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## Student Voice

In this and future issues of eVETSconnect, we will be introducing current students to you. Please meet [Danique Wortel '16!](#)

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## Nominate now for the 2014 Salmon Award

**Continue the Legacy**

You know your peers best. You know what they do day in and day out to serve their patients and clients. You know the passion they commit to furthering the profession of veterinary medicine. And, you know the loyalty that drives their service to your alma mater.

Help us honor our alumni by nominating a Cornell graduate for the Daniel Elmer Salmon Award for Distinguished Alumni Service. 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, the award was established by the Alumni Association in 1986 to recognize graduates who have distinguished themselves in service to the profession, their communities, or to the College.

Nominations are accepted throughout the year until May 1. The recipient of the award is notified by September 1 and is honored at the annual New York State Veterinary Conference.



**Nominate  
Now**

**Additional news from the Alumni Association**

Visit our [website](#) for a listing of our board members and our meeting dates. Each fall, we welcome nominations to the board.

To reach the Office of Alumni Affairs, Development, and Communications, call 607.253.3745 or [email](#) – subject line “Alumni Association.”

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## Student Profile: Danique Wortel '16



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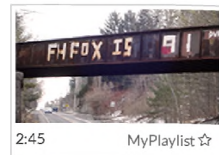
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What's it like to be a Cornell vet student? Danique Wortel gives a glimpse.

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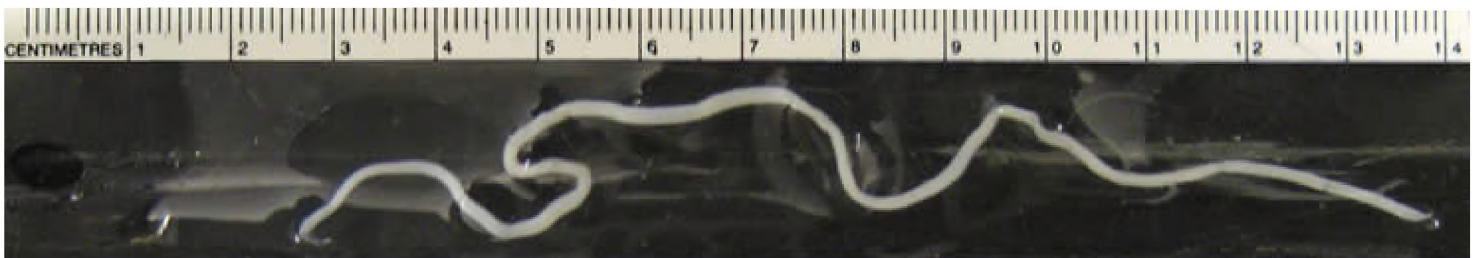
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## Cornellians find new worm infecting US cats



When Cornell veterinarians found half-foot-long worms living in their feline patients, they wondered if they'd spotted something new. Cornell scientists identified the mystery worms as *Dracunculus insignis*,

which had never before been seen in cats. Published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* in February 2014, their findings document the first proof that this raccoon parasite can infect cats.

The female *Dracunculus insignis* worm can reach 30 cm long and must emerge from its host to lay larvae. It forms a blister-like projection in an extremity, such as a leg, from which it slowly emerges over the course of days to deposit its young into the water. Dr. Jennifer Pongratz '99 found one of the female worms in a Mass cat and Dr. Sara Sanders '98 found several in a cat in N.Y. They sent samples to Cornell's Animal Health Diagnostic Center and the lab of Professor of Parasitology Dr. Dwight Bowman, which both suspected *Dracunculus*.

"The problem is you can't tell the exact species by looking at female worms," said Dr. Araceli Lucio-Forster, researcher in Bowman's lab and the paper's lead author. "You need males to tell the species because only they have distinct characteristics, such as different shapes of tail protrusions, to tell one from another."

Bowman's lab collaborated with *Dracunculus* experts at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to study sections of the worms in detail and conduct molecular analyses to confirm the identification.

Worms in the *Dracunculus* genus are well known in human medicine. *Dracunculus insignis*' sister worm, the waterborne Guinea worm (*Dracunculus medinensis*), infected millions of humans around the world until eradication efforts beginning in the 1980s removed it from all but four countries; through the remarkable efforts by the Carter Foundation and CDC only a total of 148 cases were reported in people in 2013.



