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## From the Dean:

Dear faculty, staff, and students,

I encourage you all to register for the 2009 New York State Veterinary Conference. Visit [www.vet.cornell.edu/education/conferences/NYSVetConf/](http://www.vet.cornell.edu/education/conferences/NYSVetConf/) for details and to register online.

Sponsored by the New York State Veterinary Medical Society and the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, the conference will be held October 1-4, 2009, at our College. The Conference will offer continuing education in the areas of practice management, regulatory, avian, bovine, companion animal, equine, and small ruminant. The companion animal track has a special focus on soft tissue surgery, interventional radiology, and dentistry. Equine practitioners will investigate the newest clinical treatments and findings in equine medicine and surgery. Food animal veterinarians will gain knowledge and hands-on training that will immediately enhance a practice's success. Those interested in camelids and small ruminants will hear a different perspective on several practical issues that can be applied to private practices. For more details call (607) 253-3200.

The Office of Student and Academic Services is also hosting their Annual Career Connections Forum in conjunction with the conference. Students will have the opportunity to discuss career opportunities with various practices and organizations and conduct interviews for permanent positions, internships, or externships. Please register for Career Connections online at [www.vet.cornell.edu/events/ccf2009/](http://www.vet.cornell.edu/events/ccf2009/). For more details call (607) 253-3700.

Sincerely,

Mike Kotlikoff



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## Travis earns NIH Pioneer Award



Dr. Alexander J. Travis, associate professor of reproductive biology at the College of Veterinary Medicine, was presented with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director's Pioneer Award at the Fifth Annual NIH Director's Pioneer Award Symposium on September 24. The award supports individual scientists of exceptional creativity who propose pioneering and possibly transforming approaches to major challenges in biomedical and behavioral research, according to the NIH's web site.

Travis was recognized for his work developing an energy-producing platform that could be used to power a variety of implantable medical devices. Based on the design of the sperm tail, this technology involves attaching metabolic enzymes to a solid support. If the entire pathway can be completed on the device, it could use freely-circulating glucose as fuel. These hypothetical devices could be used to deliver drugs precisely where they are needed in a patient's body, for example, such as at a tumor.

"We're borrowing the sperm's strategy for locomotion," said Travis, who conceived the idea after noting that many proteins on the sperm's tail are tied down to solid structures within the cell, but still function. By modifying the targeting domains responsible for this binding, they manipulated the first two proteins of the pathway to stick to a single man-made surface and demonstrated that they functioned in series. "We believe it is one of the first, if not the first, example of building sequential steps of any biological pathway on a manmade surface."

*Chemistry and Biology* published this information in the issue released on September 25.



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## Pioneer and innovator in cat health recognized by College Alumni Association



Dr. Fred Scott DVM'62, PhD '68 will be recognized with Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine's Daniel Elmer Salmon Award for Distinguished Alumni Service. To be presented at the New York State Veterinary Conference, on October 3, 2009, the award recognizes and honors Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine graduates who have distinguished themselves in service to the profession, their communities, or to the College.

The award is named in honor of Cornell's first DVM graduate, who is remembered for his pioneering work in controlling contagious animal diseases in the early 20th century. D.E. Salmon was one of Dr. James Law's first students when Cornell University opened its doors in 1868. He received the Bachelor of Veterinary Science degree in 1872 and entered practice in Newark, NJ. He continued his advanced research at Cornell and in 1876 he was awarded the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. This was the first DVM degree to be awarded in the United States of America.

Born and raised on a dairy farm in western Massachusetts, Scott's original draw to the veterinary profession was cattle. As life unfolded, though, he walked through a "series of doors that opened unexpectedly" that led him to a profession devoted to cats. He established the internationally known Cornell Feline Health Center in 1974 to improve the quality of life for cats through research and education. Since its founding, the Center has served as a resource center for feline practitioners and cat owners across the world.

"Thirty-five years ago, cats were not getting much attention," said Scott, whose research career began with the identification of the optimum time to vaccinate kittens against feline panleukopenia. "We knew very little about their needs, the diseases that attack them, and how best to care for them. It is very different today. Seminars and conferences are devoted exclusively to feline, and we are in a much better position to ensure the quality of their lives thanks to state-of-the-art research, including research that has been sponsored by the Center."

