Animal Connection

Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine

FALL 2012

Talented Dog Wows Hospital Staff

When Brenda Cutting was teaching her dog Scottie to lie down and 'Take a Nap', she had no idea how beneficial it would be to his future health, she was just training him to dazzle an audience.

Scottie is a twelve-year-old border collie with a whole slew of doggie titles under his collar. He is a Canine Music Freestyle Champion, a Heelwork Music Champion, and has received 2nd and 3rd place awards at the national Agility Dog Championships. Scottie came to Cutting as a youngster from Border Collie Rescue and the pair have spent thousands of hours together in training and performances.

Last year, Cutting noticed Scottie was breathing heavily during practice and his bark sounded funny. She took him to Ash Creek Animal Hospital where Dr. Bob Archer diagnosed laryngeal paralysis (larpar).

Larpar is a condition where muscles that control the larynx cease to function. It is fairly common in older, large-breed dogs, especially retrievers. Because dogs with larpar can't breathe effectively, it deprives them of oxygen in their blood and impacts their quality of life. In some situations it can even be life-threatening. "They can get into a crisis situation, especially with heat or excitement" says OSU veterinary surgeon, Milan Milovancev. "A lot of people don't pick up on the fact that their dog has larpar, they just notice a bark change or raspy sound in their breathing and think their dog is getting older and slowing down. They don't realize their dog is suffocating."

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Scottie, a canine freestyle dance champion, learned to 'Take a Nap' for doctors at the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

Llama Trades Academia for Rural Life

A former OSU llama with a big personality learns to socialize with mixed species down on the farm.

Anyone who grew up on 1970s television remembers Mr. T from the A-Team. He was famous for his Mohawk hair, gold chains and feisty attitude. So when a llama named Mr. T was donated to the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital, they should have known they were in for a bumpy ride.

Mr. T came to OSU from a farm where he was trained to guard livestock. His aggressive behavior toward the other llamas, got him relegated to solitary life in a small barn and pen. There wasn't much for him to do other than occasionally donate blood for the large animal hospital and it was not enough activity for a llama with a big personality. Every year, he got a little more ornery. When students tried to corral him to put a halter on, he resisted strenuously and spit in their faces.

When Lionel Snyder was hired as the new farm manager, he took pity on Mr. T. "He was smart enough to know life wasn't great," says Snyder who decided to work at befriending the llama. "I was the one who had to go out and catch him. He was difficult to handle at first so I started feeding him by hand, then he came around and was nice to me," says Snyder. But his bad-boy behavior wasn't appropriate for a teaching hospital so the college put him up for sale.

Juanita Rodriquez rents an apartment in her home to veterinary students and one day a tenant asked her if she wanted to add a llama to her menagerie of sheep, ducks, and geese. "I answered 'Sure, he can come here'", says Rodriquez, "thinking he could hang out with my sheep and live out his life in what I consider paradise."

Miles of red tape later, Snyder personally delivered Mr. T to his new home. "It was love at first sight," says Rodriquez. "There was something so fragile and vulnerable, yet strong and with an attitude . . . I immediately wanted to work with him and be friends." She soon found why they didn't name him Petunia.

"When Juanita got him, he tried to take over," says Snyder. "She called me and asked what to do. I said, 'Be the bigger llama. When you are with him, put your arms up in the air.' She did that and it worked."

In time, Rodriquez learned that Mr. T, like his Hollywood counterpart, was a bit of a prima donna. "It's been a long journey," says Rodriquez, "but Mr. T and I have learned to give each other the space we each need . . . If there is a gate or fence between us, he feels most secure and sometimes I can even feed him carrots. He loves his carrots!"

These days, Mr. T is most happy around small children and animals. "He is very protective of his sheep and fowl," says Rodriquez, "and when a neighbor's dog comes on the property, he runs in circles and spooks the sheep who run to the barn." Then he starts yodeling, an instinctive llama alert behavior. "Whenever I hear that, I go out and see what is going on. Then I praise him and give him a carrot."

Mr. T also likes Rodriquez' four-year-old grandson. But it's the new lambs that he really connects with. "When the lambs were born last May, he was very curious and seemed to take over grandfathering them," says Rodriquez. "When he was in his cush position, they would climb up on his back and paw at him. He seemed very proud!"

Llamas can live twenty-five years or longer, so Mr. T was lucky to find a place where he fits in. Recently, he received his first haircut (not a Mohawk). Rodriquez arranged to have him scissor-cut in a quiet, calm environment. "I told the young woman my goal was that no one get hurt," laughs Rodrizuez, "He only began spitting when she did his belly and trimmed his hooves. I was so proud of him! It showed me how far he has come."

