



*American Animal Hospital Association
2008/09 Annual Report*

The Standard of
Veterinary Excellence

AAHA MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the American Animal Hospital Association is to:

- **Enhance** the abilities of veterinarians to provide quality medical care to companion animals
- **Enable** veterinarians to successfully conduct their practices and maintain their facilities with high standards of excellence
- **Meet** the public's needs as they relate to the delivery of small animal veterinary medicine

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Letter from the Executive Director

We are pleased to present this report on another very successful year for AAHA. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on a few notable achievements.

First, I am very pleased to report that the number of AAHA-accredited practices has once again passed the **3,000** mark. About five years ago, we began a major revision of the both the *Standards of Accreditation* and the accreditation process. Frankly, the board and staff recognized that the bar needed to be raised. As an expected result, a number of previously accredited practices did not pass the evaluation under the new standards, but made a commitment to improvement and were subsequently reaccredited. Another group was either unable or unwilling to meet the new requirements, and their accreditation ended. Accordingly, we experienced a bit of a drop in the number of accredited members, but newly accredited members have now surpassed those dropped, so that the number of accredited practices is now again more than 3,000. We believe that we can be justifiably proud of all those accredited under the new standards and accreditation process.

Second, our for-profit subsidiary corporation, which operated as AAHA MARKETLink, was sold to MWI Veterinary Supply, effective July 1, 2008. The divestiture was driven by the realization that AAHA members would be better served by having MARKETLink in the hands of a company with the resources to provide them with better services and value. MWI continues to offer this program to AAHA members under the AAHA MARKETLink brand, which we continue to recommend. Reports from members say they are pleased with the enhanced service.

Third, AAHA educational programs continue to reach many more veterinarians and their practice teams than any other association or organization. Our meetings, from the yearly conference and distance education program for veterinary technicians to workshops, webinars and podcasts, reached more than **11,176 attendees** in 2008-2009.

I continue to be very proud of the leadership role that AAHA plays in the companion animal segment of the profession.

- Our activities related to common diagnostic terms and electronic health records will benefit all practices and companion animals.
- The completion of our follow-up compliance study, generously funded by Pfizer Animal Health, will also provide dividends to practices and the pets they serve. The study yielded rich information on how practices can improve the quality of care provided through higher compliance rates. *Compliance: Taking Quality Patient Care to the Next Level* (the study results) and *Six Steps to Higher Quality Patient Care* (a "how-to guide" for compliance improvement programs) will be published in early July 2009.
- We continue to support profession-wide initiatives, including the National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues (NCVEI) and the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC).

None of these activities would be possible without the support of our dedicated leadership, members, and our friends and colleagues in the animal health industry, and I am grateful for your support.

Sincerely,



John W. Albers, DVM
AAHA Executive Director



Letter from the 2008/09 President

As an association, AAHA doesn't like to stand still. We are constantly looking for ways to add value to your membership. At the same time, we work to move the profession forward and ultimately raise the level of care for our patients.

This past year resulted in significant successes for AAHA. We have completed mentoring guidelines, strengthened our student program with a content-rich web site and increased awareness of AAHA in the veterinary teaching hospitals.

We have put resources behind our Electronic Health Records Task Force to enable the use of common diagnostic terms, integrate software systems, promote portability of records and facilitate paperless practices. We look toward a future of maximizing our computer systems to their utmost ability to raise our level of practice, enhance compliance and improve efficiency of our business.

Furthermore, AAHA has proactively identified ways to boost the business results of our members. The Association pulls together Preferred Business Providers to offer our members an edge in these challenging economic times. From insurance programs and retirement planning to client communication systems and credit card use, AAHA seeks to give its members tools to improve their bottom line. The royalties AAHA receives from these programs help fund other work we do as an association, creating a win-win situation for our members.

Additionally, AAHA's current initiatives reflect the invaluable feedback we receive from members. Over the years, the biggest outcry from accredited hospitals has been that the public is unaware of the American Animal Hospital Association. The importance of accreditation has been lost on our clients because they don't know who we are — and they expect all veterinary hospitals to be accredited.

They don't understand we voluntarily go through 900 standards to become accredited, ensuring we are providing the best care possible for our patients, clients and staff. Based on this feedback, AAHA is undertaking one of its most exciting initiatives yet — the largest accreditation awareness campaign that AAHA has ever launched.

After a professional testing process that included feedback from the public and veterinary community, we released, at the yearly conference in Phoenix, a modern, up-to-date, brand image that exemplifies the meaning of AAHA. Our goal is that the campaign combined with this new look will improve client recognition and be the answer to increased AAHA awareness that members have been requesting for years.

Sincerely,



Anna Worth, VMD
2008-2009 AAHA President



It is with deep sorrow that we regretfully announce the passing of our respected and extremely appreciated 2008-2009 AAHA President, Anna Worth, VMD. [Click here](#) for a tribute that the Association has created to honor and remember our dear friend and dedicated leader.

AAHA Leadership

Board of Directors, 2008/09

Dr. Anna E. Worth, VMD, President
Dr. Thomas A Carpenter, DVM, Immediate Past President
Dr. John D. Tait, DVM, President-Elect
Dr. Gregg Takashima, DVM, Vice President
Dr. G. Timothy Lee, DVM, Secretary/Treasurer
Dr. John Albers, DVM, Executive Director
Dr. Brent D. Calhoun, DVM, Director
Mrs. Pamela Cole, Practice Manager Director
Dr. Kate Crumley, DVM, MS, Director
Dr. Rod Jouppi, DVM, Director
Dr. Thomas R. Kendall, CVPM, DVM, Director
Dr. Katherine S. Knutson, DVM, Director
Dr. Michael Robert Moyer, VMD, Director
Dr. Mark Russak, DVM, Director
Ms. Amy Weiss, LVT, Veterinary Technician Director



Leadership Groups

AAFP/AAHA Feline Lifestage Wellness Guidelines Task Force
Accreditation Awareness Advisory Group
Animal Ethics and Welfare Task Force
Awards Committee
Diagnostic Terms Review Board
Education and Publications Advisory Group
Electronic Health Record Task Force
Executive Committee
Leadership Identification Committee
Membership Audit and Control Committee
Nominating Committee
Practice Accreditation Advisory Group
Student Advocates
Practice Management Advisory Group
Yearly Conference Development Committee:
Management, Scientific and Technician Education Workgroups
International Liaisons