Scott began his veterinary career as a private practitioner in Rutland, Vermont, where he worked for about

two years. He then conducted research on foot-and-mouth disease at Plum Island Animal Disease Center. In 1965 he returned to Cornell to study virology under Dr. James Gillespie in the Department of Microbiology. After earning his doctorate, he joined the College's faculty in 1968 as an assistant professor of virology, rising through the ranks to full professor. He retired as an emeritus professor in 1996. In 2007, with the sudden passing of the Feline Health Center's director, Dr. Jim Richards, Scott was asked to step in once again as the Center's interim director, a position he filled until June 30, 2009.

Scott was one of the early leaders in the American Association of Feline Practitioners, serving as President-Elect in 1974-76, and President in 1976-78. He is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Microbiologists, an Honor Roll Member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, a member of the National Association of Practitioners, and Honorary First Fellow of the Academy of Feline Medicine.

Scott taught the virology and viral diseases course to all veterinary students for some 20 years. He taught feline infection diseases within the veterinary curriculum for nearly 40 years, first within the Small Animal Infectious Diseases elective, which he started in 1970, and then in retirement as a guest lecturer within the Feline Infectious Disease elective.

"I've had many opportunities to watch 'change,'" said Dr. Scott. "When I came back to the Center after 10 years, it was most interesting to see how technology had impacted the day-to-day duties and improved the possibility for life-changing discovery. The vision for the center has not changed, though. It remains a strong and vibrant leader in feline health. I am blessed to have been a part of the Feline Health Center and the faculty of the College of Veterinary Medicine, to have had a great cadre of outstanding graduate students and research associates, and to have a large and very supportive family. I'm humbled that my work has been recognized with the Salmon Award. Many of my mentors and colleagues have received this award, and it is a tremendous honor to receive it as well."



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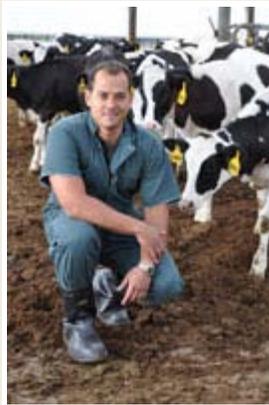
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## Challenging the status quo



When it comes to dairy cows, thin is definitely not in. Recent research results indicate that thin dairy cows are more prone to lameness than their heavier herd-mates.

Recognized as one of the leading economic challenges for the dairy industry, lameness has historically been blamed on subclinical acidosis, which is a consequence of feeding "hot diets": low effective fiber and high soluble carbohydrate diets. Dr. Rodrigo Bicalho's findings challenge this dogma, indicating that contusions inside the claw are pivotal in the pathophysiology of sole ulcers and white line diseases, the two most relevant causes of lameness in North America.

"Several factors contribute to lameness," said Bicalho, who joined the College's faculty as an assistant professor of dairy production medicine after completing a residency and earning a PhD (2008) at the College. "It's a very visual disease. You can easily see when a cow is lame, and it is obvious that her welfare is compromised. Additionally, lameness prevalence in the Northeast is particularly high relative to other North American regions."

Dairy cows have an anatomic structure in their feet termed the digital cushion, which is mostly composed of adipose tissue (fat). The digital cushion, has the crucial function of dampening the compression of the corium (a layer of tissue) exerted by the triangular bone located inside the claw capsule and ultimately preventing the incidence of foot lesions. Bicalho and his postdoctoral associate, whose salary is partially funded by gifts to the annual fund, hypothesized that thinner cows are at higher risk of lameness because their digital cushions are also thinner and less functional compared to normal herd-mates. Using ultrasound equipment, also purchased with gifts to the annual fund, the research team measured the width of the digital cushion in 600 dairy cows.

"Our findings are fascinating," said Bicalho. "We found a relationship between the digital cushion thickness and body condition score. More importantly, we also documented that cows with digital lesions (lameness) had significantly thinner cushions."

Bicalho applied these findings to further research that challenged a second long-held belief in the dairy

industry: cows should be milked three times a day. Hypothesizing that the third daily milking may contribute to lameness, Bicalho completed a four-month study with 700 thin, high-risk animals that were divided into two groups. One group was milked three times a day, while the other was milked twice daily.

