of my time and money.** Doing something for somebody else or going the extra mile always gives me a major lift. I might donate to a favorite charity, call somebody who needs their spirits picked up or just do some other random act of kindness.

**5. Phone home.** I love my wife of 36 years, Teresa, and nothing makes me happier than talking to her. For the first decade of practice, I made it a point to not mix veterinary work with my home life. Well, during the last 25 years I’ve called home whenever I had something to celebrate or when I needed to be re-energized. My wife will pray with me, get me laughing, remind me we have time off coming up or bathe me with compliments about how hard I work.

The next time you’re dragging, skip the triple-shot espresso. Engage the proven things that make your happy.
Every veterinarian knows how challenging it is to get dog owners to regularly brush their dogs' teeth, but we can improve the oral care and overall health status of our patients by doing a few simple things:

- Make sure every client recognizes that you are not only their pet's doctor, but also their pet's dentist.
- Emphasize the importance of veterinary physical and dental exams at least annually.
- Encourage regular teeth cleaning at home, and only recommend dental chews that have earned the VOHC Seal of Acceptance.

I recommend Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ as an easy, affordable, and effective solution to client compliance concerns. Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are bound to help transform preventative oral care as we know it by offering a proven way for dogs to essentially help brush their own teeth.

**RECOMMENDED BY DR. JAN BELLOWS**

Dr. Jan Bellows is President of the American Veterinary Dental College, Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Fellow of the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry, and Veterinary Dental Specialist author and lecturer. He practices at All Pets Dental in Weston, Florida. Learn more at MilkBone.com

**ENCOURAGING ORAL CARE COMPLIANCE**

We recognize the most effective dental regimen is one clients will actually follow. Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are easy, affordable chews that work. The combination of receiving quality veterinary care and using research-proven oral care products will help improve the dental health of your canine patients. As we do our part to promote good dental health, we encourage you to educate your clients on the importance of regular dental checkups and recommend daily usage of Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™.
INTRODUCING NEW **MILK-BONE™ brushing chews**

While clients are accustomed to brushing their own teeth every day, getting them to brush their dogs’ teeth regularly can be a challenge. That’s why we’ve created a new chew that’s designed to reframe dog oral care in an understandable human context and help revolutionize oral care compliance.

New Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are clinically proven to be as effective as brushing*. Designed to perform like a toothbrush and packaged in a toothpaste-looking box, they help reinforce the need for daily oral care. In addition, each Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ package reminds clients to keep their dogs’ teeth clean by giving them one chew daily and a veterinary dental checkup annually.

*When fed daily, Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are as effective as brushing a dog’s teeth twice a week based on the reduction of tartar build up and halitosis. The VOHC recommends daily tooth brushing for optimal effectiveness.

As you’d expect from a 100-year-old trusted brand, Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are widely available at an affordable price. In the coming weeks you’ll be seeing a national campaign designed to build awareness of the need for good oral care and this new innovation.

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Halitosis Reduction

INTRODUCING NEW

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Clinical trials¹ demonstrate that Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are effective in reducing tartar, plaque and halitosis.

Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ are so effective, they've earned the VOHC Seal of Acceptance.

Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™ outperform other chews on the market in several important criteria.

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<th>VOHC Seal of Approval²</th>
<th>Reduces tartar build up by &gt;50%³</th>
<th>Reduces plaque by &gt;20%⁴</th>
<th>Reduces halitosis by &gt;35%⁴</th>
<th>Less than 65 Kcal per chew⁴</th>
<th>Available to 98% of clients²</th>
<th>Affordable at less than $1 per chew⁴</th>
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1. Extensive research conducted at independent testing facilities in accordance with VOHC testing protocols. Data submitted for publication.
2. Average efficacy rates for small/medium size Milk-Bone® Brushing Chews™
3. Products that carry the VOHC Seal of Acceptance for tartar control have demonstrated via clinical testing they successfully meet strict criteria for effectiveness in controlling tartar accumulation in dogs.
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Learn more at MilkBone.com
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Managers: What our clients want vs. what they’ll pay for

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<th>Level of care majority of your clients want for a sick pet</th>
<th>Level of care majority of your clients will pay for when treating sick pet</th>
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<td>Gold standard—Best available including specialty care if needed</td>
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<td>Excellent—Best the clinic can provide, not including specialty care</td>
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| Good enough—Somewhere between excellent and minimum standard | 7.3%  
| 33.2% | |
| Meets standard of care | 0%  
| 23% | |
| Won’t treat a sick pet | 0%  
| 0% | |
| Don’t know |  
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In the January edition of the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association’s Insiders’ Insights, managers reported on the level of care they think their clients want for their pets when they’re ill and what they think clients will pay for or may be able to afford. Ask yourself: Where do you think your clients fall? It’s no surprise that there’s a gap in these answers, showing that there’s a need either for better client education about the benefits of paying for a higher level of care or perhaps new ways to help clients afford the treatment their pets need with more payment options.