Student Amy Sachs says goodbye to Leo after weeks of nursing him back to health.

Little Leo Joins the Herd

A rough start and weeks in the hospital leave a newborn calf without important bovine skills.

"Leo is taller, has outgrown his halter, and is getting more assertive." This email message was big news in the offices and treatment areas of the OSU large animal clinic. Just a few weeks earlier, Leo was one of the sickest little calves doctors at the clinic had ever seen.

Leo came into the world in April of this year, one of four newborns in Teresa Smith's small herd of cattle. A white-faced Hereford bull, he arrived bright and peppy but by his fourth day, had a high fever and quit nursing. Smith was very concerned and brought him to the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. By the time he arrived, Leo could not stand and was unresponsive. Doctors at the clinic started him on IV fluids and quickly ran diagnostic tests which revealed he was suffering from meningitis. most likely caused by a failure of passive transfer.

Failure of passive transfer happens when a calf receives too little antibody-rich colostrum (early milk) from its mom. Sometimes the mom is unwilling or sometimes the colostrum isn't adequate; either way, it can be a life-threatening situation because a calf is born without any antibodies to fight bacteria. The amount of time a calf has to ingest colostrum and absorb antibodies is narrow and crucial: two or three hours after birth. It is literally a race against time to protect the newborn.

Doctors Jennifer Donofrio and John Schlipf treated Leo with nutritional supplements and a plasma transfusion to provide blood protein. He was also given antibiotics. But the really heart-warming part of Leo's treatment was the 24-hour, tender, loving care and tube feeding that the veterinary students gave him. "It was not hard to become attached to Leo; I didn't even try. The entire hospital was powerless against his big brown eyes and long white eyelashes," says Amy Sachs. "I believe that being attached to a patient and thinking about a medical case objectively and critically do not have to be mutually exclusive."

After four days in the hospital, Leo's suckle response returned and the students were able to feed him from a bottle. But a few days later, he came up lame and fluid had to be drained from his joints in a process called 'tapping. He was put back on antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. Leo' strength improved but con-

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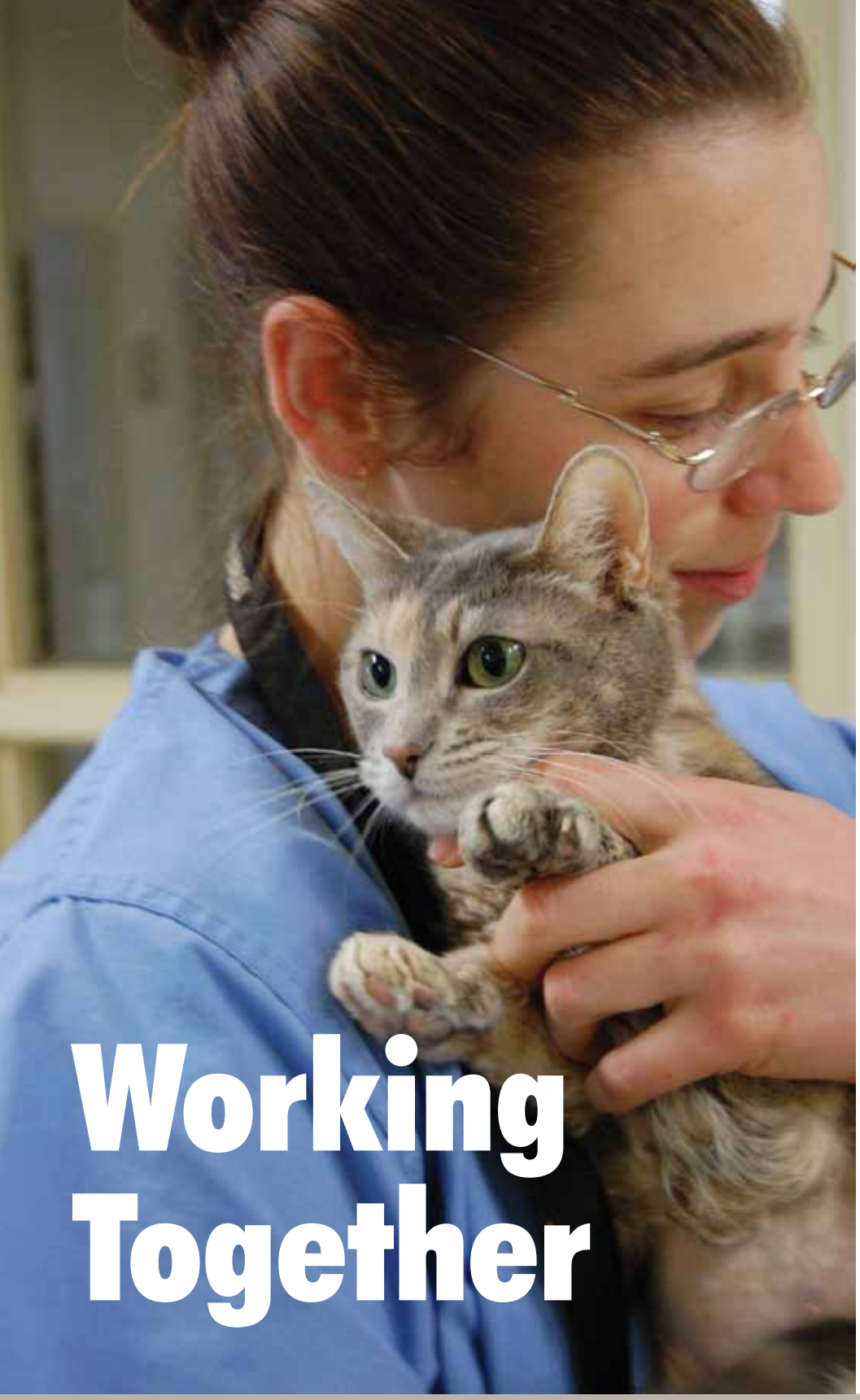