"The group that was milked just twice a day was grateful for the rest and responded with greater milk production," said Bicalho. "Even better yet, they suffered 20 percent less lameness and improved their body condition scores significantly."

Bicalho's research has made a difference for animals that needed support, action, and preventive strategies. Several upstate New York producers have incorporated this new knowledge into their daily practices.

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## Faculty profile: Dr. Judy Appleton



On July 1st, Dr. Judy Appleton, the Alfred H. Caspary Professor of Immunology and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, was appointed the Interim Director of the Baker Institute and Feline Health Center, adding yet another distinguished title to an impressive list. *Making Rounds* had a chance to sit down with Appleton to discuss her perspective on this new role.

### **Given your already full plate, what drew you to accept this position as interim director?**

I've been a member of the Baker Institute since arriving at Cornell in 1982 as a post-doc under Dr. Doug

McGregor, so I have a strong investment in seeing the Institute succeed. The merger of the Baker Institute with the Feline Health Center (FHC) also presents a unique opportunity for both organizations to become more than the sum of their parts by learning from each other's strengths. It can be a difficult period between directors, and stability was needed. I'm very happy to help out.

### **What do you see as the greatest strengths of the Baker and Feline Health Center? What makes them unique?**

The great strength of the FHC lies in its public outreach programs. It is arguably the most respected source of information regarding feline health among pet owners and veterinarians. The Baker Institute, on the other hand, emphasizes animal disease research. Its research programs are particularly strong in the areas of reproduction and infectious disease. Both of these organizations have rich, remarkable histories and are unique among colleges of veterinary medicine. There is no doubt that they will continue to be strong in years to come.

### **Broadly, what do you see as the most important strategic objectives for the Baker Institute and the Feline Health Center (FHC) over the next several years?**

My hope is that the Baker and FHC will complement and learn from one another's strengths. Closer affiliation with the Baker can help the FHC grow its research profile, which will in turn expand our understanding of feline diseases. The FHC can help the Baker enhance its participation in outreach and public education activities.

**What will be your top priorities as Interim Director?**

My immediate priority will be supporting the FHC through the transition of its physical move to the Baker Institute campus. We will need to identify appropriate space and manage the logistics of their move so as to ensure a smooth transition and help the FHC preserve its unique identity. The move will likely be complete by early November.

I will also be working to recruit a permanent director. The director of the Baker has traditionally led the group by maintaining a strong research program, so we will need to find someone who is both a top researcher and a capable administrator.

**In your view, what are the most important issues facing animal health research today?**

The foremost issues of concern are population control in companion animals, the threat of emergent cross-species pathogens, and the promise of genome-mapping projects to ultimately change the ways in which diseases are prevented, diagnosed, and treated. It's exciting to think that these are the very same areas – reproduction, infectious disease, and genetics, in which the Baker Institute has the greatest strengths.

**What will a typical day or week look like for you? How will you balance your new duties with your role as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs?**

I will continue to spend mornings in the Dean's Office and afternoons at the Baker. My assistants, Jill Short and Anita Hesser, work hard to set up my days as efficiently as possible. In my role as Associate Dean, I am often dealing with department chairs and directors. It will be helpful for me to see what life is like from their perspective -- a good educational process. I have also suspended the course in immunology that I usually teach in the fall semester. I will miss working with the students. However, I will carry on my research and my work with the graduate students in my lab.

**Please describe your research interests. What led you to a career in the life sciences / academia in general and immunology specifically?**

My father was an engineer, and I've always been interested in science because of him. In high school, I was fortunate to have a very good biology teacher, but I entered college planning to become a translator at the United Nations. Unfortunately, a 300-level course in French grammar was a deal-breaker for me. As a senior I took a class in microbial pathogenesis that sealed my career interest in infectious disease.