Correction: February’s Data Center contained an error in the “Pet owners’ perception of visit length” chart. The results were that 92 percent of pet owners felt the length of visits with their veterinarian were just about right, and 1 percent of pet owners felt they spent too much time.

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Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists

Owner: Robert G. Roy, DVM
Associates: 15 full-time, 3 part-time
Hospital team: 50 full-time, 4 part-time
Practice style: 100 percent small animal
Building size: 35,000 square feet
Parking spaces: 75 client, 45 staff
Construction: $6,000,000 (building only)
Site improvement: $600,000
Professional fees: $600,000
Equipment: $1,800,000
Furnishings: $350,000
Computers: $750,000
We kept the back of the hospital more sterile, which saved money in building and in upkeep. I say put your effort into the front structure and color schedules, and keep the back more clinical.”

—Dr. Robert Roy

A core concern: The treatment area is the core of the hospital, where the main nurses’ station is located and staffed around the clock. All other departments of this specialty hospital—internal medicine, radiography, etc.—are accessible from this space. While comfortable, the treatment area and most back-of-hospital functions at Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists were built with efficiency of time, money and resources in mind.

GET THE LOOK

In the core of this hospital, the treatment area features:

1. A main nurses’ station
2. High ceilings and natural lighting from clerestory windows
3. Epoxy painted walls as well as flooring, for easy cleaning and durability
4. Access and view to isolation ward
5. Laminated counters and cabinets
6. Large corridors for ease of patient transport
7. Quick access to other specialized departments in the hospital such as internal medicine and surgery

See more photos from the winners

For a full photo tour of both Hospitals of the Year, visit dvm360.com/pbvs and dvm360.com/avc.

Don’t forget to vote for the 2015 Veterinary Economics Hospital Design People’s Choice Award. To see photos and vote, visit dvm360.com/peopleschoice.
A grand lecture hall seating 125, complete with recording and presentation equipment showcases Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists’ mission and commitment to care. Taking up 3,500 square feet, the lecture hall includes a foyer for networking, upholstered chairs with fold-up desk arms and dedicated restrooms. An observation mezzanine on the second floor acts as overflow space for presentations.

While cost per square foot is always a consideration when building a new facility, owner Robert Roy, DVM, says the theatre-style lecture hall dovetails perfectly with his hospital’s mission.

“As I reflected on my work as a resident at the University of Minnesota and at the Mayo Clinic, I realized that education is a big part of those institutions,” Roy says. “The presence of those hospitals tends to raise the level of medicine in the area. They show a great commitment to continuing education in general. My hope was to replicate to a small degree that aspect at my new hospital, making education a part of the hospital as a whole.”

Dedicating space to education not only shows the public and referring veterinarians Palm Beach’s commitment to education, but it demonstrates this to staff as well.

Obviously, not every practice has the space, money or need for a learning auditorium. Roy, having previously practiced in a 5,600-square-foot facility, understands that as well as anyone. But putting in a stand-out feature that shows your commitment to medicine and to the people who practice it is achievable for all, he says.

For example, Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists also has a conference room with a built-in partition that is used for meetings, bereavement session, learning lunches and intimate gatherings.

“These spaces are a great extension to the public and a show of commitment to our staff,” says Roy. “Whatever the size of your practice, show your commitment in your way.”

Sarah A. Moser is a freelance writer and editor in Lenexa, Kansas. Please send comments or questions to ve@advanstar.com.

While Dr. Roy’s auditorium is a small-scale replica of those he saw at the university level, he says others could build an even smaller replica. Here, the focus is on comfortable seats, writing space for notes, audio equipment to hear the presenter, and acoustic wall panels that muffle excess noise. A second-floor viewing gallery with audio allows doctors and staff to come and go without interrupting. The attached facility includes its own entrance, restrooms and kitchen.

