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From the Dean



Dear faculty, staff, and students,

This month, I would like to give you a brief update on the budget and invite everyone to participate and support our students in two upcoming events.

As we have discussed previously, we are not expecting an additional in-year budget cut from SUNY. We are making preparations for the next fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2010, and are operating on several assumptions: The combined effect of a decrease in our endowment payout, SUNY reductions for the coming year, and ongoing Cornell budget reductions that are necessary to help close the university-wide budget gap, coming after extensive cost reduction efforts in the past 2 years, will likely make next year the most challenging from a budget perspective. As I have said many times, I am extraordinarily proud of the way that the College has responded to the financial stresses of the past 2 years, and I am confident that we will meet next year's budget with the same energy and cooperative approach. While we do not yet know the full magnitude of reductions for next year, I anticipate an additional \$2-3M reduction from last year's already reduced base. We will look at opportunities to participate in cost reduction strategies that evolve from Reimagining Cornell Initiatives; information regarding the University's budget and strategic plan can be found at www.cornell.edu/reimagining. I expect that we will receive more detailed information by the end of March and I look forward to sharing information with you as our budget is finalized.

In the meantime, our students are working very hard on two annual events: the 44th annual Open House, scheduled for April 10, and the 2nd Pedal for Pets bike-a-thon, scheduled for April 24. In both cases, our students need our support. The co-chairs for 2010 Open House are Priya DeSoyza, Kristi Hulme. This year's team has been encouraged to request ideas and support from faculty regarding new or updated displays. So please share any thoughts or ideas for enhancing booths with

the students. In addition, it would be most helpful if you would volunteer to offer presentations on topics of interest to the public the day of the event. More information is [online](#).

This year's Pedal for Pets will benefit the patient assistance fund at CUHA. In these challenging economic times, an increasing number of pet owners must balance the cost of life-saving procedures with the costs

of running a household and raising a family. The student/faculty team organizing the event this year will be looking for volunteers the day of the event in a variety of areas. Before then, though, please consider riding in the event (there are 3 loops this year as well as a junior event for younger riders), sponsoring a rider, and helping us recruit riders. More information can be found at www.vet.cornell.edu/events/pedal.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and questions.

Sincerely,

Michael I. Kotlikoff, VMD, PhD
Austin O. Hoey Dean of Veterinary Medicine

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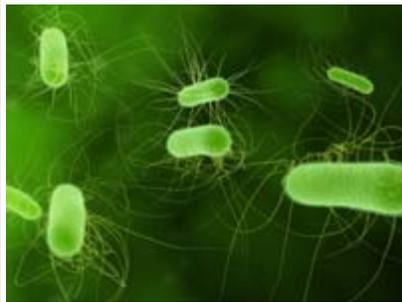


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Grasping bacterial "friending" paves the way for scientists to disrupt biofilm formation and combat enteric disease



Finding a biological mechanism much like an online social network, scientists have identified the bacterial protein VpsT as the master regulator in *Vibrio*, the cause of cholera and other enteric diseases. This discovery, now published in the journal *Science*, provides a major tool to combat enteric disease.

For decades, it has been observed that bacteria engage in biofilm formation in nature and the lab.

Like the online social network Facebook, free-swimming bacteria ditch the solitary lifestyle to form a biofilm community, but only after they've signaled their intention to do so to others. The protein VpsT receives the invitation and accepts it by starting a cellular program contributing to the process.

"We have the parts list now," said Holger Sondermann, professor at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "The next step will be to develop a clear understanding of the triggers and processes that regulate biofilm formation. With this data, we can find opportunities to disrupt the process and find entry points for therapeutic interventions."

Thus, bacteria hunker down with millions of other bacteria to form a biofilm community powerful enough to fog your contacts, rot your teeth, corrode metal and cause a host of human and animal diseases. Biofilms have been implicated in numerous chronic infections including cystic fibrosis, otitis media and prostatitis. Through interactions within a biofilm, the resident population of bacteria is likely to benefit from increased metabolic efficiency, substrate accessibility, enhanced resistance to environmental stress and antibiotics and an increased ability to cause infection and disease, says Sondermann.