**You were recently honored by Cornell University with a Cook Award, which recognizes contributions toward improving the climate for women at Cornell. Do you feel that gender equality has been achieved in academia? If not, what do you see as the greatest single obstacle, and what can be done about it?**

The number of women is still low among professorial faculty. The challenge, in biology at least, is not that we aren't producing enough women PhDs. We just lose them during the transition from training to independence, and it's a matter of finding a way to stem the leak in the pipeline. Among other factors, there seems to be a perception that it's simply too difficult to combine an academic career with family. I don't fully understand the reluctance. I recall seeing a statistic several years ago that here in Tompkins County, 70% of women with young children work outside the home. Why not choose a job that will stimulate and challenge you while you advance a career? We need to convey that an academic career does not have to be scary and that they can succeed.

**Please tell us a little bit about your personal background.**

I have two grown children, and I was involved in my sons' sports and music activities as they were growing up. I am a former "hockey mom." My husband (College Pathology Professor Don Schlafer) and I live on a small former farm in Mecklenburg, in the same house that we had originally moved into in 1982. Over the years, we have rebuilt it while preserving the original character. In terms of pets, we are now down to three dogs and a cat. We exercise to keep healthy, and this past summer I completed a triathlon. I also participated in "Women Swimmin'," an annual community swim across Cayuga Lake. Our team included other women from the veterinary college and was called "The Watery Tarts." We raised more than \$3,000 for Hospicare.

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## Baker Institute and Feline Health Center to merge



On July 1st, Dr. Judith Appleton, the Alfred H. Caspary Professor of Immunology and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, began her tenure as interim director of the newly merged Baker Institute for Animal Health and Feline Health Center (FHC). She succeeded Dr. Douglas Antczak, who has returned to his full-time faculty position as the Dorothy Havemeyer McConville Professor of Equine Medicine after fifteen years at the helm of the

Baker, and Dr. Fred Scott, who came out of retirement to serve as interim director for the FHC. By the end of October, the FHC will relocate its staff from current offices in Schurman Hall to the Baker Institute campus on Hungerford Hill Road.

The merger of Baker and FHC under a single director in a unified location will allow both organizations to benefit from each other's signature strengths - the robust research capacity of the Baker Institute and the strong outreach programs of the FHC. The merger of these two world-renowned institutions will further strengthen the overall capacity of the College to develop and disseminate science-based knowledge about companion animal health.

A key element to a successful merger will be the preservation of both the Baker Institute's and the Feline Health Center's unique identities as distinct organizations with rich and remarkable legacies. The FHC will maintain the programs with which it is traditionally identified, including the Camuti Consultation Service, feline health information for veterinarians and owners, and the Feline Memorial Gifts Program. Drs. Paul Maza and Christine Bellezza, feline health specialists who consult through the Camuti program, will also serve as acting co-directors of the FHC through the end of 2009 in order to ensure a smooth transition. The Baker Institute will maintain its commitment to improving animal health through basic and applied research.

The merger will also allow for improved coordination and synergy between the development functions of the Baker Institute, the FHC, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Development-related activities represent a large part of the duties performed by FHC administrative staff, who will now report directly to Lynne Williams, Director of Development and Public Affairs for the Baker Institute and FHC.

The Feline Health Center mascot and “spokeskitty,” Elizabeth, will not join the rest of the FHC team at the Baker Institute. With help from the FHC’s team of feline health specialists, Elizabeth responds to readers’ questions in the Ask Elizabeth column that appears in Cat Watch, a newsletter that provides information for cat owners. As a kitten, Elizabeth was rescued from the dangers of living life as a feral cat by the mother of former FHC Director Dr. Jim Richards, and later resided at FHC offices. The Baker Institute campus, where investigators work with highly dangerous infectious agents, is no place for a kitty to live. However, this being the 21st century, and thanks to Cornell’s flexible workplace policies, Elizabeth will “telecommute” from the country house that she now shares with Lynne Williams.

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## Opportunities to support the College

There have been several recent inquiries by staff wishing to make gifts to the College of Veterinary Medicine or specific departments and programs through payroll deduction. Please direct staff and faculty who wish to support the College or any of its units to contact the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development at 3-3745 or [vetfriends@cornell.edu](mailto:vetfriends@cornell.edu).

Unfortunately, it is not possible for Cornell staff and faculty to designate gifts made through payroll deduction to a particular college or unit, but we will be happy to discuss other options including secure online giving via the following web page: <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/gifts/>, which allows for a recurring charge to a credit card.

