



THE RURAL VET

The Newsletter of the Academy of Rural Veterinarians
Volume 4 Issue 2

A Message from the President

Spring & Externships: Hope for the Future

Dear ARV Members & Supporters:

This is the fun time of year...new foals, new calves, and developing veterinarians. Its exciting to see what a year of feeding, gestating and nurturing produces in the spring. People always say spring is a time of hope—



Shelley Lenz, DVM

to look to the future. All of us at the Academy of Rural Veterinarians feel the same way—as this is the time of year we announce our annual awards for the ARV Externship Program. Reviewing the student application packets shows that there are young men and women out there who really want to consider pursuing a career in rural practice—and this gives all of us hope for the future.

Just take a look inside and meet some of the fine students who received Externship Awards. This year we

were able to fund over \$13,000.00 in 29 externships. Most of the “feed” that went into our externship funding came from the membership dues. Of course, the support we received from our corporate sponsors helped us with the extras “feed” we needed to get us through this long hard winter. It’s a lot of work and a lot of hope but when spring comes, you know it was worth it. With our product on the ground and ready to grow, now its up to the externs to eat up as much as they can because before they know it, its going to be weaning time!

Speaking of the future, I call your attention to a major part of this newsletter, the results of the Training Survey we conducted earlier in the year. Thank you to all our members and student members who took the time and responded to the survey. I am proud to report that we had a 34% response rate from our membership—so we definitely can say that we had a proper sampling. Take some time to

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Spring 2009

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**ARV...
Promoting
the Rewards
of Veterinary
Practice in
Rural
America**

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors



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PRESIDENT *(Continued from Page 1)*

read over the survey compilation. It says a lot about how students are preparing for their careers. We are sending the results of the survey to the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), as well as to the Deans of the veterinary schools across the nation and department heads. We hope this information will be useful to AAVMC and the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium as they work to ensure that the profession is well positioned to meet the needs of society.

You will find other updates and useful information in this issue of *The Rural Vet*. We would like to hear from you! Please send us your latest news...how is your practice doing? Any innovations or interesting cases to report from the field? Have you received an award? Let us know — so we can share this news with your fellow members.

Thank you for your ongoing support of ARV. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish you a very productive and happy spring!



Shelley J. Lenz, DVM, Ph.D.
President

**Looking for the
perfect Associate
for your practice?**

**Place an ad in ARV's
Online Job Bank --
a free service for
our members.**

Did You See the ARV 'Centerfold' in DVM Newsmagazine?



Where did DVM Newsmagazine turn to when it really wanted to know about the rural veterinarian shortage? They came to the Academy of Rural Veterinarians!

ARV Treasurer Brett Andrews was featured in the article. Brett offered excellent insights into the life of a rural veterinarian — and we were especially impressed with his proud “shout-out” ARV through his baseball cap!

ARV Executive Director Steve McDonald was also cited in the article, and President Shelley Lenz’s experiences as a rural vet were featured on DVM360.com.

[Click here to view this article online.](#)

[Click here to view the article on Shelley Lenz’s experiences.](#)

Presenting ARV's 2009-10 Externship Awardees

The Academy of Rural Veterinarians has awarded \$13,450.00 in Externship Grants for the 2009-10 school year to 29 students representing 17 of the veterinary colleges. We have been able to increase the level of funding by approximately \$1,500 over last year. The quality of the applicants has been consistent over the past three years—and we expect all students, veterinarians and clinics involved to have a very positive experience.

The feedback ARV receives from the students is great. They really appreciate being able to get out with real practitioners to get involved with real practical everyday procedures. We have heard from ARV member-mentors that it is very rewarding to interact with the students. As one mentor recently informed ARV, “Having students on an externship involves time and sometimes slows you down, but if you pick and choose the cases you have them get involved with the extra time is time well spent. I just wish I had known as much as most of the students I’ve interacted with when I

graduated from veterinary school.”

We are extremely grateful to all those who help fund our Externship Program. The support we have received from the Land O’Lakes Foundation and Boehringer Ingelheim have helped fund this year’s program. We are especially grateful to you, our dues paying members, for your continued belief in ARV and support which allows us to continue the Externship Program—further exposing students to the need and value for qualified and dedicated veterinarians in rural communities across the nation.