Representatives to:

- AAHA Foundation Board of Trustees
- AVMA Animal Welfare Committee
- AVMA Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee
- AVMA Committee on Environmental Issues
- AVMA Delegate
- AVMA Legislative Advisory Committee
- AVMA Strategic Planning Committee
- CATalyst Council
- National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
- National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues
- Veterinary Infection Control Committee of the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV)
- World Small Animal Veterinary Association

Collaborations

AAHA leadership and staff have been collaborating with various organizations for several years on projects of mutual interest that emphasize shared principles and common goals. The following collaborative efforts and strategic relationships have been recently updated:

American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP)

According to the *2007 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*, cats are twice as likely as dogs to not be taken to see a veterinarian, leaving many undiagnosed and untreated for illness, disease, pain and discomfort. As an immediate outcome of the CATalyst Summit held in early February 2008, AAHA and AAFP agreed to collaborate on a set of **feline lifestage wellness guidelines** to improve this alarming statistic. The group of eight task force members comprising the AAFP/AAHA Feline Lifestage Wellness Guidelines Task Force met in early February 2009 to begin development of the guidelines and will work to complete the guidelines by August 2009. Plans are to publish them in the late fall.

American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP)

AAHA and ABVP initiated a series of collaborative projects several years ago to support each others' efforts in the areas of **standards and excellence**. AAHA provides standards of accreditation for veterinary practices while ABVP provides credentialing for individual veterinarians in various species groups. ABVP and AAHA mentoring materials have been completed and will be housed on both websites.

AAHA and ABVP's collaboration extends into the Association's yearly conference as well, where ABVP designs a track and hosts a credentialing workshop. In addition, AAHA offers a workshop for ABVP diplomates at their yearly symposium.

Coalition for Reuniting Pets and Families

The Coalition, composed of AAHA, American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives (ASVMAE), American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), AVMA, American Humane Association (AHA), Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) and the National Federation of Humane Societies (NFHS), is supporting **microchipping issues** throughout the industry. Meeting of the Coalition is tentatively planned for later this year.

AAHA and Schering-Plough HomeAgain (SPHA) are collaborating on the development of a Universal Microchip Lookup Tool. The internet-based lookup tool would access participating Pet Recovery Service registries that assist with microchip identification and uniting pets and owners. It would serve as a standard national source to identify the registration of any microchip, regardless of the manufacturer, as long as each manufacturer and their registry participates. AAHA has agreed to provide and host this tool on an AAHA website. AAHA has demonstrated the tool to the Microchip Coalition and has the unanimous support of the tool by all Coalition members.

Sponsored by SPHA, the AAHA Microchipping and Scanning Companion Animal E-learning course was completed in early August 2008 and is available to veterinary practice and shelter personnel. The course provides the latest information on microchipping in cats and dogs and demonstrates microchipping and scanning techniques. This course will be hosted by AAHA into 2010.

American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives (ASVMAE)

The ASVMAE is developing an actionable plan to address the challenges of **attracting, engaging and retaining new members**. ASVMAE appointed Karyn Gavzer, MBA, CVPM, to facilitate the development of this initiative, which is being sponsored by Hill's Pet Nutrition. A strategic planning meeting was held in April 2009 for the ASVMAE task force, of which Jan Trumpeter, DVM, AAHA Deputy Executive Director, is a member, to decide on actions to address these challenges. The task force hopes to have the results of this initiative by the end of 2009.

Veterinary Leadership Workshops

AAHA has worked with Pfizer Animal Health for the past three years on the AAHA Leadership Workshops. By the end of the Association's 2008-2009 fiscal year, about **34 workshops** will have been completed in the U.S. Pfizer Animal Health and AAHA MARKETLink will again provide these leadership workshops to members into 2010. With the help and support of Dr. John Tait, AAHA President, 2009/10, AAHA now has plans to take three AAHA Leadership Workshops to Canada in the fall of 2009. Pfizer Canada has agreed to sponsor and provide a speaker for these workshops, and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has agreed to sponsor and provide marketing support.

2009 AAHA Compliance Follow-Up Study

The 2009 AAHA Compliance Follow-Up Study, which was supported by Pfizer Animal Health, has been completed. The Association published an executive summary, available on www.aahanet.org and is working on a more **comprehensive publication** of the survey and results with a toolkit of resources, which is expected to be available in early July 2009. AAHA and Pfizer Animal Health are currently considering the development of programs based on the compliance study results that can be used to teach members and the profession how to grow their practices and the level of pet care they provide.

North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC)

This industry-wide consortium is aimed at addressing workforce needs and resulting impact on veterinary medical curricula. The increased demand for expanded traditional veterinary medical services, along with the need for veterinarians' expertise in bioterrorism prevention, one health, biomedical research, comparative medicine and public health led to the development of the NAVMEC. The NAVMEC was created to **review, evaluate and improve veterinary medical education to prepare graduates with the competencies needed to address societal needs**. AAHA is providing a grant to assist in supporting the consortium. The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) is currently contacting many veterinary medicine stakeholders to invite them to become partners in the coalition. The Consortium will work for 12-18 months, when a final report will be developed and distributed appropriately.

National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues (NCVEI)

This ongoing national organization was formed in response to the MegaStudy conducted by the AVMA, AAHA and AAVMC in the late 1990s. The NCVEI mission is to **improve the economic base of the veterinary profession, ensuring that the delivery of veterinary care meets the needs of society**. As NCVEI moves ahead, there will be opportunities to participate in discussions on issues through the website and on the national, state and local levels. NCVEI is committed to ensuring a viable economic future for everyone whose lives are linked to veterinary medicine. AAHA also works with NCVEI on various other initiatives.

