

HISTORY AND PURPOSES OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

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Veterinary Specialty Organizations

The purpose of having specialty organizations within the profession of veterinary medicine is multiple. The foremost reason is that such organizations promote the advancement of the specific discipline, including the creation of new knowledge and understanding about the discipline. The existence of specialists ensures that there are veterinarians with an ensured higher minimum level of expertise than exists within the profession as a whole. These experts, then, enhance the veterinary service available to the public and over time, will raise the standard of veterinary education relative to the discipline.

Secondary benefits include the contribution of new knowledge to veterinary medicine and the promotion of public education in related areas.

Specialty In Animal Welfare

Why a veterinary specialty in animal welfare? Because we are in a science-based profession, veterinarians are able to review pros and cons of topics, and understand what science is relevant to a topic, what is not, and what still is needed to be developed. We know that science is ever-evolving, so that we can interpret what is currently known and encourage additional research where appropriate.

Of significance is the fact that the public expects veterinarians to be the leaders in animal welfare. We are the only profession that communicates across the spectrum of individuals who have concerns about animal welfare because we are the only group that talk to producers, the public, and researchers.

The American College of Animal Welfare (ACAW)

An Organizing Committee for ACAW was developed between 2006 and 2007, when each AVMA allied organization and specialty was asked whether they wanted to participate in the development of a specialty in animal welfare. If they chose to participate they were to name their representative to the Organizing Committee with an individual that met specific criteria required by the AVMA's American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS). A letter of intent to organize as a specialty was filed with ABVS on August 6, 2006 because other specialty organizations were rumored to be considering including animal welfare as their subspecialty, which would limit the scope of what animal welfare encompassed.

The first meeting of the Organizing Committee was held October 27-29, 2007 at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. That group consisted of 16 people representing

different groups and one representative from ABVS. The Organizing Committee would continue to meet biannually and eventually expanded to 27 members. The breadth of the specialty came to be represented by individuals with expertise in animal behavior, cattle, companion animals, epidemiology, horses, internal medicine, international animal welfare, laboratory animals, marine animals, pain management, poultry, public health, shelter medicine, swine, thereogenology, toxicology, and wild and exotic animals. In the Fall, 2009, the Organizing Committee petitioned ABVS for recognition, and that petition was open for public comment until Nov. 1, 2010. As comments were forwarded to the Organizing Committee periodically during that one year period, they were responded to, as requested to ABVS.

ACAW, Inc.

In December, 2010, the Organizing Committee received word that the ACAW had been legally incorporated. In February, 2011, ACAW received word that the ABVS was recommending Provisional Recognition status, and that that recommendation was then forwarded to the AVMA's Council on Education (COE) for their review and recommendation. The COE delayed review of the petition in their April, 2011 meeting, and then denied the petition at their September, 2011 meeting. The ACAW appealed the COE decision in November, 2011 and COE denied the appeal.

Because a denied appeal meant that the petition was to be sent back to the ABVS, but the ABVS had already recommended Provisional Recognition, the ACAW Board of Directors appealed the COE decision to the AVMA Board of Governors in April, 2012, requesting that the AVMA Executive Board be allowed to make the final determination. The Board of Governors found in favor of the ACAW appeal in May, 2012 and the ACAW petition was then reviewed by the full AVMA Executive Board from April through July. On August 1, 2012, the AVMA Executive Board granted Provisional Recognition to ACAW.

The first credentialing process deadline for applications was November 1, 2012 and the first certifying examination was given in July, 2013. Three individuals sat that first exam, and all three were successful. The current number of ACAW Diplomates now stands at 30.

The second credentialing process deadline was November 1, 2013, with the second examination scheduled for July, 2014.

As a side note: the COE has now been eliminated from the specialty review process and ABVS recommendations are to be forwarded directly to the AVMA Executive Board, just as happens with recommendations from all other Committees and Councils.

Role Delineation Document

The ABVS is currently in the process of requiring all specialty organizations to develop a document that outlines the specialty-unique knowledge. ACAW was fortunate to be able to do this while still in the organizational stage. This document, which we call the Role Delineation Document (RDD), outlines the body of knowledge that we consider

core for our specialty. It serves as the basis for all training programs and examinations.

The nine areas included within the ACAW RDD (and emphasis) include the following:

Concepts and history of animal welfare – 10%

Ethical issues – 12.5%

Animal welfare assessment considerations – 15%

Animal environments – 10%

Role of the veterinary profession in promoting welfare – 5%

Individual veterinarian's role in promoting welfare – 10%

Impact of human, animal, environmental interactions – 10%

Regulations, policies, and guidelines – 7.5%

Contemporary animal welfare issues – 20%

Veterinarians with an interest in the American College of Animal Welfare are encouraged to go to the ACAW website – www.acaw.org.