Other *Dracunculus* worms infect a host of other mammals—*D. insignis* mainly infects raccoons and other wild mammals, though Bowman's predecessor Cornell parasitologist Dr. Jay Georgi and others had also seen it rarely in dogs. It does not infect humans.

"The cats that contracted the worms likely ingested the parasites by drinking unfiltered water or hunting frogs," said Lucio-Forster.

It takes a year from the time a mammal ingests the worm until the females are ready to migrate to an extremity and start the cycle anew.

While the worms do little direct harm beyond creating shallow ulcers in the skin, secondary infections and painful inflammatory responses may result from the worm's emergence from the host. There are no drugs to treat *Dracunculus insignis* infection—the worms must be removed surgically.

"Although rare in cats, this worm may be common in wildlife and the only way to protect animals from it is to keep them from drinking unfiltered water and from hunting—in other words, keep them indoors," said Lucio-Forster.



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## Behind the Scenes at Westminster



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## Behind the Scenes at Westminster





**Dr. Andrea Y. Tu, Cornell DVM '10**  
Associate Veterinarian, Park East Animal Hospital, New York, NY

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## Demystifying dysplasias

Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine invites Black Russian Terriers to participate in a genetic study that will improve the health and well-being of these dogs. The results of the study will hopefully lead to the development of a genetic test designed to provide breeders with the information they need to effectively reduce the incidence of hip and elbow dysplasia in this breed. To participate, please call 607-253-3060 and ask to speak with Susan Garrison or email your interest to [vetbiobank@cornell.edu](mailto:vetbiobank@cornell.edu).

Hip and elbow dysplasia are inherited developmental malformations that result in painful and debilitating arthritis. In its most severe forms, these two dysplasias cause crippling lameness especially when they occur together in the same dog. Led by Dr. Rory Todhunter, who has devoted his scientific explorations to understanding and eliminating hip and elbow dysplasia in dogs, Cornell has developed



a patented method of assessing hips for dysplasia and identified marker tests for hip dysplasia in several other breeds. The data obtained through this study will allow the Cornell team to develop a test that will predict the risk of developing hip and elbow dysplasia in Black Russian Terriers immediately after birth.

To support this study, please submit a blood sample to the Cornell Veterinary Biobank, a resource for researchers around the world studying a variety of conditions. Inclusion in the Biobank is completely confidential and facilitates the study of many additional diseases. In addition, please send OFA hip and elbow reports. Eligible Black Russian Terriers must be 2-years-old or older. We will work with the OFA to obtain additional measurements on the radiographs of your dog. We also welcome the submission of samples from any Black Russian Terrier over the age of 10, along with its medical history.

"If we can help lower the incidence of hip and elbow dysplasia in the Black Russian Terrier gene pool, it will make a huge impact on the health of the breed," said Dr. Marta Castelhana, one of the principal investigators of this study and Director of the Cornell Veterinary Biobank. "This study will provide the knowledge and tools that we need to stop propagating genes that diminish the quality of life for future generations of this breed."

For more information, please contact Susan Garrison at [vetbiobank@cornell.edu](mailto:vetbiobank@cornell.edu).



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## Productive and fertile: superstar studs

Even the best medicine has side effects. For years, dairy producers have been selectively breeding their herds to encourage milk production. New insights have confirmed, though, that the relationship between milk production and fertility is negatively correlated, which means that in our efforts to satisfy society's demand for milk, cheese, yogurt and other dairy products, we're also hindering the herd's ability to bear offspring – ironically, tomorrow's producers.

A new multi-state \$3 million USDA grant, with scientists participating from five veterinary colleges across the country, aims to comprehensively investigate the issue. Scientists will identify 12,000 cows that represent different breeding protocols (heat detection/synchronization of ovulation programs),

different geographic regions in the United States, and different types of facilities. Phenotypes will be explored using traditional time intervals and conception results (conception rate, number of services per conception, time to first breeding/conception), together with physiologic measures and intermediate events such as resumption of ovarian cyclicity, postpartum uterine health (retained placenta, metritis, and endometritis), and early embryonic and fetal loss. In addition, DNA will be collected from every cow.



With this data, the research team will identify cows in two groups—the most and least fertile—and compare changes in the DNA and corresponding fertility traits using genome-wide analysis. Researchers will also identify significant molecular markers to be included in fertility DNA analysis kits.