This new research, "Vibrio cholerae VpsT Regulates Matrix Production and Motility by Directly Sensing Cyclic di-GMP," was published in the latest journal *Science*, Feb. 12, 2010. In addition to Sondermann, it was also authored by Petya Krasteva, first author, a graduate student in Biochemistry, Molecular & Cell Biology, and by

Marcos V. A. S. Navarro, a postdoctoral fellow in the Sondermann group. The work is a close collaboration with Dr. Fitnat H. Yildiz's laboratory from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and her graduate students; Jiunn C. N. Fong; Nicholas J. Shikuma; Sinem Beyhan.

The project was funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Pew Foundation.

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Model or Meal



Why in the world are the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding a veterinary epidemiologist to study *Clostridium difficile* (CDI), the leading cause of infectious diarrhea in human hospitals? Yrjo Grohn, Professor of Epidemiology and Chair of the Department of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences, has traditionally conducted research on common food-borne pathogens, such as salmonella, lysteria, and e-coli, in farm animal populations. Like

many food supply epidemiologists, Grohn used mathematical modeling to understand the spread of these infectious agents as a means of optimizing food production systems. His work helped producers operate efficiently while keeping the risk of economic loss and zoonotic transmission (animal to human) within acceptable limits. Now, Grohn and his colleagues have found an important new application for their empirical animal models – the study of infectious disease in human populations.

While the use of animal models to advance our understanding of human diseases is well established, this type research has traditionally been conducted at the level of the individual organism. In a literature review to be published in the February issue of the journal *Nature*, Grohn argues that similar work can be done at the population level, particularly since humans and farm animals share many pathogens and transmission mechanisms. "We propose that farm animal populations, coupled with mathematical models, are well-suited model systems to study infectious disease population dynamics...that are relevant to control of human infectious diseases," he writes. According to Grohn and his co-authors, the same factors that contribute to outbreaks in livestock, such as crowding, close contact, poor hygiene, and contaminated objects, are also prevalent in human settings such as hospitals, the military, and schools.

For the NIH-supported CDI study, Grohn is using the modeling expertise that he has gained working with livestock to quantify how infection is introduced and how it is passed around the hospital environment. This work will also help determine risk factors for susceptibility and design control measures. "As veterinarians, we need to keep our eyes open," said Grohn. "When it comes to population-based studies, which are relevant in public health and food safety, we are well trained because we're used to looking at the world at a population level."

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Cornell professor named honorary Francqui Chair



Dr. Ynte Schukken has been named an honorary Francqui Chair at the University of Ghent in Belgium and will be presented with the university medal at a formal ceremony on February 17, 2010. Chosen from an international pool of candidates, Schukken was nominated for the award by faculty at the University of Ghent's College of Veterinary Medicine and appointed by the university's president. He will present his inaugural lecture, Milk, math and

molecules: epidemiology of endemic infectious disease in cattle, in the historical auditorium of the University of Ghent in a ceremony for members of the university community and invited guests.

To fulfil his role as chair, Schukken will spend a period of time in Belgium, during which he will offer 10 hours of presentations, begin a research collaboration, and help to organize various events, including a symposium and workshop.

"I expect that the work I begin in Belgium will lead to long-standing partnerships," said Schukken. "I am looking forward to developing opportunities to further our understanding of issues such as mastitis that are critically important to the welfare of cows and the dairy industry."

While serving as chair, Schukken will work with doctoral students and professional staff to statistically analyze antimicrobial resistance data as it relates to an emerging group of pathogens known as coagulase negative staphylococci. The team will compare the severity, pathogenicity, and the effectiveness of treating these emerging mastitis pathogens.

