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Nurses for Animals

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Bellwether 8

University of Pennsylvania // Summer 1983

Nurses for Animals

The comfort of patients and the smooth functioning of a hospital depends very much on a skilled nursing staff. This not only applies to a human hospital but also to an animal hospital. At the two facilities of the School of Veterinary Medicine, VHUP and New Bolton Center, the four-legged patients are cared for by a trained, full-time nursing staff. The nurse-technicians at both hospitals are state certified and have extensive training in animal care. Their charges range from small exotic birds to giant dogs at VHUP, and from lambs to stallions at New Bolton Center. Each hospital has facilities tailored to the special needs of its patients.

At VHUP hospitalized animals are cared for in wards on the third floor of the new hospital. At New Bolton Center patients are accommodated in barns. VHUP's patients are housed in large stainless steel cages or in runs, depending on their size. This facility is divided into wards. At New Bolton Center the animals are housed in large stalls; there are five barns which serve as wards, four for equines and one for bovines.

Each hospital also has a full-time cleaning staff. At VHUP cages are cleaned and disinfected daily. The stalls at New Bolton Center are cleaned daily. Here the feeding of the animals is handled by the nurses' assistants, at VHUP the nurse-technicians feed the patients.

Both hospitals have a director of nursing. Carole Contel, who is in charge of the intensive care unit at VHUP, directs the nursing staff. This does not include the nurses on duty in the operating rooms, who are under the supervision of Edna Wooters, R.N. At New Bolton the director of nursing is Sue Lindborg. Her staff not only works in the wards but also rotates through the operating rooms and the clinics.