The Externship Program Committee asks ARV members to assist them in finding other funding sources for the program—so we can continue to grow it in the years ahead. We are also always on the lookout for mentors to sponsor externships. It’s well worth it!

Please meet some of our outstanding Externship Awardees:



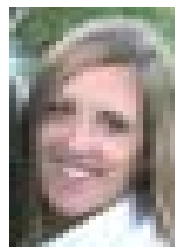
*Kyle Adkins
University of
Minnesota
Junior
Staples Veterinary
Clinic, MN*



*Kyle Berning
Kansas State
University
Junior
Circle H
Headquarters, TX*



*Jessica Collier
University of
California - Davis
Freshman
Steele Veterinary
Clinic, ND*



*Morgan Douglas
Colorado State
University
Junior
Lander Veterinary
Clinic, WY*



*Matt Faulkner
University of
Georgia
Senior
Perry Veterinary
Clinic, NY*



*Mary Green
University of
Missouri
Junior
Ashley Veterinary
Clinic, ND*



*Eric Behlke
Iowa State
University
Junior
Belle Fourche
Veterinary Clinic,
SD*



*Heather Carlisle
Iowa State
University
Junior
Ashley Veterinary
Clinic, ND*



*Sarah Davies
University of
Tennessee
Freshman
Elgin Veterinary
Hospital, TX*



*Josh Ettlin
University of
California - Davis
Freshman
Whestone Veteri-
nary Service, MO*



*Nicole Giguere
Western University
of Health Sciences
Junior
Circle H
Headquarters, TX*



*Regan Leah Greene
Auburn University
Freshman
West Central
Veterinary Clinic,
IN*

Presenting ARV's 2009-10 Externship Awardees



*Lauren Huggins
University of
California - Davis
Freshman
Lander Veterinary
Clinic, CA*



*Kathryn Lynd
Virginia Maryland
Regional College
of Veterinary
Medicine
Sophomore
Healing Springs
Animal Hospital, VA*



*Rochelle Reddig
Kansas State
University
Freshman
Killdeer Veterinary
Clinic, ND*



*Angela Spann
University of
Florida
Junior
Mid-Texas
Veterinary
Associates, TX*



*Keri Thomas
Iowa State
University
Sophomore
Lander Veterinary
Clinic, CA*



*Todd Wiseman
Virginia Maryland
Regional College of
Veterinary Medicine
Sophomore
Cross Timbers
Veterinary Hospital,
TX*



*Josh Krumheuer
University of
California - Davis
Freshman
Ashley Veterinary
Clinic, ND*



*Sarah Nelson
University of
Georgia
Sophomore
Carge Animal
Mobile Veterinary
Services, IN*



*Emilie Schilling
Texas A & M
Junior
Circle H
Headquarters, TX*



*Audra Danielle
Stallings
Auburn University
Sophomore
Cross Timbers
Veterinary Hospital,
TX*



*Jenna Warner
Texas A&M
Sophomore
Whetstone
Veterinary Service,
MO*



Our other Externship Awardees:

*Nathan Boyer
The Ohio State University
Senior
Ashley Veterinary Clinic, ND*

*Steven Houchens
Auburn University
Sophomore
Lander Veterinary Clinic, CA*

*Paul Schmitt
Texas A & M
Sophomore
Washington Animal Clinic, TX*

*Bridgette Hemmesch
University of Minnesota
Sophomore
Dairyland Veterinary Service, WI*

*Katie Kleinhenz
The Ohio State University
Freshman
Dairyland Veterinary Service, WI, &
Countryside Veterinary Clinic, NY*

*William Terry
Auburn University
Sophomore
Lander Veterinary Clinic, CA*

Attention ARV Student Members:

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*Picture your ad here! Reach accomplished
Rural Veterinarians across the nation!*

*If you would like to place an ad or more information, please
contact the ARV Office at (518) 694-0056 or arv@caphill.com.*

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results



THE ACADEMY OF RURAL VETERINARIANS VETERINARY TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Purpose: To assess the educational experiences of practicing veterinarians and current veterinary school students—analyzing confidence levels in relation to practice situations and overall preparation for entering the field of mixed practice.