"When Ghent University asked the staff of our Faculty of Veterinary Medicine for candidacies for this chair, I immediately thought of Dr. Schukken," said Dr. Sarne De Vliegheer. "He is one of the most outstanding veterinary epidemiologists in the world and an excellent speaker. In my field of research, udder health and milk quality, he is one of the leading scientists and very much respected. His ability to combine his profound knowledge of the disease mastitis (and other diseases) and

the statistical methods to study it, having an outstanding mathematical and epidemiological background, is admirable. I would expect someone of his calibre, someone who publishes many excellent papers each year, to never to leave his office, but he is still very active at farms and in his lab and manages the Quality Milk Production Services. To sum up in a few words, he is an outstanding example of someone who

is combining research, farm services, training, teaching at the highest levels. Still, he is very modest and relaxed, always friendly and willing to help anyone, even the youngest PhD student who is trying to learn from his wisdom.”

Schukken is a professor of epidemiology and herd health at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine and serves as the director of the Quality Milk Production Services, part of the College's Animal Health Diagnostic Center. He earned his DVM and PhD at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. His research aims to improve the profession's understanding of population dynamics of infectious diseases in animal populations; udder health in well managed dairy herds; and the application of epidemiological, statistical and mathematical methods to animal disease research.

“My approach to research has been a comprehensive application of epidemiological, mathematical and patho-biological methods,” said Schukken, who has been a principal investigator or co-principal investigator on more than 35 competitive grants and has published extensively in the area of endemic disease in dairy cows. “This integrated approach emphasizing strong collaborations with scientists in related but different disciplines has provided me with the most productive solutions to research questions. I enjoy working in the field and with animals. Often field data provide crucial information and hypotheses that lead to the formulation of research questions. However, field data are often crude with many potential biases. More precise measurements and study designs in controlled environments may provide further insight into the disease dynamics.”

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Cornell experts: Virus flows into Lake Superior



Recently completed testing has identified the presence of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHSV) in fish that were taken from Lake Superior. The findings were made by collaborating laboratories at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine and the USGS Western Fisheries Research Center, Seattle, Washington. The Cornell investigators involved in survey design, collections and evaluation of the samples using a

highly sensitive technique, referred to as qRT-PCR, are graduate student Emily Cornwell and collaborating graduate student Geof Eckerlin, Drs. Mark Bain, Paul R. Bowser and James W. Casey. Investigators at USGS Western Fisheries Research Center, Seattle, Washington, who confirmed the presence of the virus by testing of the same samples with a different method and for genetic typing of the virus are Drs. Gael Kurath and James R Winton.

Cornell investigators tested 874 fish collected from seven sites in Lake Superior. The 2009 work was funded with grants from the Cornell Agriculture Experiment Station (USDA Hatch funds) and USDA APHIS. Fish from four of seven sites; Paradise, MI; Skanee, MI; St. Louis, Bay, WI and Superior Bay, WI were found positive. To confirm the identification of VHSV by Cornell researchers who detected the presence of the viral N gene, tissue samples from the Paradise, MI site in Lake Superior were sent to the USGS Western Fisheries Research Center, in Seattle, WA, where an attempt to independently detect a different VHSV gene, the viral G gene, was successful. Tissues have also been sent to the to the USDA APHIS Veterinary Service's National Veterinary Service Laboratories, in Ames, IA. The 2009 work was an extension of 2007 and 2008 efforts with support from the Great Lakes Protection Fund in which Cornell investigators developed a surveillance protocol to detect VHSV in water and fish in Lake Ontario, Erie and Huron.

"The USDA APHIS Veterinary Service's National Veterinary Service Laboratories continues to test samples collected by Cornell University, but has not yet confirmed the findings," said Madelaine Fletcher, USDA/APHIS Public Affairs Specialist. "While

USDA APHIS considers these findings evidence that VHS virus has been found in samples taken from wild fish populations in Lake Superior, the gold standard of virus isolation in cell culture has not been met, and thus we have not confirmed the findings. These findings will not lead to regulatory actions by USDA APHIS since the States bordering Lake Superior are already under the provisions of the VHS Federal Order, and

these findings were from fish species already known to be susceptible to VHS. USDA APHIS recommends that susceptible wild fish populations from Lake Superior be considered in the same risk category for harboring VHS virus as those fish from the other Great Lakes.”