Other current and ongoing strategic relationships include:

- Avimark – AAHA provided speaker to their annual users meeting
- CATalyst Council – founding member, Board of Directors, other projects
- Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) – provided symposium at AAHA 2009 and 2010 Yearly Conference
- Delta Society – provided symposium at AAHA 2009 Yearly Conference
- National Association of Veterinary Technicians Association (NAVTA) – Veterinary Technician Student fundraising contest
- Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Society (VECCS) – 2009 and 2010 AAHA Yearly Conference track designed by VECCS
- Veterinary Specialists in Private Practice (VSIPP) – AAHA provided speaker to their conference
- VetPartners – AAHA will distribute an economic newsletter to members with content provided by VetPartners
- Joint AAHA-Ontario VMA conference in Toronto in 2011



2008/09 Highlights

AAHA Initiatives

AAHA Seal of Acceptance

AAHA launched the Seal of Acceptance program to inform pet owners about their options regarding the need to meet their financial responsibilities for quality pet health care in March of 2008.

When the cost may go beyond reasonable financial means of the family budget, many pet owners are forced to euthanize their pet or incur burdensome debt. Because of this, AAHA has urged the pet insurance industry to make **high-deductible policies** available. With insurance, higher deductibles reduce premiums and make pet insurance a more viable option. Many pet owners can manage expenses up to \$500 or \$1,000, but would have difficulty with expenses beyond that level.

The AAHA Seal of Acceptance is awarded to high-deductible pet insurance policies (at least \$500) that meet specific criteria. For more information about the AAHA Seal of Acceptance, please visit www.aahanet.org.



Animal Ethics and Welfare Task Force

This task force has been charged with reviewing the AAHA animal welfare position statements and changing, deleting or adding to them as necessary. They will also be examining the global perspective on animal welfare and making recommendations about AAHA's future involvement with those issues.

2009 AAHA Compliance Follow-Up Study

Supported by a generous educational grant from Pfizer Animal Health, AAHA has completed a follow-up to the landmark statistical compliance study performed in 2003. The second study focused on these goals:

- Examine client adherence to medications prescribed or dispensed.
- Have we "moved the compliance needle?"
- What works or does not work?

The Association is currently producing a **two-part publication** that will consist of *Compliance: Taking Quality Patient Care to the Next Level* (the study results) and *Six Steps to Higher Quality Patient Care* (a "how-to guide" for compliance improvement programs). Other programs will be planned for the future. Until then, here's a preview of the findings:

- CRAFT (**C**ompliance = **R**ecommendation + **A**ceptance + **F**ollow **T**hrough) is still the foundation for increasing compliance
- There is very high awareness that improving compliance improves patient care
- When practices make an effort, compliance goes up
- Practices with high compliance use at least four of the effective habits identified by the study
- The pre-appointment checklist is the single most important tool for improving compliance

The research findings have led to these conclusions about improving compliance...

- Does not require a significant investment in capital equipment
- Does not require hiring another staff person
- Does require commitment and support from the practice leadership
- Does require staff buy-in
- Does require training and focus
- Is significantly aided by periodic monitoring of results

Best results are achieved when every member of the pet's health care team, from practice owner to pet owner, pulls together to provide the highest quality of care.

Electronic Health Records and AAHA Diagnostic Codes

The Electronic Health Records Task Force and Diagnostic Codes Review Board have been working together toward the release of a first draft concept list for the **AAHA standardized diagnostic terms** in late spring. These standard nomenclature terms have a universal meaning and are applied in the same context by many users. Practitioners will be able to amass a powerful database within their practice, allowing veterinary medicine to collect disease data and to move in the direction of evidence-based decision-making. The Electronic Health Records Task Force is working with veterinary practice management software vendors to develop applications for the use of the finalized AAHA diagnostic terms, “paperless” records, and a more standardized electronic health record to be made available to practitioners.

AAHA Mentoring Guidelines

The transition from classroom to practice is a crucial time in one’s career, as is the transition that follows after a practice welcomes a new team member on board — transitions in which a mentorship can serve as an extremely valuable tool. Mentorships improve communication, promote long-term job satisfaction and facilitate adoption of best practices, ultimately improving patient care and overall hospital performance.

Mentoring helps the mentee...

- Establish medical, interpersonal and business skills
- Quickly become part of the veterinary team
- Think and manage independently with the support of a mentor
- Move forward in their career with the understanding and empathy of their mentor

Mentoring helps the mentor...

- Improve both recruitment and retention of top talent to the practice
- Increase new team members’ level of satisfaction, leading to higher-quality patient care
- Teach new employees effective communication and teamwork
- Learn the most current medicine from their recently trained colleague

The Association has developed the **AAHA Mentoring Guidelines** and other mentoring tools to help both mentors and mentees facilitate and define the support needed to start and maintain a successful mentorship. These are available at www.aahanet.org and on the student website at student.aahanet.org.

AAHA Referral Guidelines

These guidelines were created by an AAHA task force charged with developing detailed and specific referral guidelines for companion animal practices that address all matters of communication between those veterinarians referring and those receiving patients.

While there are many excellent referral relationships, as with most relationships, interactions between individual veterinarians and practices can be improved by enhanced communications and by open, honest discussions between those individuals on each side of the relationship. The **AAHA Referral Guidelines** are intended to help bridge the referral communications gap and facilitate:

- The highest quality of care for patients
- Education and outstanding service for clients
- Continuing education and promoting the veterinary profession
- Enhanced teamwork among veterinary professionals

AAHA recognized that for the guidelines to be embraced by the profession and widely utilized, the development process needed to be very collaborative. Input was solicited from a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the referral process, including general practitioners, private practice specialists, emergency clinicians, teaching hospitals, specialty organizations and organized veterinary medicine, with the goal of producing a set of practical guidelines that fully address the issues involved in referral relationships.

It is the Association’s hope that these guidelines will be used as a template for enhancing referral relationships in local communities throughout North America.

Membership

The Association has adopted a team-focused philosophy to emphasize the importance of each individual's contribution in making a practice successful. Today, AAHA serves approximately **6,000 practice teams** in the United States and Canada that are comprised of more than **40,000 individual veterinary care providers**, including veterinarians, practice managers, veterinary technicians, front office staff and more.