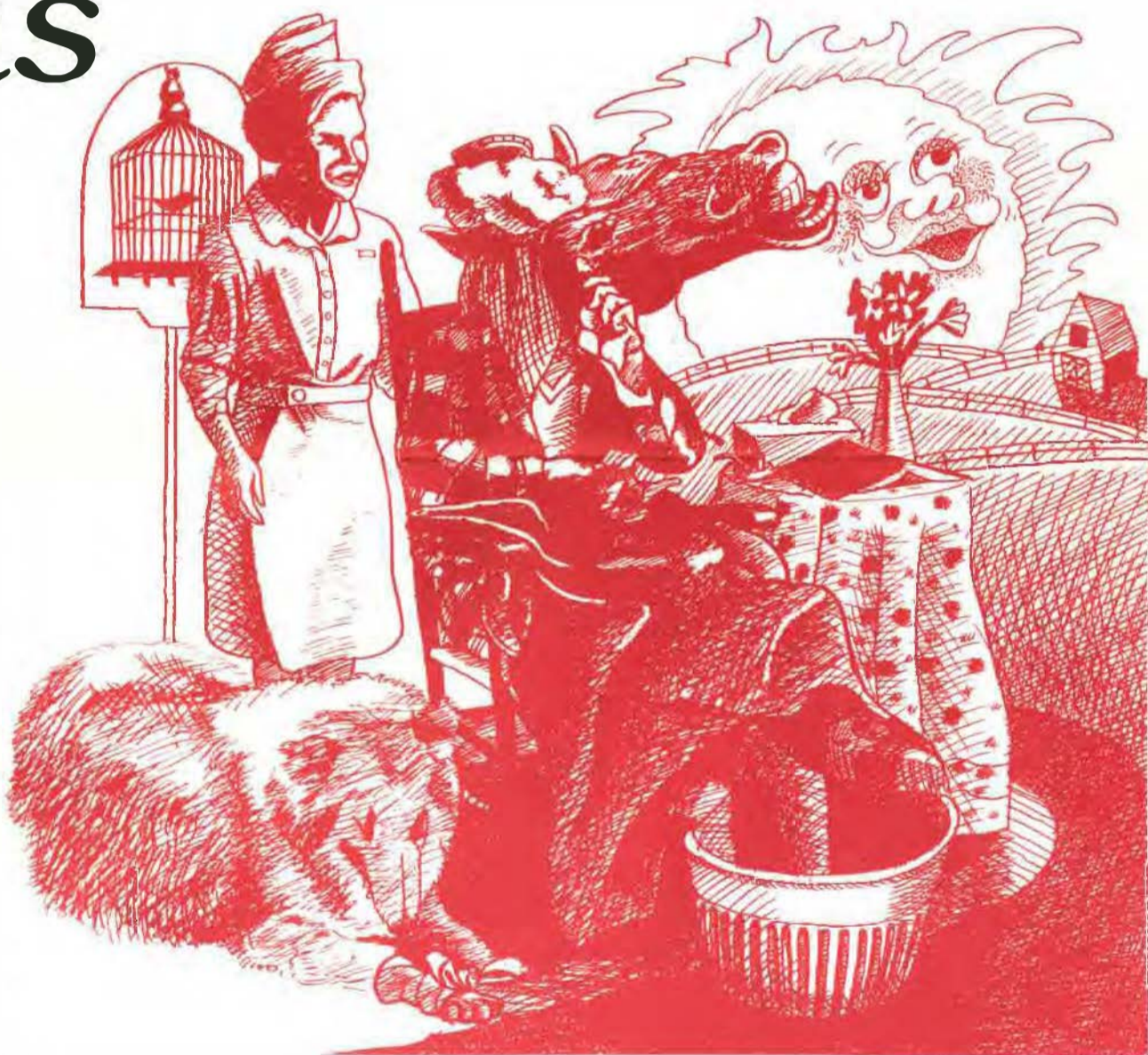


ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL TRINSEY

"We have five full-time nurses here in the ward," said Tinamarie Gilbert, head nurse and staff nurse supervisor at VHUP. "The nurses are on duty during the day in the wards and around the clock in the intensive care unit. During the night students and nurse-technician students from Harcum Junior College are on duty in the wards. The Harcum students work with us during the day and we train them."

New Bolton Center's nurse-technicians are on duty from 8 a.m. until midnight. "For intensive care cases we call in one of the three intensive care nurses who works part-time," said Sue Lindborg. The nurse-technicians at both hospitals have a multitude of duties. "Our nurses give general nursing care, they give medication, physical

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Penn Annual Conference—1984 Change of Date and Location

The new dates for the 1984 Penn Annual Conference are Thursday and Friday, January 26 and 27, 1984. The new location is the Franklin Plaza Hotel, Two Franklin Plaza, Philadelphia, PA. For further information contact: Ashra Markowitz, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, 3800 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19104. Call (215) 898-4234.

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NURSES FOR ANIMALS

(continued from cover)

therapy, draw blood and handle tests," said Ms. Gilbert. "They make sure that the animal is fed, exercised, groomed and bathed and is comfortable." At New Bolton, in addition to the nursing care, duties include preparing the animal for surgery and, when assisting in the operating room, gowning the surgeon and handing instruments during surgery.

At VHUP the wards are divided into sections, each with a nurse who is responsible for her ward. There are two medical wards for non-surgical cases such as patients admitted to dermatology, neurology and the like. There is an orthopedic ward which, in addition to cages and runs, has a special treatment room with a whirlpool and waterbeds for animals which must remain prone after surgery. Soft tissue patients have a separate ward as have exotic animals. The space for the latter can be kept at higher temperatures and the humidity can be adjusted to suit the needs of the patients. Animals requiring semi-intensive care are housed in the fluid therapy ward and those in critical condition are placed in the intensive care unit. This facility is equipped with oxygen cages, an EKG monitor and other sophisticated equipment. VHUP also has an isolation ward, a totally self-contained unit. "We have separate equipment and supplies here in each of the three units of the ward," said Ms. Gilbert. "Our laundry is kept apart from that of the general ward and we wear disposable gowns and gloves when we enter each section. One section is for animals with contagious diseases, one is for animals with parvovirus disease and the third is for animals suspected of having parvovirus disease. When we leave the unit we have to use a foot bath and spray ourselves to prevent contamination of other areas of the hospital."

In addition to the wards the floor also houses special areas for oncology patients and for animals treated with radioactive materials. There is also a special quarantine section. Spaced

between the wards are large treatment rooms where patients are taken for treatments, bathing or grooming.