TOTAL RESPONDENTS – 108 34% of current Academy Membership

61% - Practicing Veterinarians (Member/Mentors)
39% - Student Members

Part I – Practicing Veterinarian Responses to Own Education

Years in Practice?

22% 1-5 Years **17%** 6-10 Years **13%** 11-15 Years **10%** 16-20 Years **38%** 20+ Years

Gender **71%** Male **29%** Female

Personal Experience

Practicing veterinarians were asked to rate their confidence level based on their experience as a new graduate entering the field.

Respondents rated their confidence level on a series of professional situations.

Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.

1 – No Confidence

2

3 – Neutral

4

5 – Very Confident

Survey Results Continued→

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results

a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	3.6
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.8
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	2.4
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	4.0
e.	Equine Colic	3.4
f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	3.2
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	3.0
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.9
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	3.0
j.	Lameness in any specie	3.3
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	3.5
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	4.1
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	2.9
n.	Expertise in business management	2.2
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	4.1
Overall Confidence Level Based on Training		3.3

Part II – Practicing Veterinarian Responses Concerning New Graduates

Observations of New Graduates

Practicing veterinarians were asked to rate the confidence level of new graduates that they have come into contact with (i.e. supervised as an intern/extern, hired, etc.).

Respondents rated the new graduate confidence level on a series of professional situations.

Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.

- 1 – No Confidence
- 2
- 3 – Neutral
- 4
- 5 – Very Confident

a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	2.6
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.3
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	2.2
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	2.3
e.	Equine Colic	2.9

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results

f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	3.0
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	2.5
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.7
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	2.5
j.	Lameness in any specie	2.8
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	2.9
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	3.0
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	3.4
n.	Expertise in business management	1.8
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	2.9

Overall Confidence Level Based on Observation 2.7

Other factors that might influence the confidence levels of graduating veterinary students (Or what changes could be made in curriculum to better prepare students for rural practice?):

Narrative Summary

The responses to this question covered three major categories. Each of these categories are explained in greater detail:

1. More hands-on/practical experiences needed 47%
2. More business management training needed 30%
3. Specific skills mentioned that should receive attention 23%

More hands-on/practical experiences needed (47%)

Respondents recognize the value of internships, externships and mentorships, and in every instance, noting that such experiences are crucial in the preparation of a successful mixed animal/rural veterinarian.

The following response exemplifies these responses:

“Most of the experiences in senior clinics at vet school did very little to prepare me for working in rural private practice. I gained most of my experience and confidence through working in private practices before and during vet school and on my externships spent off-campus. Vet students need to spend more time on externships working in clinics especially during senior year. The university referral hospitals offer a totally different environment and way of doing things that is often not applicable to working in a rural private practice.”

More business management training needed (30%)

Respondents emphasized that veterinary students should receive additional training in the economic/ business side of practice. Specific areas mentioned included: agricultural economics, practice management, business management, financial management, and food animal management. A number of respondents also mentioned that effective communications skills should also be included in training.

Survey Results Continued →

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results

Specific skills mentioned that should receive attention (23%)

Respondents offered a number of areas that they felt schools should provide training in order to increase student confidence and make sure that they are prepared for practice. Below is a sampling of responses chosen because they represent multiple similar submissions:

- Animal behavior
- More exposure to rural practices with basic ambulatory cases such as simple colics, lacerations, restraint, and sick large animals.
- Many come out of school thinking that they must run every test possible before moving forward on treatment. They need to be taught how to diagnose and treat when not every last diagnostic tool is available.
- On the small animal side they usually don't teach you to trim nails, express anal glands, clean ears—the things that are commonly done everyday.
- Students should be familiar with large animal side issues that may not be seen very often like rectal prolapse in a feedlot steer, vaginal prolapse in a cow, suturing up a corneal ulcer in a calf, or pulling wolf teeth in a colt.
- Rectal palpation either in bovine or equine species was not emphasized in the curriculum.
- Equine dentition was poorly taught in the general curriculum. I had no idea how to float a horse's mouth when I graduated. I had to learn it from my boss.
- Not knowing antibiotics and other therapies for large animals.