Working Together

A unique partnership with the Oregon Humane Society gives students at the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine real-world experience and provides shelter animals with plenty of loving care.

Walk through the big glass doors at the Oregon Humane Society (OHS) in northeast Portland and you enter a stylish room with vaulted ceilings and polished floors. It feels like the lobby of a nice hotel until you look to the left and see the Robotic Cat Playroom. A glass-walled space full of cat toys that are wired for hands-free movement, the playroom hosts groups of cats on a one-day trip to kitty Las Vegas. Behind the scenes, cat-lovers from around the country are using the internet to control the spinning neon fuzzy tails and bouncing doo-dads while watching the ensuing mayhem through a webcam.

The Robotic Cat Playroom is just one of the many impressive features at the OHS, which takes in nearly 1,000 animals every month. Almost one third of those come from other shelters on the west coast who do not have the resources to keep them. With this many animals to save, it is astounding that the OHS has a 98% adoption rate. None of this would be possible without the work of more than a thousand volunteers who do everything from foster care to running with dogs. Volunteers also staff the 'Pet Pals' program, which trains incoming dogs and cats in basic good behavior so they can fit in to their new home.

Another piece of this highly successful animal welfare organization is the Animal Medical Learning Center (AMLC). Half the animals that arrive at OHS need spay or neuter surgery, and a significant number need medical care. The AMLC is a

unique partnership between Oregon State University and the OHS. In it's high-tech surgery suite, fourth-year students from the College of Veterinary Medicine complete a two-week rotation as part of their graduation requirement. These extra pairs of hands help the shelter treat and heal pets faster, reducing the average animal's stay by 20 percent and making room for new animals. It is also an invaluable real-world experience for the students.

OSU students live onsite at the AMLC and perform an average of 50 surgeries during their rotation. "Their skill and confidence increases tremendously during their time with us," says Dr. Kirk Miller, an AMLC surgeon and OSU faculty member. "They have an idea of what to do when they start," he says, "but their hands are shaking and they need a lot of guidance. By the end of their rotation, they are doing most of the surgeries on their own and I just monitor their progress or assist if there are any complications."

Recent graduate, Rachel Hector, completed her rotation at the AMLC in the spring and describes the experience as very busy. "There are cats, dogs, rabbits being carried everywhere, being examined for medical problems, spayed, neutered, or having fractures repaired. Pretty much everything you can think of." But Rachel appreciated the opportunity to think on her feet and work through many different problems. "You spend three hours every morning doing surgery and this often consists of multiple abdominal procedures. Each surgery provides you with an opportunity to become a better doctor."

This was especially true for OSU students who were on rotation when 30 Shar Peis arrived from a bad breeder in Washington state. Shar Peis are known for their folded, wrinkled skin and are prone to eye and skin infections. All of the Shar Peis that came into the OHS in May needed treatment for medical conditions. Nearly a dozen needed corrective surgery for severely wrinkled skin that affected their health and ability to function.

Most of the Shar Peis have since been adopted, but some are still recovering from surgery in foster homes and expect to be placed soon.