VHSV is a significant emerging fish pathogen in the Great Lakes and neighboring waterways that, according to Dr. Paul Bowser, Professor of Aquatic Animal Medicine at Cornell, has reached epidemic proportions. VHSV causes hemorrhage and anemia (as well as other varied disease signs) in fish, has been identified in 28 freshwater fish species, and poses a potential threat to New York's sport-fishing industry, which has been estimated by the US Census Bureau to contribute \$1.4 billion annually to the economy of New York State.

“People come from all over the eastern United States to fish the Great Lakes,” said Bowser, noting that the virus has also been found in a few inland waters, including lakes, streams, and a family-owned earthen pond. “The economy of many of these areas ebbs and flows based on the season and the perceived value of outdoor recreational opportunities. The value of these opportunities is dependent on how successful we are at managing the health of wild fish. On a world-wide basis, VHSV is considered one of the most serious pathogens of fish, because it kills so many fish, is not treatable, and infects a broad range of fish species.”

The presence of VHSV in the Great Lakes basin was first reported in fish from Lake St. Clair, MI, and Lake Ontario, Canada, in 2005. Through the following years up to 2008, the virus had been documented in all of the Great Lakes with the exception of Lake Superior. In response to the identified VHSV invasion, USDA issued a federal order (USDA 2008) preventing transport of 28 species of susceptible fish within the Great Lakes watershed to limit the spread of this viral pathogen. Lake Superior was included in the federal order, even though no fish infected with the virus had been found and the Lake was thought to be disease-free. The possibility of spread of VHSV to Lake Superior was a valid concern due to the movement of both commercial ships and recreational boats from the lower Great Lakes – areas known to be VHSV positive.

So while no significant fish mortality events due to VHSV were observed in 2008 and 2009, the virus is still present in Great Lakes fish. “It is important to note that fish harboring VHSV sequences, showed no clinical signs of disease; essentially the infection was proceeding but no mortalities were observed,” said Bowser. “This is important because it suggests that these infected fish may serve as a reservoir for the virus in the Great Lakes ecosystem. While we don't fully understand the reasons for the lack of recent mortality events, the potential presence or absence of concurrent stressors on the fish may be playing a role. Further, VHSV was isolated by cell culture in a few fish collected in 2008 where levels of VHSV sequences were high, attesting to the accuracy and sensitivity of current testing used at Cornell and the USGS Western Fisheries Research Center. In our 2009 work, VHSV sequences for two viral genes have been independently detected by two collaborating laboratories – Cornell and USGS. This strongly suggests that this virus has invaded Lake Superior.”



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Research hopes to improve animal welfare



A research team at Cornell University is investigating opportunities to reduce animal use in drug development studies, refine study design and techniques used, and replace current modalities with newer methods.

"With increasing public awareness of parasites in pets, and the corresponding rise in demand for parasiticides, many new products have entered the market in recent years that can control parasites," said Dr. Alice Lee, a postdoctoral associate at the College of Veterinary Medicine who collaborates with Dr. Dwight Bowman, professor of parasitology.

The Food and Drug Administration mandates that drugs used to control parasites (specifically anthelmintic medications) be tested for their power to produce the desired effect on the species for which they are intended. Further, these regulatory agencies require that animals infected with the parasites of interest during these tests be euthanized, followed by a postmortem count of worms within the alimentary tract.

"These requirements result in the death of hundreds of animals for the approval of even a single combination product," said Lee. "Through the use of minimally invasive diagnostic imaging methods, we aim to develop an alternative that will permit a non-terminal counting approach. The ultimate goal would be to reduce the number of animals sacrificed during clinical trials for anthelmintic medications, an important step toward improving animal welfare in research. This is all about animal welfare."

Currently, Lee has produced a series of video clips of gastrointestinal endoscopies that show worms *in situ*. The videos clearly show parasites – well enough to count – as well as parasitic damage in portions of the small bowel. Lee and her team are currently investigating the use of wireless camera capsules, which will allow them to view the entire length of the small bowel without anesthesia.

"We believe that we are on the way to finding an alternative method to post-mortem counting," said Lee.