AAHA established a new membership category for veterinary teaching hospitals in 2008 to provide students with an external network of the highest quality veterinary practices across the nation. These accredited hospitals are making a powerful commitment to their students' professional growth because accreditation sets a positive example as it encourages constant effort for continuous improvement.

AAHA offers unparalleled customer service through the Member Service Center (MSC). Specialists are available Monday through Friday 7 am to 5 pm MST to answer questions, process registrations, receive publication orders and more. From January 2008 through April 2009, MSC responded to **31,662 calls**.

AAHA in the News

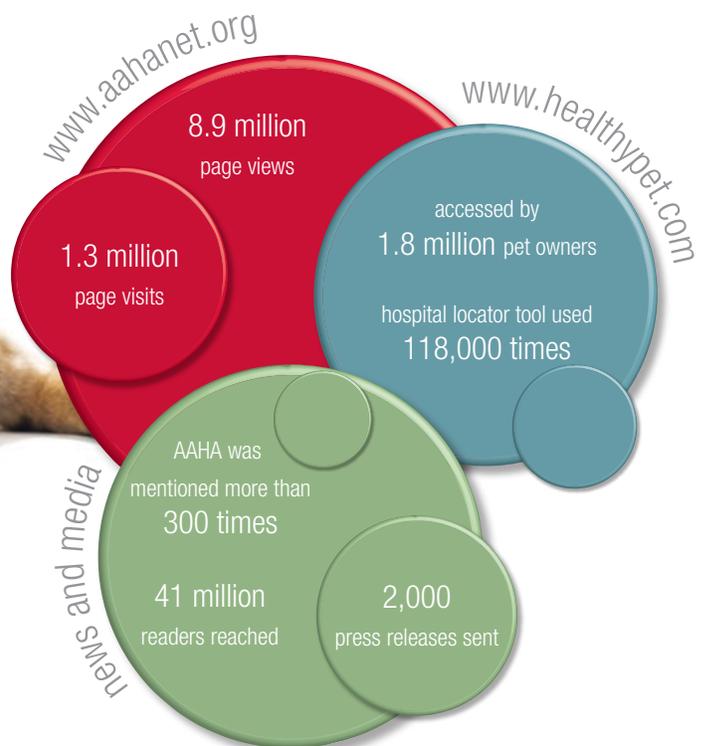
From July 2008 through March 2009, AAHA was mentioned more than **300** times in newspapers, veterinary trade magazines, consumer websites, blogs, television news and pet trade publication articles, reaching an audience of more than **41 million**.

The AAHA PR department sent more than **2,000 press releases** to local media outlets on behalf of 780 newly and re-accredited practices in 2008.

"When you are searching for a pet hospital, make sure you find one that is an accredited member of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). This title is only given to the hospitals that pass comprehensive [evaluations] on their entire facilities, medical equipment, practice methods, and practice management. These facilities must also keep up on their strict AAHA standards in order to maintain the approved status."

— Marketing Article Bank, 9/19/2008

HealthyPet.com was accessed by 1.8 million pet owners in 2008, and the hospital locator tool was used more than 118,000 times. The hospital locator can also be found on *www.webvet.com*, *www.petside.com* and *www.pets911.com*. In addition, *www.aahanet.org* had more than 8.9 million page views and 1.3 million page visits.





Preferred Business Providers

AAHA's Practice Management Advisory Group (PMAG) was created to keep the Association's staff updated on developments in the profession related to practice management and to recommend and evaluate programs and services for AAHA members. The Association turns to the PMAG for feedback on current Preferred Business Providers and ideas for new or modified products and services that might be of benefit to the membership.

New relationships include:

- AAHA employee insurance offers services to assist with group health and employee benefits programs.
- Increase compliance and enhance client education regarding pet wellness and medical care with the Pet Health Network system of medical communications products and services, including interactive exam room touch screens and web-based tools. This is an exclusive accredited member benefit.
- A newly expanded agreement with Vetstreet provides client relationship management software and free distribution of *PetsMatter*.

Other established providers include:

- Business insurance – Hub International Midwest
- Members retirement program – AXA Equitable
- Payment processing solutions – Wells Fargo Merchant Services
- Pet healthcare payment plans – CareCredit
- Practice financing – Matsco
- Drugs and supplies – AAHA MARKETLink

AAHA Career Center



The AAHA Job Bank was overhauled in 2008, to create the new AAHA Career Center. This transformation now offers expanded exposure, easier navigation and custom accessories.

As part of the transition, AAHA has joined the Veterinary Career Network, an alliance of industry associations and schools and colleges of veterinary medicine. This partnership gives job seekers and employers nationwide reach throughout the industry. Job advertisements and resumes posted at the AAHA Career Center can be available at all participating industry organizations' career centers, providing maximum coverage.

"I absolutely love the AAHA Career Center. We have posted positions for associate DVM's, and veterinary technicians. I have already hired a CV, and am in the advanced interview stages with an associate. It's very user-friendly."

– Jennifer Underwood, Practice Manager, CountryChase Veterinary

AAHA Foundation and Helping Pets Fund



Since 1933, AAHA has strived to meet the public's needs for pet care by supporting companion animal veterinary practices through a variety of high-quality programs. The AAHA Board of Directors established a Foundation in 1978 to fund programs that would improve the lives of pets. Although appointed by the AAHA Board of Directors, the AAHA Foundation's Board of Trustees operates independently from the Association's board and guides all Foundation activity.

Today, the Foundation is embracing a benevolent mission through the AAHA Helping Pets Fund, launched in 2005 to help those in need access quality veterinary care. The AAHA Helping Pets Fund has awarded over **1,000 grants** worth nearly **\$900,000** to help pets in need across the nation. This fund provides financial assistance through AAHA-accredited veterinary practices for emergency and non-elective veterinary care when an animal has been abandoned or their owner is experiencing financial hardship.

The AAHA Helping Pets Fund recognizes CareCredit as a Founding Benefactor. CareCredit's generous donations of **\$50,000** in 2007 and 2008 have had a tremendous impact on the ability to meet Foundation goals. We thank them and every donor that has been a part of this effort.