**Primary architect**

H. Richard Barnes
1807 E. Terrace Drive
Lake Worth, FL 33460
(561) 762-8451

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**GET THE LOOK**

While Dr. Roy’s auditorium is a small-scale replica of those he saw at the university level, he says others could build an even smaller replica. Here, the focus is on comfortable seats, writing space for notes, audio equipment to hear the presenter, and acoustic wall panels that muffle excess noise. A second-floor viewing gallery with audio allows doctors and staff to come and go without interrupting. The attached facility includes its own entrance, restrooms and kitchen.
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A surgical suite for every need: The surgery area houses four complete surgery suites: Two for general use, one dedicated to ophthalmology and one double-sized suite for emergencies.

+ GET THE LOOK

Spacious glass-front cabinets ➊ keep supplies close at hand. Seamless quartz epoxy floors ➋ were chosen for durability and ease of cleaning, along with epoxy-painted drywall walls ➌. Extra-wide sterile corridors lead to the surgery suites, with double egress doors (not pictured).

Designated space for imaging: The internal medicine department houses a dedicated ultrasound imaging room. This area has easy access to both the client services corridor and the internal medicine specialists’ area.

GET THE LOOK

The room features fluorescent lighting ➊ for ease of patient loading as well as dimmable incandescent lighting ➋ for scanning. A laminated cabinet ➌ provides storage and houses a sink ➍ for washing up.

A soothing space to wait: A coffee nook with high-top tables is nestled under the stairs, offering a quieter place to escape and get some work done or rest. Jennifer Fossen, CVPM, says kids like this area, as it feels secure. Adults enjoy the aroma of coffee brewing and cookies baking.

GET THE LOOK

A warm, neutral palette ➊ puts anxious clients at ease, as does the natural light and spaciousness ➋. Moveable seating—in comfortable chairs ➌ rather than benches—and Wi-Fi access complete the look for the coffee nook ➍.

>>> CONTINUE TO PAGE 19 TO SEE THE MERIT AWARD WINNERS.
And the **Merit Award** winners are ...

In this issue, you’ll see the two Hospitals of the Year from the 2015 *Veterinary Economics* Hospital Design Competition. But here are details on the six Merit Award winners—congratulations!—to be featured in more detail in the special June 2015 supplement.

**Conejo Valley Veterinary Hospital**
*Thousand Oaks, CA*
**Owner:** Todd Hughes, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 12
- **Square footage:** 17,000
- **Total cost:** $4,595,662

**Country Club Veterinary Clinic**
*Lake Charles, LA*
**Owners:** Christine M. Mocklin, DVM; Martha P. Briley, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 5
- **Square footage:** 5,035
- **Total cost:** $1,239,200

**Long Animal Hospital & Emergency Center**
*Charlotte, NC*
**Owners:** Richard E. Killough, DVM; Richard B. Killough, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 10
- **Square footage:** 31,203
- **Total cost:** $8,107,051

**Dunwoody Animal Medical Center**
*Dunwoody, GA*
**Owner:** CL Johnson III, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 4
- **Square footage:** 1,704
- **Total cost:** $938,000

**Hunterdon Hills Animal Hospital**
*Whitehouse Station, NJ*
**Owner:** Charles Westfield, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 6
- **Square footage:** 9,523
- **Total cost:** $4,320,473

**Flint River Animal Hospital and Bed ‘n Biscuit**
*Huntsville, AL*
**Owner:** Kevin M. Lowe, DVM
- **Exam rooms:** 4
- **Square footage:** 11,150
- **Total cost:** $4,256,782
Survey identifies the most common work complications
Inconsistent protocols and hiring and firing top the list.

What's overcomplicating practice owners' work lives?
(Practice owners selected all that applied.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency between doctors (medicine, charging for care, etc.)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff hiring/training</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<td>My time management</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporating social media into marketing plan</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited personal time</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety over problem employees/terminating employees</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff's time management</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long/excessive hours</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associates' time management</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice software</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee turnover</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best practices from the best practices
For more tips from Well-Managed Practices on solving your hospital's headaches, visit dvm360.com/2014benchmarks.

Consistency tip:
Define expectations and standards of care with written guidelines. Set budget goals and share them with staff to make it a team effort.

Hiring tip:
Write job advertisements to reflect your practice's culture and personality to attract the right new hire.