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Ledbetter awarded Udall Assistant Professorship



Dr. Eric Ledbetter, an ophthalmologist in the Department of Clinical Sciences, has been named the Robert Hovey Udall Assistant Professor. The professorship was created by a gift from Mrs. Mary Udall to honor an outstanding assistant professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine. After obtaining three degrees from Cornell University, including a DVM in 1941, Dr. Robert Udall, a second-generation Cornellian, spent the rest of his career as a professor of pathology at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Ledbetter was selected from a competitive pool of candidates on the strength of his research program, as well as for his exemplary clinical and teaching contributions. "Dr. Ledbetter has distinguished himself as a clinical ophthalmologist and instructor," said Dr. Thomas Kern, Associate Professor and Section Chief of Ophthalmology. "He has made very significant discoveries in the pathogenic ocular microbiology of animal eye diseases and in so doing has put veterinary ophthalmology at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine on the world map of his specialty."

"Not only am I very honored to have been named to the Udall Professorship, but it is also a motivation to keep innovating and moving forward with my research," said Ledbetter, who will retain the title as long as he is an assistant professor.

After graduating at the top of his veterinary class at the University of Missouri, Ledbetter completed an ophthalmology residency at Cornell. He was drawn to ophthalmology by the complexity of the ocular system, the opportunity to treat a wide range of species and perform surgical procedures, and by the variety of infectious diseases that affect the eye.

Since his appointment as assistant professor in 2006, Ledbetter's research has focused on discovering, identifying, and characterizing ocular infectious diseases. Major advances to date have involved linking canine herpesvirus to corneal ulcerations in dogs and determining the nature of amoeba-based ocular infections in a variety of species. In addition, Ledbetter is a pioneer of in-vivo corneal confocal microscopy – a real-time, non-invasive imaging technique that he compares to "a virtual

biopsy of the eye.”

Ledbetter values the variety of professional activity that his position affords. “I maintain an active research program, see patients in clinics, and train both students and residents,” he said. “And the availability of experts in a variety of fields here at Cornell opens up a wealth of collaborative opportunities for clinical and research activity.”

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Microbiology & Immunology to welcome new chair



Avery August, Professor of Immunology in the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences at Penn State University, will lead the Department of Microbiology & Immunology (M&I), effective July 1. Dr. August will succeed David Russell, Professor of Molecular Microbiology, who has been at the helm of M&I since 2000. Making Rounds recently had a chance to speak with Dr. August about the upcoming transition, his background, and his vision for the department.

MR: What motivated your decision to come to Cornell?

August: I am very excited by the opportunity to work with this outstanding group of faculty members. David Russell has

done a superb job assembling a great group of colleagues within M&I, and there are many outstanding complementary resources across Cornell. I look forward to increasing the department's level of interdisciplinary collaboration with other parts of the College of Veterinary Medicine and the university, particularly with Weill Medical College, but also with Ithaca-based departments such as plant pathology, nutritional science, and biomedical engineering.

MR: What will be your immediate priorities for the department? Longer-term aspirations?

August: One immediate objective will be to fill the open positions in the department. I will work hard to convince the best and brightest young people in the field that Cornell is a place where they can truly build their careers. My long-term vision is one of broader interactions with other Cornell units. It is important for us to build greater cohesiveness between Ithaca and Weill, particularly among graduate students and faculty on the two campuses. I look forward to expanding joint seminars and videoconferencing activity.

MR: Tell us about your own research interests.

August: My original work was studying how T-cells are activated by pathogens – what are the signal transduction pathways that these cells use to sense the presence of viruses and bacteria, and can we manipulate these pathways to alter the immune response associated with diseases such as allergic asthma or accelerate it in response to vaccinations? We are now looking at how we might manipulate these pathways to develop better “memory” in the immune system. For example, can we prevent the symptoms associated with the early immune response to vaccines while

still imprinting the memory of the vaccine on the immune system? We also have a strong interest in signal transduction pathways at the molecular level and how these pathways affect how immune cells actually develop in prenatal and young individuals. While our work is considered basic in nature, I have collaborated with pharmaceutical companies that are interested in using our results to develop practical therapeutic applications.