Finally, a number of these respondents focused on the fourth year of education—recommending that more opportunity should be provided for students to work with large animal species. This large animal focus carried over to the topic of teaching, as illustrated by this response:

“We need faculty that understand and appreciate the bovine. We have experience with some new grads that have been taught in clinics by equine clinicians, but have no proper understanding of bovine obstetrics, typical bovine emergencies, and no understanding of mastitis and other costly dairy diseases.”

Other respondents expressed concern over teaching faculty who were researchers or specialists—and who have had little or no practice experience.

Where did you go to school?

Auburn	6%	Missouri	8%
Colorado	8%	Ohio	6%
Cornell	2%	Oklahoma	2%
Georgia	2%	Oregon	6%
Illinois	6%	Purdue	8%
Iowa	15%	Tennessee	2%
Kansas	14%	Texas A&M	6%
Michigan	3%	Tufts	2%
Mississippi	2%	Washington	2%

Survey Results Continued →

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results

Part III – Current Student Responses to Own Education

What year of veterinary school are you currently in?

11% 1st Year 19% 2nd Year 34% 3rd Year 36% 4th Year

Gender 28% Male 72% Female

At present time, do you consider rural practice a viable option for employment after graduation?

87% Definitely Yes 8% Possibly 5% Definitely No

Personal Experience/How Confident Does Your Training Make You?

Current veterinary students were asked to rate their confidence in dealing with situations that they may soon encounter after graduation if employed in a rural mixed animal practice.

Respondents rated their confidence level on a series of professional situations—based on their training.

Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.

1 – No Confidence

2

3 – Neutral

4

5 – Very Confident

a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	3.3
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.5
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	3.2
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	3.5
e.	Equine Colic	3.0
f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	2.9
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	2.6
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.5
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	2.9
j.	Lameness in any specie	3.3
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	4.0
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	3.6
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	4.2
n.	Expertise in business management	2.5
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	3.5
	Overall Confidence Level Based on Training	3.2

Survey Results Continued →

ARV Veterinary Training Survey Results

Other factors that might influence your confidence level that might be taught prior to graduation:

Narrative Summary

64% of respondents felt that they gained confidence for practicing the profession outside the classroom through “hands-on experience” such as externships or through their own personal backgrounds. Their reasons were almost equally divided among the following:

- Externship experiences were the best in providing insight into rural practice.
- Student grew up in a rural community or related to a veterinarian.

The following submissions reflect the overall responses:

- “I’m hoping that clinics will give me more confidence in these areas, but as of now my confidence is determined by externships and experience that I had before veterinary school.
- “Most of the hands-on skills I have acquired during vet school, the kind that I will need starting the day I graduate, I did not learn at school. I learned them through my own initiative to go out on externships and in summer jobs. School gave me the “book smarts” and nothing else, and it cost me \$100,000. My responses above are those from school and are not reflective of my actual knowledge set. In other words, my answers to most of these would be, ‘no confidence’, if going to vet school was the only training I had.”

36 % of respondents specifically identified themselves as having come from a rural background, and noted that this life experience has been helpful in being ready for career in mixed animal practice.

29% indicated either practical skills or a specific area that they felt was lacking in their training. Among these, were responses dealing with the ability to:

- Handle nighttime emergency cases on own
- Driving standard transmission trucks
- Dealing with patients in relating death of an animal
- Small/large animal dentistry
- Large animal ophthalmology

Where do you go to school?

California/Davis	3%	Ohio	6%
Colorado	6%	Oregon	3%
Cornell	3%	Ross University	3%
Edinburgh	3%	Texas A&M	9%
Georgia	2%	Tufts	3%
Illinois	3%	VMRCVM	5%
Iowa	9%	Washington	8%
Michigan	14%	Western University	6%
Minnesota	9%	Wisconsin	3%
Mississippi	2%		

End of ARV Survey Results

Rabies Titer Information You Should Know About

As a veterinarian or veterinary student, do you know what your rabies titer is? How long has it been since your last rabies booster shot? We all took them in vet school – for those who have deficient immune systems, we took the initial series of 3 injections twice. Back in the dark ages of the 70's, it was recommended that rabies vaccination boosters be given every 2 or 3 years.