The only current designation for payroll deduction gifts is the Cornell Employee CARE Fund. More information on this fund can be found at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/caringCommunity/>.

Thank you,  
Kevin Mahaney  
Assistant Dean for Alumni Affairs, Development and Communications



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## A note about the H1N1 flu

As you are aware, the University has been taking steps to help protect the health of the campus community during this flu season as well as provide support services to students who have become ill. Among those steps, the Cornell "Flu and You" web site ([www.cornell.edu/flu](http://www.cornell.edu/flu)) was developed to share information with the campus and public. The University will keep this information current so I encourage you to visit the site directly for the most timely updates. Gannett Health Services has increased hours and services to students, free flu kits have been sent to students in need, and hand sanitizers have been placed in high traffic areas. Faculty, staff and students are asked to help by understanding H1N1 symptoms and available campus resources, washing hands often or using hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available, and staying home if experiencing flu-like symptoms.

Whether it is the seasonal flu or H1N1, it is reasonable to expect some impact on College operations due to faculty and staff illness or absences. The Division of Human Resources offers a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet addressing questions regarding time off and pay, work schedules and alternative work sites, employee services, health insurance, event planning and general information about H1N1. Please take a moment to read the FAQ on this link: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/fluFAQ.pdf>. Supervisors are especially encouraged to view the link to review procedures related to a variety of relevant supervisory issues.

As a reminder, the seasonal flu vaccine clinic will be at the CVM Atrium on Wednesday, October 7th from 9am - 4pm (no appointment necessary, and free of charge with a Cornell ID). The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the 2009 H1N1 flu. Updates on the H1N1 vaccine will be posted on the web site as information is made available.

Though most of the flu cases that have been seen by Gannett have been mild to moderate, we do know that for those with an underlying medical condition, the flu can present a very serious risk. Please help us in minimizing the spread by taking care of yourself and encouraging those around you to do the same. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the CVM Office of Human Resources at 253.4111. Thank you all.

Mary Beth Jordan  
Human Resources Director

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William Lang, father  
Celeste Grace Boatwright '90  
Erin Lashnits '12  
Jamie Morrissey, faculty (co-captain)

## College bikers cycle in AIDS ride

A team of 25 riders -- including faculty, residents, alumni, family, and students from all classes -- rode 85-100 miles in the 2009 AIDS Ride for Life ([www.stapinc.org](http://www.stapinc.org)). The team members, who are listed below, collectively raised more than \$11,000 and won the prize for the second most funds raised.



### MEMBERS:

Catherine Benson, pathology resident  
Bethany Devilbiss '10  
Susie Fubini, faculty (co-captain)  
Geff Godbey '13  
John Hermanson, faculty  
Anna Gelzer, faculty  
Katja Lang '11

Drew Noden, faculty  
Kyla Ortved, large animal surgery resident  
Dana Pierce '13  
Eileen Penner '11  
Heidi Reesink, LA surgery resident  
David Russell, faculty  
Amanda Spector '13  
Sean Stockwell '11  
Erik Zager '13  
Michael Greenberg '09  
Rebecca Harman, staff at the Baker Institute  
Lisa Sepesy, former SA medicine resident and clinical instructor  
Andrew Pisicano '10  
Shari Kearl, staff



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## Elf backpack program follow-up

Thank you to all who purchased and filled a backpack or gave money for us to buy and fill a backpack! The final count here at the Vet College was 52 backpacks! We met our goal for South Hill Elementary School and were able to pass along backpacks to other schools in the Ithaca area that are under the Elf Program umbrella. The Elf Program across campus gathered 257 backpacks to distribute to 12 area schools.

We received a letter from South Hill Elementary School thanking us for the donations and stating, "Many of the families expressed their sincere thanks as the backpacks relieved their worries of providing their children with necessary school supplies."

Thank you as always for being so generous to our local needy children. Many will start school this year with not only complete supplies, but also a wonderful new backpack to carry their school books and supplies.

For more information regarding the Elf Program at Cornell visit:  
<http://www.elves.cornell.edu/index.html>

Jennifer

Elena

Director of Admissions

Administrative Assistant