MR: What originally drew you to a scientific career?

August: As an undergraduate with an interest in biology, I thought at first that I might eventually attend medical school. But I realized that I was actually more interested in investigating the underlying processes and mechanisms of disease than in clinical work. A professor of organic chemistry steered me toward laboratory research. It is a hard, long process, but the successes keep you going. After I took an undergraduate immunology course, I was hooked. I found it fascinating that our immune system is already programmed to “respond” to any pathogen with which it will encounter. I decided to attend graduate school in immunology.

MR: What can you tell us about your life outside the lab?

August: I moved to Los Angeles from Belize with my family as a teenager. My wife is an elementary school guidance counselor, and we have three daughters – the youngest of whom is interested in becoming a veterinarian. We also have a dog. I enjoy foreign films and pickup soccer, and we look forward to enjoying the many restaurants and cultural attractions that Ithaca has to offer.



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McEntee assumes leadership of DCS

On February 1, Dr. Margaret "Margy" McEntee, Professor of Oncology, began her tenure as interim chairperson for the Department of Clinical Sciences (DCS). McEntee succeeds Dr. Rodney Page, who has led the department as Alexander de Lahunta Chair of Clinical Sciences since 2005. Page is returning to his native Colorado to serve as director of the Animal Cancer Center at Colorado State University. Making Rounds recently sat down with Dr. McEntee and [Dean Michael Kotlikoff](#) to discuss the transition.

MR: What are your immediate priorities as you enter your new role?

McEntee: Serving as Chair of DCS requires a great deal of time, energy, and passion, and Rod Page has done an admirable job. I see my role as helping to support DCS during its transition to a new chairperson. I'm still immersed in learning the day-to-day administrative processes of managing this large, diverse department. (Associate Dean for Academic Affairs) Judy Appleton and (Director of Human Resources) Mary Beth Jordan do a phenomenal job of providing a support structure that keeps us on track for things like reappointment timelines and assisting department faculty members with career development.

MR: What is the state of the department currently?

McEntee: A period of rapid growth and the introduction of new specialty services at the Cornell University Hospital for Animals (CUHA) were followed by serious budget pressures related to the economic downturn. We now face the challenge of keeping our faculty productively engaged despite the difficult financial climate and recent reductions in support personnel and infrastructure. The upside of the current situation is that it encourages us to operate efficiently and to get creative in seeking external grant and donor support.

MR: Speaking of external funding, what can be done to further encourage clinical research?

McEntee: There has recently been a lot of great movement toward supporting clinical research at the College. Internal grant awards have recently been consolidated and strengthened in order to help jump start research programs and secure external funding. (New CUHA Hospital Director) Bill Horne is highly energized and committed to aligning the DCS with the CUHA in order to optimize conditions for research to flourish. I look forward to working closely with Dr. Horne, as Dr. Page has been doing. Clinical research is so critical for improving treatments and outcomes for our patients, and for ensuring the success of our faculty. I look forward to mentoring our junior and mid-career faculty members and am thinking a lot

about how to best facilitate that process.

MR: Tell us about the search process for the permanent DCS chairperson.

McEntee: Dr. Julia Flaminio is leading a national search, and the committee has already met several times. I hope that we are able to recruit the very best candidate possible, and I am in favor of an outside candidate to bring in a fresh approach that will invigorate, revitalize, and overall move us forward.

MR: How do you plan to balance your new administrative responsibilities with your clinical and research activities?

McEntee: I hope that people find me approachable. My door will always be open, and I will likewise need everyone's help in steering the department until we can identify a permanent chair. [Editor's note: Dr. McEntee receives a message on her pager calling her into the clinics to see a patient.] And when I have a patient under anesthesia waiting for me ... I'll have to get up and run!



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CUHA back in the black and looking forward



Under the leadership of Hospital Director Bill Horne, the Cornell University Hospital for Animals (CUHA) is emerging from this past year's economic downturn. After lagging behind prior year's revenues by 15% through the summer and early fall months, the CUHA has regained its financial footing and is currently at 97% of last year's revenue. Dr. Horne is optimistic that revenue that will continue to

improve through the rest of the fiscal year, which extends through June.