Visit www.aahahelpingpets.org to find out more about the Helping Pets Fund.





Accreditation

According to 2008 *Financial and Productivity Pulsepoints* research findings, AAHA-accredited practices are renowned for their excellence in veterinary care, client service and sound management practices and are, on average, more successful than nonaccredited and non-member practices.

Launched in the 2008/09 Fiscal Year

REFERRAL ACCREDITATION

2008 was the launch of the *AAHA Referral Standards of Accreditation*. This accreditation expansion was designed to bridge the gap between general and specialty practices. The new process customizes the *AAHA Standards of Accreditation* to apply directly to specialties. Referral practices with a board-certified veterinarian on staff can now become AAHA-accredited through the *AAHA Referral Standards*, strengthening communications throughout the industry and improving the quality of care being provided.

“AAHA is focused on facilitating high quality care in small animal practice, and the AAHA Referral Standards are a natural extension of this goal. Furthermore, AAHA is committed to enhancing communications between referring and receiving veterinary practices to achieve the highest levels of success.”

– Link Welborn, DVM, DABVP, *AAHA Referral Standards* Task Force Member

To date, **33 referral practices** have become AAHA-accredited, representing **103 specialties**.

ONLINE ACCREDITATION TOOL

A new online accreditation tool that made preparing for the AAHA accreditation evaluation more efficient and effective was introduced. The online tool provides these benefits as members work through the *Standards of Accreditation*:

- Work from any computer with internet access
- Allow access to multiple users simultaneously
- Save time with the ability to view multiple questions on one page
- Track your progress with running point totals
- Ask your Practice Accreditation Coordinator questions as they follow along
- Get instant access to suggested resources
- Change your answers as new processes are implemented
- Use protocol examples

FREE WEBSITES

A new member benefit was introduced to accredited members. Free websites with the option to choose from nine different templates feature:

- Complimentary maintenance and hosting of the site, saving time and money
- Fresh content updated continuously to keep clients interested
- Professional design makes it easy for clients to navigate
- Customization options, including staff, services and more
- Search engine optimization so clients can easily find practices on the web
- Accreditation messages educate clients about the excellence accredited members stand for
- Client access to *PetsMatter* directly from the practice's website

ONLINE FORUM

Hospitals working toward first time or re-accreditation now have access to an online forum that allows them to help one another through the accreditation preparation and process. The forum allows accredited members to bounce ideas off peers, ask questions of colleagues that are facing the same challenges, and share what works, to achieve successful accreditation as an industry-wide team.

EXTERNSHIP DIRECTORY

The new *AAHA Externship Directory* is the first guide for students exclusively featuring AAHA-accredited practices. Based on a recent survey, **75%** of AAHA student members think it's important to work at an AAHA-accredited hospital after they graduate. The *Externship Directory* allows access to these prospective associates who understand the value of AAHA and accreditation.

Employer benefits:

- The listing is a free accredited member benefit
- Easily edit or remove information
- No more posting and re-posting positions
- The directory is promoted primarily to AAHA student members

Visit student.aahanet.org to add practice information to the new *AAHA Externship Directory*.

Ongoing Resources

In addition to the accredited perks introduced in the last year, the Association devotes a constant flow of resources to accreditation.

The *AAHA Standards of Accreditation* are regularly reviewed to ensure their accuracy and reflection of the most current medical practices. AAHA's Practice Accreditation Advisory Group (PAAG) is primarily responsible for this. Their role is to share and discuss personal accreditation experiences, offering suggestions for improvements regarding the *Standards*, delivery tool and overall accreditation process.

The Membership Audit and Control Committee also works closely on the *Standards of Accreditation*. This committee assists with violations, processes complaints, facilitates interpretation, develops recommendations, approves all newly accredited members and assesses evaluation delay requests.

AAHA practice consultants evaluate more than **1,000 practices** annually. Their individual regions are determined by the location and number of accredited practices in each. The goal of the practice consultants is to provide the maximum level of personal attention and service to each practice member during accreditation evaluations, courtesy calls and lunch-and-learn opportunities. In addition, practice consultants represent AAHA at all veterinary industry regional and national meetings, and are involved in AAHA Veterinary Leadership Workshops and other AAHA educational seminars. On average they reach out to and interact with members and nonmembers each year as follows:



In-house coordinators support and assist the practice consultants and work one-on-one with practice team members throughout the evaluation preparation process. The coordinators have extensive knowledge of the standards and can assist in the use of the new online evaluation tool. They also provide valuable resources and answer any questions practices may have about accreditation or the evaluation process.

Led by Debbie Gadowski, CVT, AAHA national field operations manager, there are currently **nine practice consultants** who team with **five in-house coordinators** to cover regions that encompass the entire United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

Practice management resources are provided by Corinne Ryan, CVPM, AAHA member advocate and accreditation supervisor. She responds to more than **100 emails and phone calls** each month from members requesting information about fees, human resources, handbooks, safety, practice transition, salary ranges, marketing and more.

What Are Members Saying About Accreditation?

"It is the best thing I have done within veterinary medicine. Years ago I thought I was doing fine and accreditation would only be a formality, but I was wrong. It was a great experience and it forced me to be better. It helps us focus on being more proficient."

– David Westby, DVM, Raintree Veterinary Center, Hoquiam, Wash.

"We originally decided to become AAHA-accredited to ensure that we were practicing at the highest standard possible. With a great team effort we came away with improved quality of care, increased staff morale and a practice consultant who continues to be a wonderful resource."

– Lynne Schroeder, MBA, Westfield Veterinary Group, Westfield, N.J.

"Obtaining AAHA referral accreditation gives us credibility with both our clients and the veterinarians who rely on us and trust us to help them with their cases."

– Paul A. Cervone, CVPM, Hospital Administrator
VCA Emergency Animal Hospital & Referral Center, San Diego, Calif.

"I can remember when AAHA evaluations were terrifying experiences. No longer! The new referral accreditation is an easy-to-use, computer-aided program in which the doctors and staff can go through and evaluate themselves at their own pace. The specialty practice, referring practices and patients benefit from improved standards encouraged by the evaluation and practice consultant."