Now the recommendation is to have blood titers checked every 3 years, and as long as the titer remains 1:5 or above (by the RFFIT method), it is considered protective. If the titer drops below that number, booster vaccination is recommended.

What is “the RFFIT”?

RFFIT stands for Rapid Fluorescent Foci Inhibition Test. It is a serum neutralization (inhibition) test, which means it measures the ability of rabies specific antibodies to neutralize rabies virus and prevent the virus from infecting cells. These antibodies are called

rabies virus neutralizing antibodies (RVNA). The RFFIT does not measure the amount of rabies specific antibodies but the neutralizing activity of the antibodies present in the serum.

What does your titer tell you?

The RFFIT test determines a RVNA titer (e.g., 1:5). If you do not have RVNA present in your serum it will not neutralize the virus and the titer will be LESS THAN 1:5 (the 1:5 diluted serum will not prevent the virus from infecting the cells).

Many veterinary conferences and conventions offer rabies titer testing. Certified laboratory personnel collect blood during the conference and results are mailed to participants a few days later. This is usually at a nominal cost, since they can collect many samples within a few hours.

It behooves each of us as Veterinary Professionals to be aware of our rabies titer status.

ARV's Call to Help

Scores of Neglected Mustangs from Nebraska Ranch Treated

In late April, ARV received word from several members that there were over 200 starving Mustangs being rescued from the 3-Strikes Ranch in Bridgeport, Nebraska. Father-son veterinarian team, Doctors Jim and Tom Furman of The Animal Center in Alliance, Nebraska put out a call for help April 24, 2009 to help save the horses. Upon hearing about this emergency situation, ARV immediately put an e-mail notification.

ARV followed-up with the Doctors Furman. Over 200 Mustangs have been saved – either adopted or moved on to rescue facilities. Over 70 were found dead. Volunteers came in from all over and the local community also responded with donations of supplies and food for the workers. Students from the veterinary programs at Colorado, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska also responded. In fact, Nebraska-Lincoln Associate Dean of Professional Program in Veterinarian Medicine David Hardin brought in seven students – arriving that Friday after midnight – working straight through Saturday – and then returning to campus after going 36 straight hours.

The *Scottsbluff Star-Herald* covered the rescue operation and Dean Hardin was quoted. “They were all first and second year students from all across the state,” Hardin said, “This has been a very good experience for them.” The students have been able to take the things discussed in class out into the field. “One hates to see this sort of thing, but it enabled the students the opportunity to receive hands-on training as they performed various tasks,” Hardin said, further reinforcing the findings of the recent ARV Training Survey (see pages 5-10).

Dr. Jim Furman is currently finishing-up forensic work for local law enforcement, and plans on writing up his findings. “We thoroughly learned a lot from this entire experience. You don't give these things your attention unless they directly affect you or your busy practice. All the people and groups that responded were very positive. They came from all walks of life to treat animals in crisis.” ARV has asked Dr. Furman to send a copy of his report so we can share the information with our members.

A Rural Vet's Thoughts on Electronic ID

By Steve McDonald, DVM

“Number 620” bellowed the chute operator. “996” piped in the scale reader; that being the heifer’s weight in pounds.

It was pregnancy test day at Bill Microchip’s, my octogenarian role model. I palpated the heifer. “Four months,” I shrieked. We were barely half done and I was already losing my voice. Kim, whose job was to record ID, weight, and pregnancy status called out, “Did you say 16 or 620?” “This one or the one before?” queried the chute guy.

It often goes like this on the windy plains of North Texas. I believe OSHA would categorize this work place as noise polluted; not only the wind, but also the whine of the hydraulic chute and the roar of the branding iron heater. In other words, the general ruckus involved with working cattle. It’s probably as damaging to our ears as a rock concert, and we should wear ear protection. But then we’d just have to scream louder, and frankly I can’t see any one of my clients wearing those ear muffs worn by air-crews when launching fighters off of Navy carriers.