 Bicalho

“It is our central hypothesis that reproductive efficiency depends, to some extent, on biological factors that are influenced and modulated by genetic variation,” said Dr. Rodrigo Bicalho, who is a co-principal investigator with Dr. Robert Gilbert for the project at Cornell. “Because of this, we expect to find differences in the DNA for the most fertile cows as compared to the least fertile cows. With this data, we can develop a genetic test that can be used to predict fertility immediately after birth, eliminating our current reliance on the very time-consuming and costly process of selecting from registered and phenotypically beautiful animals with good pedigrees. Sometimes looks and lineage can be deceiving, but currently it takes years to confirm this.”

The grant also funds the development and delivery of a comprehensive, research-based extension program that will share the best selection practices for bull studs and for on-farm use with the replacement heifers that will improve fertility and the overall productivity of dairy herds. In addition to “extension road shows,” where dairy producers can discuss current strategies for improving fertility, including reproductive management, genetic and genomic selection, the research findings will be shared with the USDA Agriculture Research Service Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory and artificial insemination companies to incorporate fertility breeding values into the national genetic improvement program for dairy cattle and to facilitate a timely translation of research results into commercial tools that could be incorporated into routine farm management.

“Fertility plays a key role in the efficiency of modern dairy production systems, and failure to attain timely conception is one of the major reasons that cows are separated from herds,” said Bicalho. “The proposed genetic test will allow producers to make rational and cost-effective management decisions regarding cow uterine health and fertility. In effect, it will allow producers to identify superstar bulls by testing newborn calves. Instead of gambling on good looks, producers can evaluate the bulls’ genes before incorporating them into the breeding program. To know which bull to use as a sire is the equivalent of winning the lottery.”



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## Alum pioneers the field of veterinary medical illustration

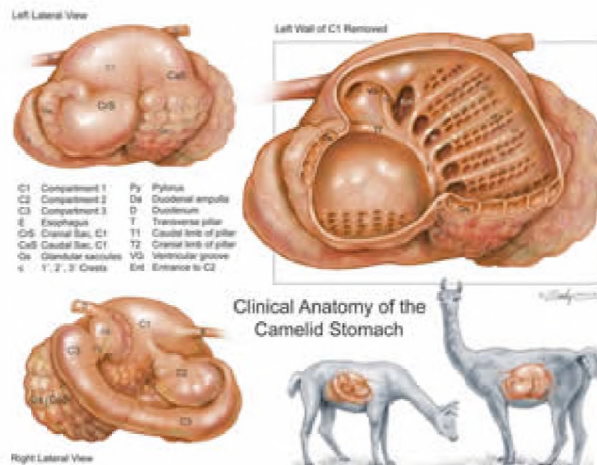
Many budding artists push their passions aside when it's time to build a career. But Dr. Lauren Sawchyn '09 managed to merge her interests in veterinary medicine and art, pursuing a dual career as both a veterinarian and a board-certified medical illustrator, practicing medicine while running her own illustration business, Sawchyn Medical Illustration ([www.sawchynmi.com](http://www.sawchynmi.com)), in the greater Boston area.

A native of southwestern Conn., Sawchyn grew up immersed in veterinary medicine and inspired to pursue the field by her mother, a certified veterinary technician who worked her way up to manage an entire practice.

"When I was seven, my mother gave me a copy of the Hill's Atlas of Veterinary Clinical Anatomy," said Sawchyn. "I was fascinated by the artwork and the animal diseases represented. Years later, after becoming a medical illustrator myself, I met some of the illustrators who created the Hill's Atlas that had so inspired me."

Sawchyn did her undergraduate studies in zoology and studio arts at the University of Maine, spending long hours in the studios followed by more hours in science labs. When a veterinarian she worked for gave her a first edition Miller's Anatomy of the Dog, she became enamored with anatomy and pathology. Finally, taking a class on the history of veterinary medicine exposed her to veterinary medical illustrations that captivated her aspirations.

"These old detailed pictures were amazing and still communicated the story hundreds of years after they were made," said Sawchyn. "I knew I wanted to be a veterinarian, but after seeing those pictures I realized I wanted to merge that interest with art in my career. So before veterinary school, I decided to pursue a medical illustration degree."