– Steven E. Holmstrom, DVM, Diplomate American Veterinary
Dental Collage (DAVDC), Animal Dental Clinic, San Carlos, Calif.

AAHA Publishing

AAHA Publishing encompasses AAHA Press, *Trends magazine*, *Trends online*, *NEWStat*, *PetsMatter* and the *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association (JAAHA)*. AAHA utilizes both research and the Education and Publications Advisory Group (EPAG) for new ideas and modifications to existing products related to publishing.



AAHA Press

AAHA Press publishes easy-to-use, relevant resources designed to build practice success, including **12 new titles** published or made available in the 2008/09 fiscal year

- *101 Veterinary Technician Questions Answered*
- *Be Safe! Managers Guide to Radiation and Waste Anesthetic Gases*
- *Boothe's Small Animal Formulary*, Sixth Edition
- *Career Choices for Veterinary Technicians*
- *Financial & Productivity Pulsepoints*, Fifth Edition
- *First Steps with Puppies and Kittens: A Practice-Team Approach to Behavior*
- *How We Do Things Here: Developing and Teaching Office-Wide Protocols*
- *Low-Stress Handling, Restraint, and Behavior Modification of Dogs and Cats*
- *Pet First Aid and Disaster Response Guide*
- *Team Satisfaction Pays: Organizational Development for Practice Success*
- *What's That? A Beginner's Guide to Veterinary Ultrasound*
- *The Veterinary Fee Reference*, Sixth Edition

During the past year, **3,000 practices** worldwide will have purchased an AAHA Press product. Estimating eight people per organization, **24,000 veterinary professionals** have been touched by AAHA Press products.

On the client side, through pet health and behavior brochures and other client education giveaways, AAHA Press has reached approximately **1 million pet owners**.

Trends magazine

Trends magazine is the essential business and practice management magazine for veterinary professionals, and the past year offered more than ever to advertisers and readers. Circulation was increased by **45 percent** to include every veterinarian, practice manager and technician at all AAHA member practices. The magazine's frequency also increased from six to eight issues per year. The two additional "special issues" were distributed to bonus circulations, including additional audiences and at industry conferences.

Trends online

Trends online gives readers instant access to news in veterinary practice, as well as news and features relevant to practices everywhere. *Trends online* provides supplementary information that can't be found in *Trends magazine*, creating synergy rather than duplication. The interactive portal offers original web-only articles, videos, polls, quizzes, training and much more.

NEWStat

AAHA's biweekly email newsletter is an exclusive member benefit for the entire practice team. *NEWStat* includes feature articles on timely topics and covers breaking news within the companion animal industry. Its convenient format is easy to read and share with others, including hyperlinks that guide members to additional information on subjects of veterinary interest.

PetsMatter

PetsMatter is a bi-monthly e-newsletter produced for AAHA members' clients. It is delivered directly to clients from their veterinary hospital. The mission of *PetsMatter* is to foster communication and strengthen the relationship between pet owners and their veterinarians. The newsletter features a mix of brief articles to:

- Inform pet owners about medical issues, health-related lifestyle issues and other key pet health topics
- Emphasize the importance of effective communication between veterinary professionals and clients
- Urge pet owners to visit clinics regularly and to ask questions about pain management, wellness visits, dental exams and more

JAAHA

This bimonthly, online, peer-reviewed journal provides the latest insights and discoveries for clinicians from around the world. User-friendly features include videos, new issue email alerts, one-click printing, an archive of issues since 1998, a comprehensive search function, links to cited articles and more.

AAHA Continuing Education

AAHA has developed a world-wide reputation for cutting edge, quality continuing education. As an AAHA member, you have access to these exceptional programs at a discounted price. The Education and Publications Advisory Group (EPAG) is responsible for keeping the education staff up to date on developments in the profession and reviewing educational materials for content and suitability.

Educational Programs

AAHA offers educational opportunities for virtually all practice team members, including:

- National Staff Meeting Web Conferences
- Midwest Small Animal Association (MSAA)/AAHA Meeting
- Veterinary Leadership Workshops
- Veterinary Management School (VMS), Levels One and Two
- Veterinary Management Institute (VMI)
- Distance Education Veterinary Technology Program (DEVTP)
- Regional meetings (2009 Southeast Regional Meeting in Atlanta, Ga.)

AAHA also offers a free online microchipping course in 2008 and 2009, open to all veterinary and shelter professionals, entitled *AAHA Microchipping and Scanning Companion Animals*. You can find out more about this course in the "Education" section of www.aahanet.org.

In the past year, these programs had a total of **3,166 attendees** physically present, with an additional **8,010 online learners** from the DEVTP, web conference and microchipping programs. Together, meeting attendees obtained **65,027 CE hours**.



AAHA Phoenix 2009 Yearly Conference

"This is the first AAHA conference I've attended and it's very impressive. It's user-friendly, easy to get around, friendly atmosphere. The presentations are good, clinically relevant, all-in-all a great value."

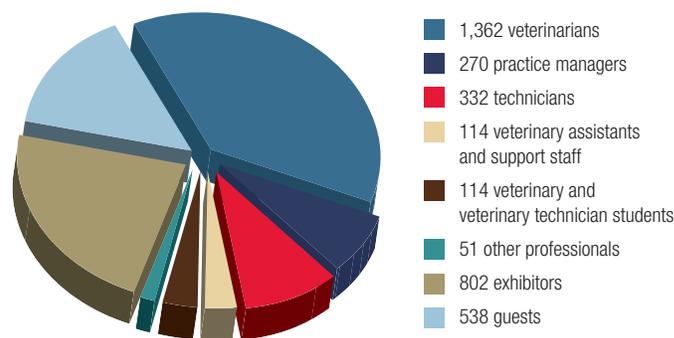
— Don Ragland, DVM

Ragland & Riley Veterinary Hospital PLLC, Livingston, Tenn.



Each year the Yearly Conference Development Committee (YCDC) is called upon to ensure a smooth planning process by identifying, reviewing and selecting high quality, relevant, advanced and interesting or popular presentation topics and speakers.

