



10-1-2009

Dean's Message

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As dean, I spend a tremendous amount of time speaking to humans about the importance of animals. I speak to legislators concerned about the health of agriculture and food sources. I speak to advocates of animal welfare. I speak to clinicians, students and alumni who want to integrate the most innovative research into their practice. I speak to pet owners and advocates who care deeply about the fate of the animals that bring such meaning to our lives.

The nature of the bond between humans and their animal companions is endlessly interesting—especially to those of us whose lives are centrally enriched by our connections to animals. Consider my current canine companion—the cleverly named “Rocky”—the goofy, conformationally challenged English Bulldog pictured below. I first met him across a crowded room at Penn Vet’s



Photo by Lisa Godfrey

Intensive Care Unit. He was a happy 12-week-old puppy with pneumonia. Our eyes met and our connection was instantaneous. He was, and is, a completely winning dog; his only apparent interest (beyond food) is to make sure that he is first in the hearts of his people. I immediately said, as a joke (everyone knows my weakness for English Bulldogs) that if his owners wanted to give him up for adoption I stood ready to serve. By the next morning, this had come to pass. That was six years ago.



Why this dog? Why does seeing him make me happy *every* day? I’ve had personal reasons to think about the mutual love affair between dogs and humans. Fate brought my family not one, but *two* lost dogs in the last few months. My husband — *always* leaping at the chance to save animals — has a quick eye and a quick way with a motor vehicle. So when we found two dogs during family outings, I was able to get each dog into custody without delay or trauma. We then waited anxiously to see if our calls to local police, shelters, vet clinics, and our postings on the web would yield a happy ending; both did—both *totally* satisfying as the families and dogs were reunited. There was much species-specific evidence of happiness: tail wagging, leaping, hugging, and tears. So here’s what I find amazing: during the few days it took to find each dog’s family, we bonded to these two very different dogs (neither was an English Bulldog or even close!). It was a real loss to let each dog go but also a profound delight to see them snap back into place with their real families.

Over the last months, many of you have helped us reach out to the governor of Pennsylvania and to the legislators of the Commonwealth to make our case for support as we faced unprecedented short-falls in state funding. The case we have made for Commonwealth support rested primarily and rightfully on Penn Vet’s critical assistance to agriculture and public health. The vital nature of veterinary medicine to agriculture and public health can not be overstated.

However, for thousands of *Bellwether* readers there is a more tangible and personal case for supporting Penn Vet. It is that the animals that occupy our homes are absolutely essential to us and to our well being.

In fondness for all you do—friends, clients, alumni—on behalf of the large and small animals that make our lives so rich and full of family,

—JOAN C. HENDRICKS, V’79, GR’80
THE GILBERT S. KAHN DEAN OF VETERINARY MEDICINE