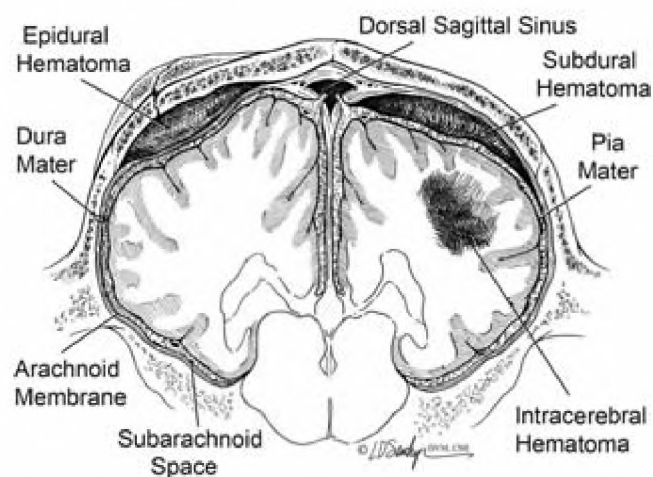


Sawchyn attended Georgia Regents University to obtain an M.S. in medical illustration. Most of the program focused on human medicine, so Sawchyn took human-focused courses such as anatomy and pathology along with medical students. Unique among her peers in her focus in veterinary medicine, she forged her own path toward this specialty by creating her own veterinary projects as well as shadowing a lab animal veterinarian at the college.

After her masters, her knowledge deepened considerably when she began studying veterinary medicine at Cornell. She worked with several professors on illustration projects, including doing carnivore illustrations for Paul Maza's carnivore anatomy class, for which she became a TA and used her illustrations to help teach. In 2009, the year she graduated from Cornell, she became board-certified in medical illustration, a rigorous process requiring oral, written, and portfolio exams.

Sawchyn practiced veterinary medicine full time in the practice her mother manages in Conn. for the last several years. She recently moved to Mass., where she is transitioning to practicing part-time as she builds her business, which provides medical illustration and fine art services for biomedical fields, specializing in veterinary medicine.

She is the first veterinarian to serve on the Board for Certification of Medical Illustrators and is also a professional member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of Medical Illustrators, the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, and the American Association of Veterinary Anatomists.



"It's been a fascinating ride combining these fields," said Sawchyn. "I'm not the only veterinarian who draws, but I'm one of only a few who have graduate training at this level. It's important to realize that not all artists are the same, and not all 'medical' artists who claim to be really are. Any one can draw a pretty picture – a medical illustrator knows how to research to make it accurate and understandable. They are 'multi-lingual' problem solvers. There are about 2,000 medical illustrators in the world, a fraction of whom are board-certified. I'm working with students interested in the vet specialty who are coming up the ranks. I've given lectures at illustrators' conferences, and have started working with other veterinary associations to build partnerships with the illustration field. My ultimate goal is to be a bridge between the two worlds."



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## Bequest spawns multifaceted fund to advance veterinary surgery

What started as a scholarship fund two friends created to honor their charismatic colleague Dr. John W. Whitefield '65 has been transformed by an unexpected boost. With a \$1.2 million donation and the guidance of several of those closest to Whitefield, the scholarship has expanded into the John W. Whitefield '65 Memorial Fund, which will support the advancement of veterinary surgery through several areas of the College.

When Whitefield, a dedicated veterinary surgeon, fell gravely ill, his friends Drs. Ed Dalland '68 and Joel Edwards '64 raised funds from Whitefield's friends and clients to endow a scholarship to keep his

memory alive. Distributing brochures and calling clinics across New York, they gathered \$100,000 with more than 350 donations over five years.

Their efforts bore unexpected fruit recently when Whitefield's former client Barbara Herndon gave the scholarship fund a \$1.2 million bequest. Herndon first came to Whitefield for help managing orthopedic issues in Bryna, her Welsh Springer Spaniel's. She became a longtime client and friend, forging a close bond that, with the help of the funding vehicle Edwards and Dalland had created, left a portion of her estate to Cornell to honor Whitefield.



"John was a good friend and when he became ill, Ed and I worked to establish the scholarship," said Edwards. "We mailed brochures to New York State veterinarians letting them know of our efforts and asked them to give clients opportunities to contribute, especially those with pets on which John had performed surgery. We developed an avenue for people to honor John, who had to drop out of Cornell for a year to work to earn tuition funds. The recent addition of Barbara's gift allowed us to expand the fund to recognize more of the wonderful things John did in his life for the profession, especially in the field of surgery."

The newly structured fund establishes the John W. Whitefield '65 Surgical Residency. Each year, a third-year resident will receive financial support and the distinction of being named the Whitefield Resident. This resident will receive additional funds to teach the Whitefield Surgical Short Course, to be offered during the New York State Veterinary Conference, to non-boarded general practitioners.

