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Second annual NYS-VC a wrap



From October 1-4, the College of Veterinary Medicine and the New York State Veterinary Medical Society (NYSVMS) co-hosted the 2009 New York State Veterinary Conference at Cornell. Visitors from across the state and throngs of violet balloons filled the corridors of the Veterinary Medical Center, as the event attracted nearly 270 veterinarians and more than 30 vendors. As many as 100 students and other non-veterinarians also participated.

"The College is honored to co-host the annual New York State Veterinary Conference, and we are committed to making this meeting as professionally and personally rewarding as possible for veterinarians in the region," said Michael Kotlikoff, Austin O. Hooley Dean of Veterinary Medicine. "This conference is a great example of collaboration between the College of Veterinary Medicine and the New York State Veterinary Medical Society, and I was particularly pleased at the breadth of participation at this second annual meeting."

The conference offered equine, food animal, camelid/small ruminant, and companion animal tracks as well practice management topics, bringing together veterinarians from many different practice types and careers. Interest in subjects outside of traditional companion animal practice was particularly strong this year. "With the profession and continuing education opportunities becoming more specialized, it is important to have events like this that create bonds among veterinarians and remind us of our common interests," said Dr. Lorin Warnick, Professor of Ambulatory Medicine and Associate Dean for Veterinary Curriculum. Altogether, the conference offered 102 hours of continuing education credits.

"I learned really helpful tips and heard some interesting ideas at the 'News Hour' session with Drs. Divers and Ducharme," said Dr. Anina La Cour DVM '80, an equine surgeon from Chatham, NY. "The information made getting up at 5 am to be here for the session completely worth it."

The conference also offered alumni the opportunity to return to Ithaca for a visit. "I always enjoy coming back to the Vet College at Cornell. It is like going to Mount Olympus for a breath of fresh air," said Dr. Ed von der Schmidt III DVM '79, MD, a neurosurgeon from Princeton, NJ. "The events, including the New York State Veterinary Conference, are informative, professional, and world class, as exemplified by the accomplishments of Dr. Fred Scott [who was presented with the Daniel Elmer Salmon Award for Distinguished Alumni Service]."

The keynote address at this year's conference, entitled "Entering the Golden Age of Veterinary Medicine," was delivered by Dr. Dennis McCurmin, DVM, DACVS, Professor of Surgery and Management, and former Hospital Director at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Louisiana State University. Dr. McCurmin outlined the challenges currently faced by the profession, including a difficult economic climate, high debt load among veterinary graduates, changes in lifestyle expectations, and difficulty in recruiting top specialists to careers in academia. However, he also discussed positive trends and opportunities in veterinary economics and practice management, including the rise in pet ownership and veterinary spending, the emergence of pet insurance, and the increasing emphasis on compliance and preventative wellness. Dr. McCurmin cited studies from the National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues (NCVEI) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) that illuminated industry best practices for increasing revenue and efficiency to weather the current recession.

This year's conference was co-sponsored by The Cornell Feline Health Center, Bayer, Fallon, Idexx, Merial, Pfizer, and Welch Allyn. "The support of sponsors and participation by exhibitors is critical for the success of the conference and much appreciated," said Warnick. "Organizing the educational programming and logistics for this conference is a collective effort of many College staff and faculty, as well as the leadership and staff of the NYSVMS. We are grateful to everyone for their hard work." Organizers of the conference are already looking ahead to next year's event, scheduled for September 30 – October 4, 2010, here at the College.