



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
Large Animal Clinical Sciences

February 22, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to offer this letter of support for the Academy of Rural Veterinarians (ARV) and, specifically, the externship programs that they have developed through their mentorship program. The veterinary industry is faced with a significant challenge in meeting the demand for veterinarians with interest and proficiency in food animal and mixed animal practice to serve in rural areas. Many papers have been published describing this problem and many proposals have been made to address the situation, but I can say without reservation that the activities of the ARV have probably been more successful in the past 1-2 years in this area than any other programs I am familiar with.

As an academician, I recognize how difficult it is to find individuals to enter rural food animal and mixed animal practices. Our student population is increasingly suburban with strong interest in pursuing careers in small animal medicine and specialty fields. Fewer of our students are from rural communities and those without rural backgrounds are reluctant to seek employment in these areas. Another challenge is exposure of students to common presentations and problems encountered in clinical food animal practice. University teaching hospital caseloads are increasingly secondary and tertiary in nature with variable exposure to primary patient care at colleges across the country. Therefore, it is imperative for veterinary students to identify externship experiences outside of the veterinary curriculum to supplement their learning and increase their exposure to those areas unique to private practices including practice management, primary veterinary care services, etc. As a private practitioner, I hosted 4-5 externs annually because I strongly believed that externships in rural mixed animal practices could be extremely valuable in supplementing the student's clinical education and recruiting students to similar practice types.

The ARV has been very active with our college's food animal student groups. The majority of students in these groups are interested in pursuing careers in mixed animal practices and they provide an ideal audience for the ARV's messages. Drs. Steve McDonald and Arn Anderson have frequently visited our students to share with them their experiences as rural mixed animal veterinarians and the students have always enjoyed their presentations and the opportunity to interact with them. I have no doubt that some students will seek employment in rural mixed animal practices in part because of their interaction with these veterinarians. Additionally, the ARV externship program is expanding to include financial compensation for all externs that are placed through their organization, removing probably the most significant impediment to students seeking externships; cost.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my support for this program. I have seen first hand the impact that the ARV and its members has had on veterinary students and I fully anticipate that as their programs continue to develop, their effect will grow as well. Please feel free to contact me regarding this organization and their participation with our students. I would be happy to offer my testimonial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Osterstock".

Jason Osterstock, DVM
Lecturer, Food Animal Medicine & Surgery

