WORLD VETERINARY DAY, APRIL 29, TO HONOR DIVERSITY, IMPACT OF PROFESSION

Schaumburg, Ill. — You know that veterinarians are the doctors that keep our nation’s 146 million companion animals healthy. But did you know that veterinarians also protect our health and environment? World Veterinary Day, celebrated on Saturday, April 29, highlights the contributions veterinarians make to public and animal health.

The World Veterinary Association, comprised of more than 80 countries, sponsors World Veterinary Day to highlight the global benefits that result from the work of veterinarians each and every day. Building on the theme of this year’s World Veterinary Day—“Celebrate Our Diversity”—veterinarians around the world will be hosting events to publicize their contributions to food safety, zoonotic diseases and public health, as well as animal health and welfare.

"Veterinary medicine has always played an essential role in public and animal health," said American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) President Dr. Henry E. Childers. "The public has always been well served by the diversity in our practice areas. However, the public is probably unaware that veterinarians have been called the 'best defense against bioterrorism,' or that it was a veterinarian who discovered West Nile virus in the United States, or that a veterinarian pioneered research on how the human immune system recognizes cells infected with a virus."

In honor of World Veterinary Day, the AVMA is drawing attention to the numerous connections between human and animal medicine. The following stories highlight just some of the important work being performed by veterinarians today.

Dr. Corrie Brown
Corrie Brown, DVM, PhD, head of the department of veterinary pathology at the University of Georgia, helped diagnose Afghanistan’s first case of avian influenza, while visiting Kabul to teach local veterinarians how to perform necropsies. She began to receive dead birds from farmers, and it was then she discovered the deadly strain of the deadly avian influenza.

"I really got a little weak in the knees, and then I thought, this is what I've been trained for," Dr. Brown told reporters.

Her work has helped alert and educate the people of Afghanistan about avian influenza and secure funding to fight the disease in the country.

Dr. Michael Lairmore
Michael Lairmore, DVM, PHD, professor and chair of the veterinary biosciences and member of the Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, discovered that a viral protein made by a cancer-causing virus once thought to be unimportant is in fact critically needed by the virus to initiate an infection and to reproduce.
"These findings should help us begin to learn whether this viral protein influences cell survival, perhaps by extending the life of the cell," Dr. Lairmore said.

**Dr. Bran Ritchie**  
Bran Ritchie, DVM, research scientist in the department of small animal medicine and surgery at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine worked with retired UGA professor, Dr. Richard Wooley and Tony Capomacchia, associate professor in the College of Pharmacy to combine an anti-microbial treatment called Tricide and a bioadhesive that adheres to the skin without being toxic. The treatment has potential human applications and the researchers are seeking a patent.

"In the case of burn victims, whether animal or human, bacteria and fungi can infect the open wounds and kill the patient," Ritchie said. "We have found a way to kill those drug-resistant bacteria and fungi with compounds that cleanse wounds while being gentle on the tissue."

**Dr. Cynda Crawford**  
Cynda Crawford, DVM, PhD, veterinary immunologist at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, first isolated the canine flu virus. The virus received national attention in September 2005 after Dr. Crawford and colleagues published an article in Science Magazine entitled "Transmission of Equine Influenza Virus to Dogs." Dr. Crawford appeared in media outlets across the country to educate people about the newly emerging disease and allay fears about its potential impact on animal and human health.

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Founded in 1863, the AVMA is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world, comprised of more than 73,000 member veterinarians engaged in a wide variety of professional activities. AVMA members are dedicated to advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine, including its relationship to public health and agriculture. Visit the AVMA Web site at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) to learn more about veterinary medicine and animal care, and access up-to-date information on the association's issues, policies, and activities.