Social media tip:
Your social media can't be all cute cat videos. Online content should fit your practice's brand—the reputation you want to project.

Time management tip:
Go paperless at your practice with electronic medical records and use templates to save time with fill-in-the-blank sections.

Other factors:
> Facility expansion or new equipment
> Finances
> Competition
> Long-range planning
> Government intervention in healthcare and retirement
> Implementing wellness plans
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Atwater Veterinary Center

Owners: Drs. Charles Copeland, Carolyn Chiffelle, Paul Elliott Cook, Nicole Maria Eklof

Associates: 3 full-time

Hospital team: 6 full-time, 5 part-time

Practice style: 50 percent small animal, 50 large animal (mostly bovine)

Building size: 5,496 square feet

Parking spaces: 19 client, 7 staff

Construction: $1,436,300 (building only)

Site improvement: $168,900

Professional fees: $339,600

Equipment: $160,424

Furnishings: $39,961

Computers: $21,751
Follow the lead of this year’s General Practice Hospital of the Year by drawing inspiration from your surroundings and making your clinic space uniquely yours.

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By Sarah A. Moser

P luck Atwater Veterinary Center out of its surroundings, and locals would still likely know it belongs in Atwater, California. This small animal and bovine practice—the 2015 Veterinary Economics General Practice Hospital of the Year—brought local flavor indoors, personalizing the space and making clients feel at home. One competition judge said, “This hospital is superbly detailed.” When given the backstory, it’s easy to see just how impressive that compliment is.

The owners were forced into this building project. In 2012, the city took the previous practice building via eminent domain—for the second time. At one time, the group of four co-owners had three hospitals. The first was taken by eminent domain for a bridge expansion nine years ago. They “The very heart of our community here in the Central Valley is agriculture based. This was the theme we chose for our interior.” —Dr. Carolyn Chiffelle

---

GET THE LOOK

1. The reception area brings the outdoors in with a Faux Japanese maple tree
2. Earthy color palette inspired by the local environment
3. Central seating with tear-resistant fabric
4. Personalized artwork of staff pets
5. Locally made laser-cut practice name
6. Gabled clear-cedar ceiling
7. Pendant lighting
8. Reception-desk location makes for ease of traffic flow and entry monitoring
9. Tile flooring with easy-to-clean epoxy grout
10. Brushed anodized aluminum storefront windows
merged the second and third offices into one, which was also taken by eminent domain to make room for an expressway overpass project that leads to a local university.

The doctors took the opportunity to build fresh and ran with it in a short time period of just 15 months. “We sat down and had a hard talk about what we were going to do,” says co-owner Carolyn Chiffelle, DVM, “We considered folding the Atwater clinic and just operating our ambulatory side of the practice. None of us wanted to incur the large debt associated with building a new hospital, but we had been an important fixture in the community for more than 40 years and provided needed services. And we couldn’t imagine letting our long-term employees go.”

In the end, the doctors decided to make the most of a very difficult situation—and build the hospital they wanted. Making sure the new hospital represented the surrounding community.

For a quicker build, Atwater Veterinary Center went with a steel exterior frame. Also: Light and dark tan paint with green metalwork features and pale green performance glass blends into the local environment. A raised seam metal roof over the lobby and reception area and brushed anodized aluminum storefront window wall systems complete the look.
nity was foremost in their minds. “The very heart of our community here in the Central Valley is agriculture based,” says Chiffelle. “This was the theme we chose for our interior.”

The hospital has commissioned a stained-glass piece for the lobby as well. The piece will highlight the nearby mountains of Yosemite, row crops and orchards of the Central San Joaquin Valley, quail and California poppies.

**Primary architect**
Rich Rauh, AIA
Rauhaus, Freedenfeld and Associates
23101 Moulton Parkway, Suite 106
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
(949) 697-6997
rfarchitects.com

**Fear-Free tip**
“The central seating area offers easy separation of cats and dogs, while providing a calming, nature-like setting for clients and their pets,” says Chiffelle. For more Fear-Free tips, visit dvm360.com/fearfree or scan the QR code below.

**FOCUS ON ... design details**

*Fun trail:* Paw prints on ceiling tiles run from one exam room to the reception area and disappear into the manager’s office.

*Picture perfect:* The doctors at Atwater Veterinary Center chose personalized photos over generic artwork for their practice. A receptionist who is also a talented photographer took photos of all the doctors’ and staff members’ pets and created a portfolio. “We chose our favorites, then had Giclée canvasses made to hang throughout the building,” says Chiffelle. “This approach personalizes the practice for our employees and shows our commitment to our pets.”