Including both service revenues and state support, the CUHA generated a net gain of over \$435K for the first six months of fiscal year (FY) 2010, compared to a loss of \$97K for the corresponding six months in the prior year. This was largely due to the vigilant cost management efforts of all members of the hospital staff. These efforts included salary reductions, as well as improved strategies for inventory control, purchasing, and accounts receivable organized by Finance Director Ofer Leshed. CUHA has succeeded in reducing accounts receivables (unpaid funds owed to the CUHA by its clients) by over \$400K. Altogether, expenses for the first six months of FY 2010 were down over \$870K compared to the prior year.

The \$435K net gain generated by the CUHA so far this year will be used to reduce some of previous years' deficits, pay for early retirement packages, and replace outdated equipment around the hospital. CUHA plans to eliminate its aggregated \$1.8M budget deficit completely by FY 2015. Given continued strong financial performance, the CUHA will begin to restore staff hours that have been temporarily reduced since last October.

Having weathered the financial storm, the CUHA is introducing some important new initiatives to best position itself for the future. Foremost among these is a renewed emphasis in all areas of the hospital on outstanding customer service for animal owners and referring veterinarians. CUHA leadership is working with the college's Office of Human Resources and Cornell Organizational Development to design and implement client service training programs. A new network of patient coordinators

that includes lead technicians and front office is being created in order to promote improved efficiency and communication. Real-time feedback will be solicited through a new survey that will soon be administered to clients and referring veterinarians upon discharge. The CUHA has also produced a series of radio advertisements and other promotional materials to market its world-class clinical services to the

community.

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Exciting year ahead for AHDC



Despite its critical role in safeguarding public health and food safety, the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Center (AHDC) was not immune to the effects of last year's general economic meltdown. The State of New York slashed support for its core programs by 28%, and service revenues, which account for 60% of the AHDC's total budget, also saw a sharp decline. As a result, programs were cut, employee hours were reduced, and vacant positions left unfilled.

But as AHDC Executive Director Bruce Akey surveys the year ahead, he sees many reasons for optimism.

In July of this year, construction will be complete on the building that is to be AHDC's new home – a 125K square foot, \$80M state-of-the-art facility funded jointly by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and Cornell. The building will replace existing facilities, which were constructed in 1978, and will accommodate the work of over 200 people currently dispersed over 12 separate locations. "It's going to be fantastic," said Akey. "Visitors who have toured the facility have been universally impressed." The new building will offer laboratories at bio-safety levels 2 and 3, which will enhance the ability of researchers University-wide to conduct infectious disease research on dangerous pathogens. According to Akey, the facility will also further expand Research & Development capabilities to develop new diagnostic tests and methods. This year alone, the AHDC introduced significant new tests for pregnancy detection in horses, and for the diagnosis of Lyme Disease in both equines and companion animals. The new building will also provide AHDC employees with enhanced amenities such as break rooms and meeting rooms.

The state budget outlook is also brightening following a year of great fiscal challenge. While next year's proposed budget developed by the office of New York Governor David Paterson will significantly reduce funding in many other areas, including higher education, it actually proposed to increase the core budget for the AHDC. According to Akey, the budget would essentially restore the funding that was cut last year, while also offsetting some operating costs for the new AHDC building. "This would really take us back to the flat funding level of the past 10 years, but in this economic climate, that's a win," he said. The governor's proposed budget will

need to be approved by the state legislature.

While service revenues are still down 10-15% over the prior year, Akey also expects improvement in this key area. The AHDC has launched a comprehensive marketing campaign and has signed up as an exhibitor in six national or regional veterinary conferences. "We are highlighting the quality and convenience of our services," said Akey, "and we're already seeing a substantial return on our efforts." For example, the average number of new clients that the AHDC sees per month has increased from 40 to 80. According to Akey, without these proactive marketing efforts, service revenues might well have dropped off further and taken longer to rebound.