AAHA Phoenix 2009 Attendees – 3,583 total



AAHA Phoenix 2009 had a total of 3,583 attendees taking advantage of the cutting edge CE and friendly atmosphere found only at AAHA conferences. Attendance included 1,362 veterinarians, 270 practice managers, 332 technicians, 114 veterinary assistants and support staff, 114 veterinary and veterinary technician students, 51 other professionals, 538 guests, and 802 exhibitors.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

AAHA Long Beach 2010

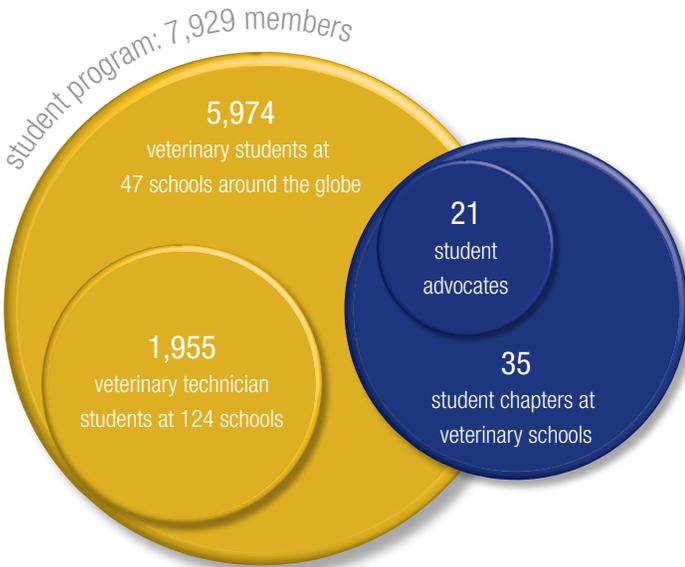
March 18-21, 2010, Long Beach, California

AAHA/OVMA Conference

March 24-27, 2011, Toronto, Canada

Student Program

In the past year, AAHA has made the student program a priority. The Association has taken enormous strides to research exactly what it is that students need and want, so that the AAHA becomes a resource they can turn to.



New tools have been developed in response to this research to ensure that AAHA is meeting the next generation of veterinary professionals' needs. The new student website, student.aahanet.org, serves as a toolbox for all these resources, including specific sections about career planning, financial planning and life balance. There, students will find:

- Video clips with advice from practicing veterinarians
- Interactive tools for creating mission statements, vision plans and goals
- The *AAHA Mentoring Guidelines* and other mentoring tools
- Help finding externships in the NEW *Externship Directory*
- Compensation and debt management information
- Budget templates and loan calculators
- Stress tests and tips

As of February 2009, with the new design, there has been a **40%** increase in page views, and **75%** increase in visits.

AAHA supports continuing education and programs designed for students across the industry. The Association's 2008/09 sponsorships include:

- AVMA Veterinary Leadership Experience (VLE), an opportunity for students and faculty to develop leadership skills through an interactive curriculum that is designed to encourage, challenge and drive personal growth and transformation
- Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Symposium: *Small Animal Emergency and Critical Care* lecture series at the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, March 26-28, 2009
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) Symposium
- Ohio State University FurBALL and Freshman Orientation program
- University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine Run for Rabies, part of SAVMA's World Rabies Day One Health Challenge
- More than 200 AAHA student chapter events

The *AAHA Externship Directory* is the newest addition to the resources housed on the student website. This directory is a one-stop-shop for students to find opportunities at accredited practices.

Externship Directory student benefits:

- Free
- Features only accredited practices and is the only comprehensive guide available for accredited hospitals that offer externships
- Provides complete and ample information regarding each externship, including what clinical skills externs will learn, if there is a stipend offered, number of doctors at the practice, equipment used, caseload expectations and more
- Very user-friendly and searchable by various items, including hospital name, state and position type

"AAHA exemplifies what it means to strive for excellence, constantly on the forefront of addressing pertinent issues in veterinary medicine. As a student, it is important to learn the absolute best medicine, and being a student member of AAHA allows me to be exposed to what it means to be an exemplary veterinarian."

– Kelvin Urday, AAHA Student Chapter President, University of Missouri

Accreditation Awareness Campaign

AAHA is launching a **\$1 million** accreditation awareness campaign throughout the U.S. and Canada, the biggest outreach effort to the pet-owning public in the Association's history. In the next three years, you will see:

- Commercials on *Animal Planet* programming
 - 15-second ad spots to air approximately 145 times in 2010, throughout *Heroes* and other highly-rated pet programming, yielding approximately **83.4 million** impressions
 - Custom 30-second educational commercials to air approximately 200 times in 2010, throughout pet-related programming, yielding approximately **104 million** impressions
- A major sponsorship with the *Animal Planet* Puppy Bowl
- Online editorial outreach program to target influential industry bloggers
- Educational and informational webinars geared toward pet-owners
- AAHA YouTube channel
- Relocation, shelter and breeder partnerships
- Co-op advertising opportunities in local markets, such as yellow pages, newspapers, local television, etc.
- Online advertisements on influential pet-related websites
- Search engine optimization for www.aahanet.org and www.healthypet.com
- Newly re-designed www.healthypet.com

There has never been a better time to be accredited. The time and money invested into this achievement has never offered such an outstanding return opportunity. AAHA is building a national brand around accredited hospitals that will benefit every member who chooses to demonstrate their commitment to the standards and prove the quality of care they're providing.



01:01:10

**THE TIME
IS NOW**

ACCREDITATION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



The Standard of
Veterinary Excellence

As part of this campaign, the Association itself is rebranding, updating the logo and tagline to meet the demands of today's pet owners. Research shows that pet owners care about accreditation, and that the new face of AAHA, including the new logo and tagline, positively impacts their attitude toward accreditation.

What pet owners are saying after being educated about accreditation



The Association understands this is a huge undertaking for each individual practice, and there will be extensive resources and education available to help accredited practices every step of the way. The Accreditation Awareness Advisory Group (AAAG) has been established, representing geographical regions, to spread the word and answer questions. This group will help AAHA communicate to and educate industry professionals (members and nonmembers) about the value of accreditation and the accreditation awareness campaign.