Sarah A. Moser is a freelance writer and editor in Lenexa, Kansas. Please send comments or questions to ve@advanstar.com.
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Nutramax Laboratories has introduced Dasuquin Advanced Joint Health Supplement for dogs. Dasuquin Advanced builds on the avocado-soybean unsaponifiables (ASU), glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate combination in Dasuquin by adding *Boswellia serrata* extract, *Curcumin longa* extract and alpha lipic acid to the product. It is available in chewable tablets in two sizes: small-to-medium-dog and large-dog strengths.

For fastest response visit dasuquinadvanced.com or call (888) 886-6442

Elanco Relaunched parasiticide

Elanco has reintroduced Interceptor Flavor Tabs (milbemycin oxime), a single-molecule heartworm product that also protects against whipworms, roundworms and hookworms in dogs. The once-a-month tablet also prevents heartworm disease and removes adult roundworms and hookworms in cats and kittens. Elanco is relaunching Interceptor following its 2014 acquisition of Novartis Animal Health.

For fastest response visit interceptorpet.com

Zoetis Feline FeLV-FIV test

Zoetis’ new combination Witness FeLV-FIV Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) Antigen and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) Antibody Test Kit is available for preorder. The new test offers veterinarians an accurate and cost-effective point-of-care option that requires no refrigeration or snapping. The test kit uses rapid immunomigration technology to detect the presence of FeLV antigen and FIV antibodies, providing results in approximately 10 minutes. In a series of clinical tests conducted by Zoetis, the Witness FeLV-FIV Test demonstrated excellent sensitivity and specificity.

For fastest response visit zoetisus.com/simplysmarterchoice or call (888) 963-8471
Cut the fat—get Lean
What Toyota has to teach veterinary hospitals. By E.E. Chip Ponsford, DVM

Every year, prominent veterinary trade journals publish benchmarks and metrics of veterinary practices. What if there was a new paradigm that set the bar at a totally new level—not just another way of thinking outside of the box, but a whole new box?

What is the “new box” that could change how veterinarians and practice managers think, manage and improve their organizations? It’s what’s worked in some human hospitals: University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor decreased discharge time from more than three hours to 89 minutes, a reduction of 54 percent. Say hello to the Toyota Production System (TPS), or Lean, which aims to deliver exceptional customer value while eliminating “fat.”

The skinny on Lean
Fundamentally, Lean is the long-term commitment to giving customers value in a continuous flow of work, without waste. At its heart, Lean dissects processes into their separate, individual steps. All of the steps are meticulously analyzed to determine which are necessary, which add value, and which are wasteful and can be eliminated.

In order to add value, the product or service must be something that the client wants and is willing to pay for. Each step in the process must enhance the product and must be done right the first time. Any deviation is a form of mura, the Japanese word for “waste.”

The 8 forms of mura
1. **Defects.** Doing something incorrectly or spending resources to fix an error.
2. **Overproduction.** Doing more than the client asked for and is willing to pay for, or doing something before it’s actually required.
3. **Transportation.** Redundant movement of patients, resources or specimens.
4. **Waiting.** Periods of non-production, due to waiting for something or someone.
5. **Inventory.** Inefficient or excessive inventory.
6. **Motion.** Unnecessary movement of staff.
7. **Overprocessing.** Acting at a higher level than is necessary or will be utilized.
8. **Staff talent.** While this one is not part of the original seven, it involves the waste of not utilizing team members effectively and not acknowledging their unique talents, perceptions or potential intellectual contributions.

The Lean “toolbox” contains many other items such as:
> The “5 S’s” (sort, straighten, shine, systematize and standardize) to organize work areas
> “Fishbone” analysis (cause and effect analysis) to clarify the root cause of problems
> Value-stream mapping that graphically shows steps and times involved in processes
> Just-in-time systems that allow inventory to be managed more visibly.

The Toyota Production System has proven itself in virtually every type of manufacturing setting, and now it’s not uncommon to visit human hospitals and see the signs of a Lean initiative in place. Physicians, medical staff members and patients all over the world are benefiting from incredible gains in profit, patient safety, timely access to life-saving treatments, resource utilization and employee engagement. It’s time for veterinary medicine to get Lean. **ve**
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