

Practice Concepts

How We Propose to Recognize and Use Animal Health Technicians

Dr. Samuel Hutchins, South Barre, Vermont—Chairman
Dr. Ben Harrington, Raleigh, North Carolina—Co-Chairman

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ben Harrington, AABP Delegate to the AVMA House of Representatives

I would like to mention a few points about the training of animal technicians. The AVMA has formed a committee, which is a sub-committee of the Council on Education, to undertake the accreditation of training programs of animal technician schools.

The name of the committee is "Committee on the Accreditation of the Training of Animal Technicians." (CATAT). We are pleased with their progress; we have had eight site visits and eight schools have been accredited. I represent large animal practice on this committee.

We have discussed what schools to accredit and what they should teach. It soon became obvious that it would be easier to specify things that we would accept. The three main factors were that we would not accredit programs that taught students how to diagnose *per se*; programs that taught surgery; or how to prescribe drugs. If we keep these in mind, we have a good guide to go by. There was a lot of discussion about surgery but we felt that there is a lot of difference in the states, so it was excluded. The intent of the policy is to train students to assist veterinarians. The program is not designed to let them go out on their own or on farms or other areas—but to fit into a hospital operation, etc. We have used eight of these students in our practice for large and small animal work. They have helped us considerably.

Technicians are here to stay. There is obviously a lot of controversy in this area but we must find out how to use them in large animal practice. There are about 50 schools for animal technicians at present. Probably about 35 of these will qualify eventually with a two-year program of studies under our guidelines. They must have a veterinarian on their teaching program. I have not received a complaint about a graduate technician so far. Please feel free to contact me any time as your representative. Dr. Leland West represents the AVMA and we have had good guidance from our national organization. The

site visitation team is made up of one CATAT member, one state appointed representative who is usually on the advisory committee to the school and the other is Dr. Leland West.

The function of CATAT is to train the student, but the State Practice Act controls how they are used. Registration is better than licenses for the former means that the technician works with the veterinarian.

CATAT strongly recommends that schools training technicians should not be involved in a fee paying practice, but use their own animals. The school must specify its area of prime interest. We feel that even though their main interest is small animals, for example, they should be able to adapt to other areas in a practice.

District I

Dr. Samuel Hutchins III
South Barre, Vermont

Dr. Roland Whitehead, committee man from District I, was unable to attend this meeting so I will discuss the results of the survey taken in District I which is made up of New England and New York.

First, let me emphasize that the term "animal technician" as used in this survey was broader than Dr. Harrington's definition. We included any lay help used by AABP members in large animal practice. We wanted to know how AABP members were using lay help at the present time.

About one third of the membership returned the survey and of these, 40% used lay assistants to some degree in cattle practice. This varied from driver-helpers to five graduates of a two-year program and one man who uses a third year veterinary student in the summer. These people had used animal technicians for six months to 35 years.

How are these people used? Three-fourths of them were used in small animal and equine practice as well as cattle practice and if I can read between the lines, this was their primary reason for being hired.

The work performed by animal technicians