The nurse-technicians at VHUP, like their counterparts at New Bolton Center, monitor the animals and report any changes to the clinician in charge. "This is true not only for the intensive care unit but for patients in the other sections as well," explained Ms. Gilbert. "We keep in close contact with the clinician in charge."

"Some of our IV fluid jugs hold twenty liters and it takes two people to hoist these up high enough so the drip functions properly."

While the activities of the nurse-technicians at VHUP are concentrated on the third floor of a building, nurse-technicians at New Bolton Center frequently brave the elements while rushing between the barns, Widener Memorial Hospital and the nurses' station. The nature and the size of the patients often requires a lot more physical exertion. "We hold horses and cattle and help to move them around," said Mrs. Lindborg. "Some of our IV fluid jugs hold twenty liters and it takes two people to hoist these up high enough so the drip functions properly." Nurse-technicians at New Bolton also have to handwalk or handgraze horses. This means being exposed to all kinds of weather. "In the winter it gets really cold, particularly if you sit with an animal while on intensive care duty."

The nursing staff at New Bolton Center, numbering ten, rotate through the entire facility. Handling the large patients requires different skills than those needed for the animals at VHUP. "Most of our nurses have equine backgrounds," said Mrs. Lindborg who herself is a certified assistant riding instructor. "In pediatrics, when the foal is the patient, the mare comes also and we have to care for both," she explained. "Mares are very maternal and great care has to be taken when the foal is removed for surgery. Often the mare has to be tranquilized because she gets so worried."



Judy Smith





New Bolton Center has an isolation area for animals suspected of contagious diseases. It does not have an intensive care unit as such. "Intensive care takes place wherever the animal is," Mrs. Lindborg explained. "We move the equipment and fluids needed and then stay with the animal around the clock."

The nursing staff at New Bolton Center, like the staff at VHUP, is assisted by student technicians from Harcum Junior College. "They are here for seventeen weeks and we train them in large animal care, just like they are trained in small animal care at VHUP," said Mrs. Lindborg. The nursing staff at both facilities is now in the process of developing special courses and lectures for the continuing education requirement mandated by the state. "We have to have eight continuing education credits every two years," said Ms. Gilbert. "These are necessary to keep our license in force."

The nurse technicians enjoy their work and the interaction with animals and clinicians. "We can take care of a lot of routine work and tests," said Ms. Gilbert. "This frees the clinicians to see more cases." Both Mrs. Lindborg and Ms. Gilbert feel that the nurse-technician has a vital role in modern veterinary medicine. "The students and clinicians are very used to competent nursing care provided at the hospitals," Mrs. Lindborg said. "When they go into practice they will be looking for people trained like the nurse-technicians at VHUP and New Bolton Center."

The animals at both facilities are in good hands, benefitting not only from the advances made in veterinary medicine but also from the skilled care and monitoring provided by the trained staff of nurse-technicians. Long gone are the days where wards and barns were left in the care of unskilled personnel. Today veterinary medicine, like human medicine, demands and provides care which requires special skills and training. The animal nurse-technicians, like their counterparts in human hospitals, are the support for the clinicians. They look after the patients, monitor the progress and administer treatments, helping to pave the way to recovery.



Mr. W. Wilson Goode, Democratic Candidate for Mayor of Philadelphia, visited VHUP recently. Pictured with him is his wife, Velma, who is assistant to Associate Dean, Donald A. Abt.



Enjoying the Alumni Reception at the New Jersey VMA's 99th Annual Meeting at Harrah's, Atlantic City, on April 13 are: (from left to right) Dr. Harold M. S. Smith, V'43, Dean Robert R. Marshak, and Dr. Scott E. Palmer, V'76.



Mr. Bertram Lippincott accompanied by Dean Robert R. Marshak views the bust of his grandfather, Joshua B. Lippincott, whose original donations helped to make possible the building of the Veterinary School. Both J. Bertram Lippincott, his father and Mr. Bertram Lippincott continued the family interest in the School by serving on the Board of Managers of Veterinary Hospital and supporting the annual Lippincott prize awarded the senior student with the highest grade average at graduation. Mr. Lippincott was guest of honor at a luncheon at the School in March.