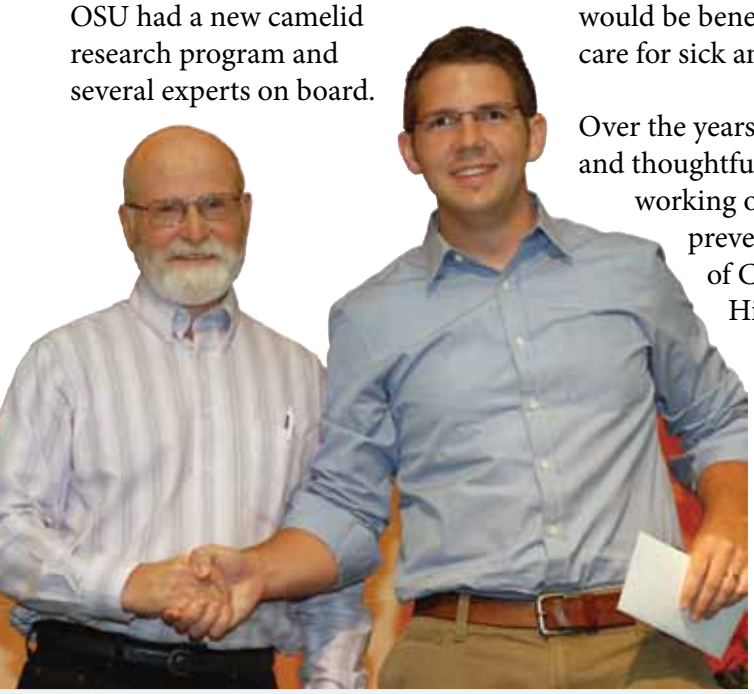
Hector values her clinical experience at the AMLC, but also the opportunity to work in an environment where everyone around her is dedicated to the welfare of animals. "Everywhere you turn there are so many people who clearly love what they are doing and if you ask them, they will tell you that shelter medicine is exactly what they want to be doing with their lives."

Top: Adam Ballard moves a Shar Pei to recovery after brow-lift surgery.
Bottom: Rachel Hector operates on a Shar Pei at the Oregon Humane Society's Animal Medical Learning Center.

Friendship Begins with Sick Baby

Glen Pfefferkorn's long friendship with the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) began with a sick baby llama.

In 1987, the first llama born on his farm became ill with colic and his vet referred him to the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. At that time, little was known about llama health, but OSU had a new camelid research program and several experts on board.



Pfefferkorn's baby llama received a stomach tap and recovered. "That piqued my interest," says Pfefferkorn.

As founder of the Willamette Valley Llama Association, Pfefferkorn joined the Dean's advisory council at CVM and where he worked to raise funds for llama research. "I figured that becoming more familiar with the college would be beneficial to ensure good care for sick animals," he says.

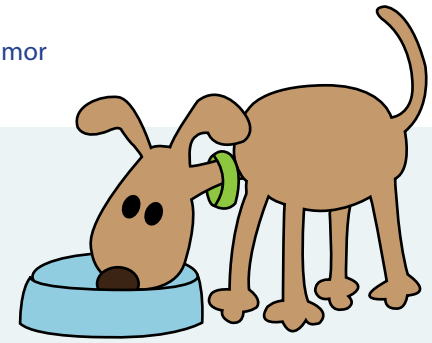
Over the years he gave many hours and thoughtful advice to the college, working on critical intiatives like preventing the elimination of CVM from the Board of Higher Education budget in 1993. "The economy of Oregon is heavily dependent on agriculture and livestock. Also, a high percentage of human illness is first detected in livestock and pets. Having a veterinary college keeps Oregon on the front line of public health," he says.

Despite retiring to Arizona, Pfefferkorn is still very active in supporting the college and he recently endowed a scholarship to help lessen the debt burden for aspiring veterinarians. "Glen's support has been invaluable, especially in regard to his successful efforts to build research and education programs involving camelids," says Dean Cyril Clarke. "His ongoing participation in strategic planning and development projects is an important asset to the college."

For his dedication, inspiration, and hard work, Pfefferkorn was awarded the CVM Distinguished Service Award, one of only four awarded in the thirty-year history of the college.

Glen Pfefferkorn congratulates Jeff Nickel on receiving the Glenmor Forest Llamas Scholarship

Beware of Dog Food



When it comes to food poisoning, humans get all the attention. But in the past few years there have been numerous recalls of tainted pet food.

In May of this year, multiple brands of dry dog food produced by Diamond Pet Foods were recalled after public health officials found salmonella in a routine pet food inspection. The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) worked together to link the dog food to reported cases of human illness. It was discovered that dozens of pet owners became ill when they handled the dog food or a dog who had eaten it. "It is important for people to know that after they feed their pets or give them treats, they should wash their hands," said Dr. Casey Behravesh of the CDC.