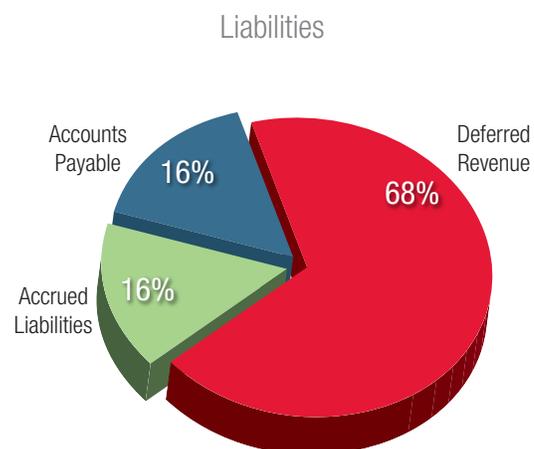
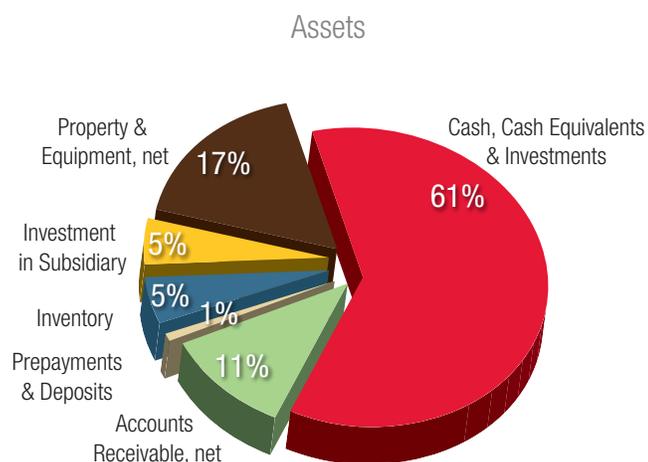
For more information and updates, visit www.aahanet.org.



Financial Statement

AAHA Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2008 (Excludes AAHA Services Corporation)



Assets

Current Assets:

Cash, cash equivalents & investments	\$ 5,218,685
Accounts receivable, net	963,819
Prepayments & deposits	76,505
Inventory	424,938
Total Current Assets:	6,683,947
Investment in subsidiary	445,000
Property & equipment, net	1,489,309
Total Assets	\$ 8,618,256

Liabilities & Net Assets

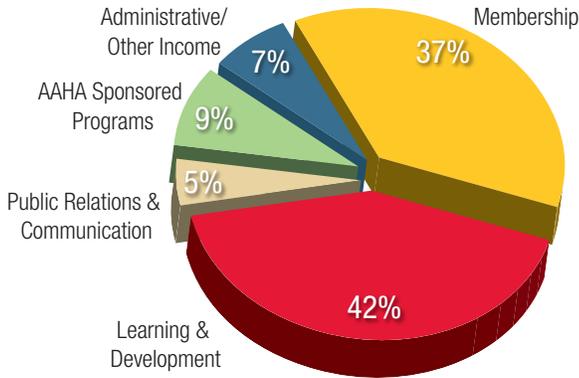
Current Liabilities:

Accounts payable	\$ 658,992
Accrued liabilities	680,370
Deferred revenue	2,809,158
Total Liabilities	4,148,520
Net Assets:	
Unrestricted	4,469,736
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 8,618,256

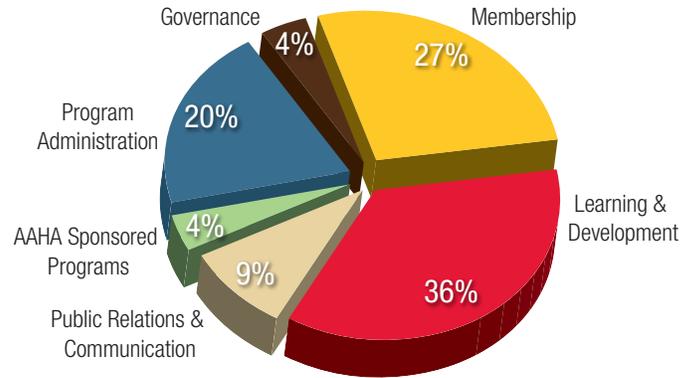
AAHA Statement of Activities

As of June 30, 2008 (Excludes AAHA Services Corporation)

Where the Dollars Came From



Where the Dollars Were Used



Revenue

Membership	\$	4,108,950
Learning & Development		4,718,755
Public Relations & Communications		531,858
AAHA Sponsored Programs		993,424
Administrative/Other Income		734,579
Total Revenue	\$	<u>11,087,566</u>

Expense

Program Services:		
Membership	\$	2,978,796
Learning & Development		3,865,839
Public Relations & Communications		990,256
AAHA Sponsored Programs		428,552
Supporting Services:		
Program Administration		2,124,907
Governance		476,772
Total Expenses	\$	<u>10,865,122</u>

Change in Net Assets Before Tax	\$	222,444
Income Tax Expense		(105,665)
Change in Net Assets		116,779
Net Assets, Beginning of Year		4,352,957
Net Assets, End of Year	\$	<u>4,469,736</u>

Member Benefits

We know that your drive to be part of AAHA goes far beyond tangible member benefits. That you take personal stake in your membership and everything it entails:

- Ensuring consistency, quality and best practices in delivering pet care
- Furthering the profession as a whole and raising the level of care being provided industry-wide
- Staying at the forefront of veterinary medicine in every aspect

Which is why the Association is doing more than ever to give you a reason continue your membership. [Click here to view a list of member benefits:](#)

Individual Member Benefits

Nonaccredited Member Benefits

Accredited Member Benefits, in addition to the regular member benefits





The Standard of
Veterinary Excellence

American Animal Hospital Association

12575 W Bayaud Avenue

Lakewood, CO 80228-2021

Phone: 800/252-2242 or 303/986-2800

Fax: 303/986-1700

Member Service Center: 800/883-6301 or msc@aaahanet.org

Practice Accreditation: practice.accreditation@aaahanet.org

www.aaahanet.org | www.healthypet.com