The fund also establishes the John W. Whitefield '65 Surgical Advancement Award, to be administered by the Office of Research and Graduate Education. The Award will be made after a call for proposals that focus on advancing the field of veterinary surgery.

Finally, the fund will provide for the new John W. Whitefield '65 Service Opportunity Program. It will be managed in conjunction with the College's existing Expanding Horizons program, which gives veterinary students opportunities to work on service projects related to veterinary medicine. Up to five students may receive funding each year for projects that involve providing veterinary services to underserved areas in the United States or abroad.

Meanwhile, the original John W. Whitefield '65 Memorial Scholarship will continue to help students, providing an annual scholarship for a fourth-year student in the top 20% of his or her class who is interested in pursuing an internship or surgical residency following graduation.

"I feel this is one of the more rewarding things I've done in life," said Dalland. "John was a dear friend, and Joel and I were privileged and honored to work on this as a way to honor him. We felt this mix of programs best addresses the spirit of John's contributions to veterinary medicine. He was very community minded and would love to see all the ways this fund will help people and the profession. That same spirit is what's behind the service opportunity program, honoring John's active life of service outside his profession."

Whitefield's widow, Dr. Twila Whitefield, will be presented with a plaque honoring her husband's contribution to veterinary surgery and the Herndon gift that ensures his ongoing legacy of advancement in veterinary surgery.

Herndon's generosity also extends the research efforts of the Baker Institute for Animal Health ([bakerinstitute.vet.cornell.edu](http://bakerinstitute.vet.cornell.edu)) and its mission to study infectious diseases, immunology, genetics, and reproduction. Herndon made a bequest for veterinary research following her longstanding relationship



with Whitefield, who made memorial gifts to Baker when her canine companions passed away. To learn more about this program, visit <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/baker/giving/>.

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## Student follows fathers' footsteps

For Arielle Breite '14 there was never any question about what she wanted to do with her life or the path she wanted to take to get there. Breite grew up dreaming of becoming a veterinarian and attending the same college as her father, Dr. Marshall Breite '79.

"I grew up dreaming of coming to Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine and my dad always wanted me to come here too. So I've wanted to come to Cornell for my whole life," said Breite.

Breite fondly recalls a very special moment that set her on this path when she was a teenager.

"We were here for Reunion and we were walking down that hallway that has all of the composites, and he put his arm around me and said, 'Arielle, I want you to be up on this wall someday,'" said Breite. "Now I will be."

With the idea of coming to Cornell in her head from an early age, Breite grew up hearing her father's stories about his time at Cornell and knew she wanted the same experience.

"I grew up thinking that people like Howie Evans, Drs. Francis Fox, John King, William Hornbuckle, and most of all the famous Dr. D (Sandy DeLahunta) were celebrities," said Breite.



She was also treated to stories of pranks on Fox's birthday, stories of experiences in labs, and many other of her father's memories from Cornell.

"His stories made me want to come here," said Breite. "He has always spoken of his time here with such fondness and nostalgia that it was contagious."

When it came time to apply to vet schools, Breite kept her options open, but she knew that Cornell was the place for her.

"Being a vet was always the big dream, so I would have gone anywhere," said Breite. "But having the opportunity to get my degree from here made it that much more special."

Being accepted to Cornell meant that Breite was on her way to fulfilling both her dream, along with her father's. She would get the same quality education that he had received while becoming part of Cornell's community.

"I think that there's a really nice tight knit community here," said Breite. "I really like having friends everywhere I go and saying hi to faculty and staff and students. I feel like it's a really close community."

During her time at Cornell Breite has taken advantage of many opportunities to make the most out of her four years in the Cornell community. She has been involved in extracurricular activities and has especially enjoyed getting the chance to be involved in clubs that are not specifically related to veterinary medicine, including the *a capella* and theater groups.

"I think a lot of other vet schools don't have clubs that are non-vet related," said Breite. "It's been really nice to have an outlet for some non-vet creativity."

Now as Breite approaches graduation and realizes that her picture will soon be hanging in the same hallway as her father's, she is looking forward to what comes next. Here too she plans to follow in her father's footsteps, working at a mixed or general small animal practice.

"I will miss being able to just walk down the hall to ask specialists their opinions," said Breite. "I will miss having my friends around me at all times to hold me up when things are hard, and celebrate when things are happy. The community is what makes it, and that's definitely what I'll miss the most."