It isn't only humans that get sick. Although dogs are more resistant to salmonella than humans, they can get sick too. If your dog has diarrhea or is vomiting, check with your local veterinarian.

The recent pet food recall was not an isolated incident. In the past few years, pet food makers have issued nearly five dozen recalls of pet food and dog treats because of salmonella concerns. Dry pet food, raw meat scraps, and bulk dog treats like pig ears are more susceptible to salmonella than canned food. In fact, a study published by the American Veterinary Medical Association found that forty percent of pig ears sold in the U.S. were contaminated with salmonella.

The OSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory partners with government agencies to provide testing for salmonella, e-coli and other public health outbreaks. If you fed your dog Diamond Pet Food and either you or he is ill, contact the Oregon Division of Public Health at 971-673-1111.

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The good news is that veterinary surgeons can perform a procedure called 'tie-back surgery' through a small incision. "The incision is about an inch wide and the amount of tissue trauma is minimal," says Milovancev. "For vets who do the procedure a lot, like we do here, it's a pretty quick procedure." Historically, eighty percent of dogs undergoing tie-back surgery recover quickly. But of the remaining twenty percent, the most serious complication is aspiration pneumonia. Just like people, dogs under anesthesia will experience some stomach reflux; in dogs with larpar, reflux can enter their lungs and cause pneumonia.

Currently the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is enrolling dogs in a clinical study to evaluate a drug that may reduce the risk of pneumonia in dogs who receive tie-back surgery. "We designed this study to determine if it is worth giving this drug to dogs or not," says Milovancev. "It's a very safe drug, it's fairly inexpensive, and its readily available to us so it's a good candidate for a clinical trial."

All dogs enrolled in the trial get the same surgical procedure and the best care possible. Just like in human clinical trials, some dogs will receive the drug while others receive a placebo. The biggest benefit for the dog's owner is a twenty percent discount on the surgery fee. They also get twenty-five percent off laboratory fees for blood work. "And they are helping us figure out how better to treat this condition in the future," says Milovancev. "When the trial is finished we'll know whether we should be using this drug or whether to focus on a different drug that may help."

With about 50 dogs enrolled so far and an end goal of 500, investigators are actively recruiting dogs with larpar to participate in the clinical trials. If you suspect your dog may have larpar, check with your local veterinarian and ask them about getting your dog enrolled in the clinical trial at OSU.

Scottie received tie-back surgery at the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital last winter. The doctors and technicians remember him for his impressive ability to lie still for x-rays without sedation. "This is the first time I have seen a dog specifically trained by his owner to remain unmoving, in the position we placed him, for the explicit purpose of obtaining radiographs," says Milovancev. Scottie had three x-rays for his larpar surgery and every x-ray was successful on the first attempt, a tribute to Cutting's training skills and Scottie's winning personality. "It was great to not have to give him drugs," says Cutting.

Scottie's larpar surgery was a success and he's doing great. "I set up crates around my doggie daycare gym," says Cutting, "and Scottie is back to running a half mile or more on most days." The talented pair are back on the showbiz circuit competing for new titles to add to their collection.

If you have questions about tie-back surgery or Larpar clinical trials, call the OSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital at 541-737-4812 or email Dr. Milovancev at milan.milovancev@oregonstate.edu.

Leo the Calf Cont. from page 3

tinued lameness required repeated joint flushing. "It was a good learning experience," says student Paul Schiffgens. "I had an opportunity to observe both a joint tapping and joint lavage (flushing). It also made me very aware of what can happen when a calf doesn't get a good start."

By the time Teresa Smith was finally able to take Leo home, his ordeal had left him developmentally delayed. "He had a hard time learning to eat grass on his own," says Sachs, "and he was just a little slow." The doctors told Smith that he might remain stunted and slow permanently but recommended she try gradually introducing him to the herd so he could learn to fit in.

Small and confused, it took Leo a while to get the hang of bovine living. "It took him forever to learn how to graze," says Smith. "And it broke my heart to see him alone while the other calves played, but now he is initiating play and they are responding." He still receives two bottles of milk a day and 'drinks water like a dog' reports Smith, but Leo's local veterinarian, Dr. Jeffrey Pelton, recently gave him a thumbs-up on his well-baby check.

"I am so forever thankful for all that everyone did for Leo," says Smith. "He is one lucky guy and has come to know he is very special."

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$143,000:

The average cost of a veterinary medical degree in the U.S.

With that kind of debt load, veterinary graduates can't afford to work where they are needed most: in rural areas.

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