It would be good to reduce noise for the sake of the cattle, as a screaming human is more distressing to them than all the rest of the racket combined. As a typical rural veterinarian, I go to many operations, and I can bear witness to the fact that cattle worked quietly work faster and easier. Too much racket and too much “Eeeyaughh!” will transform the stressed-out bovine into an animal that has replaced its ‘flight zone’ with a ‘Target Acquisition’ zone. We could discuss cattle handling further, but the noise issue leads into a ‘what if’ discussion of electronic ID.

Bill Microchip, my oldest yet most progressive client, has his herd records on computer. As everyone is now aware, computers are very useful for storing and organizing information. They are without equal in discovering errors in data collection. Unfortunately, they are useless in helping you track down misread ear tags, typos and incorrect

entries. While a numbered ear tag is supposed to represent an individual cow, quite often when doing a careful inventory, the program will announce that the number is already taken; in other words there is more than one cow with ear tag number 34. It’s up to you to find all number 34s, elect a true 34 and give the duplicates new numbers.

Then there’s human error. Numbers called out can be hard to understand in the best of situations. The noise around a working chute greatly compounds the issue. Many of us have hearing loss to some extent. Polly, my bride, tells me I need a hearing aid but I pretend I can’t hear her.

Digital screens on electronic scales and laptop computers can be hard to read in sunlight, another source of error. At Bills, the error rate on a herd entry occasion can be as high as 5%. Most errors are correctible, but they are aggravating and time consuming.

In a perfect world, electronic ID would appear to be the ideal answer. The tag would be read correctly each time. Electronic scales can be programmed to record the weight simultaneously. Errors in verbal communication would be much reduced. Guys like me could put off hearing aids awhile longer. Less noise would make a trip through the pens a little easier on the livestock, especially if the propane brand heater is replaced with an electric brand or even a wood fire.

But the world is what it is. EID can be pricey, yet somehow you need to gather and store information that will be useful in making management and marketing decisions. If you have a defined breeding season, you preg check annually, and sell the opens, you are already in roughly the top 40% of the nation’s cowherds. In other words, EID would be a big aid to those committed to herd improvement at the level of individual herd members. It is not necessarily for everyone.

It would be nice, however, not to have to out-howl the wind when communicating around the chute!

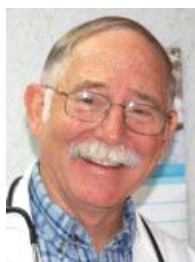
ARV Leadership 2008-09



**President & Website
Committee Chair**
Shelley Lenz, DVM
Killdeer Veterinary Clinic
Killdeer, North Dakota
(701) 764-6511
shelleylenz@ndsupernet.com



**President-Elect &
International Relations
Committee Chair**
Bob Gentry, DVM
Beloit Veterinary Clinic
Beloit, Kansas
(785) 738-8583
regentry@nckcn.com



Vice President
Paul Click, DVM
Animal Care Center
Vernon, Alabama
(205) 712-9127
docclick@gmail.com



**Treasurer, Finance &
Mentorship Committee
Chair**
Brett Andrews, DVM
Burwell Veterinary Hospital
Burwell, Nebraska
(308) 346-4145
andrews@nctc.net



Secretary
Dean Christianson DVM
Ashley Veterinary Clinic
Ashley, North Dakota
(888) 252-8387
ashvet@drtel.net



Immediate Past President
Rexanne Struve, DVM
Veterinary Associates of
Manning
Manning, Iowa
(712) 653-2125
crstruve@mmctsu.com



**Executive Director,
Membership & Mentoring
Committee Chair**
Steve McDonald, DVM
Dry Fork Veterinary Clinic
Henrietta, Texas



**Fundraising Committee
Chair**
Dave Horn, DVM
Greenwich, New York
(518) 469-9999
grassvet@gmail.com



Founding President
Larry Moczygamba, DVM
South Texas Veterinary
Clinic
Beeville, Texas
(361) 358-8351
stvc86@sbcglobal.net

ARV National Office

90 State Street, Suite 1009
Albany, New York 12207-1710
Phone (518) 694-0056 Tollfree (877) 362-1150
Fax (518) 463-8656
arv@caphill.com www.ruralvets.org