As the budget situation improves, Akey hopes to reverse many of the personnel actions that were necessitated by last year's cuts. While reductions in effort that were taken by staff members to reduce costs are already being restored, Akey will continue to hold open some vacancies as a short-term strategy. If the proposed state budget increases materialize and service revenues continue to climb, Akey expects to begin filling vacant positions within three to six months.



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Library survey: your response is appreciated



Please fill out this [online survey](#) by Friday, March 5, 2010, to let us know which Veterinary Library services and collections are important to you.

A College-based Library Committee has been established to evaluate the Library's contributions to the mission of the College and to create a well-thought-out plan to ensure that core contributions and services continue even as we address budget reductions.

Your answers, along with those from other members of the community, will guide the Library Committee in making their recommendations.

Thank you for participating in this important survey!

The Library Committee



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Help a local animal shelter with your vote



Your vote can help a local animal shelter win \$500. Each year, the Helen Woodward Animal Center holds an essay contest for the participating Iams Home 4 the Holidays organizations. The Center awards \$500 to the shelter or rescue group with the winning adoption story. This year, the Center received information about 1,363,638 pets that were adopted during the 11th annual Iams Home 4

the Holidays pet adoption drive and is requesting the public's help to choose the most heart-warming pet adoption story of the year. Votes can be cast by visiting www.animalcenter.org/events/h4th/essay_contest.aspx. Voting ends March 1, at 12 noon PST.

Misha, who was adopted from a local shelter, is among the finalists: Misha is a Tortie-point Siamese mix. In May 2009, the trailer park in Etna, NY, that Misha's then-owners lived in was condemned due to a faulty septic system and all residents were permanently evacuated. She and two of her kittens were abandoned, left in the remnants of these condemned trailers to fend for themselves. This young mother and her kittens stayed there, believing that their family would come back for them. Day after day, month after month, they waited, but no one ever came back to claim them. That is until the Lucky Day Cat Rescue team stepped in. Read the rest of Misha's story at

www.animalcenter.org/events/h4th/2010_essays/misha.aspx and cast your vote in the Iams Home 4 the Holidays contest.

More than 3,900 animal shelters and pet rescue organizations in 17 countries joined paws to save the lives of orphaned pets during this 11th annual IH4TH campaign October 1, 2009, through January 4, 2010. Each group was invited to submit their best pet adoption success stories.

"There are so many great stories about pets that were saved during the holiday season. Now they're starting the New Year with a new, 'leash' on life," says Mike Arms, President of Helen Woodward Animal Center in Rancho Santa Fe, CA and

creator of the international, "Iams Home 4 the Holidays" (IH4TH) pet adoption drive. "We've narrowed this down to the top five. Between now and February 28 we're asking people to vote on their favorite story. The animal shelter or rescue group that submitted the winning entry will receive a \$500 donation from Helen Woodward Animal Center."

Arms reminds animal lovers, "One vote per person. This isn't about which organization can convince the most people to vote. It's about which story touches your heart."

To read the top five stories and cast your vote log on to www.animalcenter.org and click on "Global."

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A job well done

Editor's note: The following comments were shared by Dean Michael Kotlikoff.

As many of you know, Rodney Page, Alexander de Lahunta Chair of Clinical Sciences, has accepted the position of Director of the Animal Cancer Center at Colorado State University. This choice reflects his commitment to comparative oncology and the timing of this opportunity and personal issues have coincided to convince him that this was the right decision at this time.

Rod has made enormous contributions to Cornell since he arrived in 1999. As the founding Director of the Sprecher Cancer Center he established an interdisciplinary research and training program that has advanced the state of cancer treatment in animals. Since becoming Chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences in 2005, he has overseen a strategic expansion of the Department, with the development of important new sections and the strengthening of traditional areas. He is viewed by the Department as a thoughtful and fair administrator and I will miss his humor, advice, and wisdom. The College looks forward, however, to Rod's continued contributions to veterinary oncology and wishes him the best in his native Colorado. Please join me in congratulating Rod on his selection and wishing him every success.