Shelter Practice Clerkship

I. Course information

Number: VEM 5863/VME 6XXX (Third and fourth-year veterinary students or graduate veterinarians only)
Course Title: Shelter Practice Clerkship
Phase: Special Elective for UF-DVM students in Phase 3 (VEM 5863)
Semester: 2-Week Block Schedule –
        Can be taken as either:
        Part A (in North Florida), or
        Part B (in South Florida)
Year: Every Year (Parts A and B are each offered for a total of 40 out of 52 weeks of the year)
Course credit: 2 credits per two-week rotation (may be repeated for a total of 4 credits if take both Parts A and B)
Students on Rotation: 1 to 4 in each location (more by special arrangement with supervising clinicians)

II. General information

Course Coordinator: TBD
        Office location & office hours: SAH XXX office hours by appointment
        Office phone number: 352-294-4757
        Email: sheltermedicine@ufl.edu

Course Faculty: Dr. Lawrence Garcia (Alachua County Animal Services in North Florida)
                Dr. XXX (TBD at Miami-Dade Animal Services in South Florida)

III. Course description

Overview:
Shelter Medicine is a new specialty area of veterinary practice recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AMVA) and credentialed by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP). There are approximately 13,600 animal shelters in the USA, each of which desires the services of a veterinarian who is skilled and knowledgeable about this new area of veterinary practice. Every private practitioner will see shelter pets in their practices when brought in by local shelters, nonprofit rescue groups, and foster families for medical care. Shelter pets are now the most common source of new pets in the USA, with potential adopters able to select from the 7.6 million dogs and cats that find themselves in the shelter system each year.

Students in this two-week elective Shelter Practice Clerkship will learn how to care for these animals as individuals and as a population via an immersive, hands-on experience in a municipal animal shelter. Because of the diverse set of skills required to practice shelter medicine, this clerkship is divided into two parts that each focus on a different aspect of shelter medicine.

Focus of Part A: This clerkship focuses on the physical health and welfare aspects of shelter practice as guided by the standards of care published by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV). Students will participate in all aspects of shelter practice, including population medicine, behavior assessment and modification, zoonotic and species-specific infectious disease control, and shelter administration. Students will also practice primary-care skills on individual shelter animals while performing physical examinations and preventative care for incoming animals as well as diagnostic and treatment procedures for ill and injured pets in the care of the animal...
shelter. Students will learn about the operations of a moderately-sized municipal animal shelter by spending time within the various departments to witness intake, kennel care, adoptions, and animal control functions and to see how cultural diversity and public policy factors in to shelter operations. Students may also observe forensic cases as opportunities arise. (This 2-week rotation is conducted at Alachua County Animal Services in Gainesville, Florida.)

Focus of Part B: This clerkship focuses on the high-quality/high-volume surgical procedures applied in shelter medicine and guided by standards of practice published by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV). Students will perform spays, neuters, and other common surgical procedures common to the practice of shelter medicine as the opportunities arise (i.e., wound repairs, amputations, enucleations, lumpectomies, FHO procedures, dental extractions). Students will practice pain management protocols, conduct pre-operative physical examinations, and manage post-operative recovery of each surgical patient. Students will learn about the operations of a large-sized municipal animal shelter by spending time within the various departments to witness intake, kennel care, adoptions, and animal control functions and to see how cultural diversity and public policy factors in to shelter operations. Students may also observe forensic cases as opportunities arise. (This 2-week rotation is conducted at Miami Dade Animal Services in Doral, Florida.)

Course goals:

Part A: Provide students with hands-on training in the population and individual animal health and welfare practices within a medium-sized municipal animal shelter in North Florida. Students will understand the critical role played by veterinarians in protecting the health and welfare of sheltered dogs and cats and be able to recognize and respond to compromised physical and behavioral health conditions of shelter pets; understand animal shelter operations and flow through; and develop proficiency in basic diagnostic evaluation procedures and creating shelter appropriate treatment plans.

Part B: Provide students with hands-on training in high-quality, high-volume surgical practices within a large-sized municipal animal shelter in South Florida. Students will apply the standards of care for high-quality/high-volume surgical practice, including selection of patients, anesthetic monitoring, surgical record keeping, multi-modal pain management, and post-operative recovery. Students will understand the critical role played by veterinarians in reducing pet overpopulation within a culturally diverse-community.

Course Objectives:

Part A: Students who successfully complete the clerkship will:

1.) Perform a thorough intake examination for each shelter animal and administer appropriate treatments based on shelter best practices and shelter resources and document all findings.

2.) Make decisions (pathway planning) that decrease length of stay in the shelter and promote live outcomes.

3.) Collaborate and communicate well with colleagues and staff in the shelter setting.

4.) Manage time appropriately to allow for comprehensive consistent medical supervision of the shelter population.
5.) Perform thorough diagnostic evaluations without tools such as radiographs or other common tools available in veterinary practices, but usually not available in shelters.

6.) Create a medical treatment plan for sheltered animal considering the animal’s needs, shelter resource and budgetary limitations and take into consideration the impact of the resource allocation on the entire herd.

Part A Required SLO’s

a) Perform a physical examination on a cat
b) Perform a physical examination on a dog
c) Identify signs of pain in a patient
d) Demonstrate understanding of biosecurity principles
e) Demonstrate the ability to present case findings and summarize conclusions verbally
f) Prepare, perform, and interpret fecal flotation for parasites

Part B: Students who successfully complete the clerkship will:

1. Use the ASV Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-neuter Programs to conduct surgery in the shelter environment.
2. Apply biosecurity protocols designed to minimize risk of spreading pathogens or acquiring an infectious disease in the shelter environment.
3. Diagnose and treat common surgical problems in shelter animals.
4. Demonstrate low-stress, safe, and humane animal handling methods when working with shelter pets.
5. Demonstrate proper medical recordkeeping and maintain appropriate drug logs for surgical procedures conducted in the animal shelter.
6. Spay and neuter dogs and cats while managing the safety and welfare of each patient during the pre-operative, intra-operative, and post-operative periods.
7. Identify practices in the shelter setting that contribute to signs of compassion-fatigue and/or burn-out and discuss preventive strategies.
8. Use the (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters as a guide for the practice of veterinary medicine in a shelter environment.

Course schedule:

Both Parts A and B are elective, full-time, two-week clinical rotations in a Florida animal shelter. Travel is required to the clerkship locations. Local housing will be available for students who travel more than 2 hours to the location. Students will report to the shelter at 8 am Monday-Friday and can expect to remain on duty until 6 pm. Animal treatment duty may be required during occasional after hours or weekend periods.

Course prerequisites:

For veterinarians: A veterinary degree from an AVMA accredited veterinary college.
For veterinary students:
  • Junior or senior student ranking for both Parts A and B.
• Completion of surgical and anesthesia training for Part B.

IV. Course Materials

Required texts:
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-neuter Programs

Recommended texts:
- Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters
- Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff, Second Edition
- Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff 1st Edition

***new shelter surgical textbook that is in press

Additional Resources/Equipment:
- Stethoscope, scrub tops and bottoms, closed-toe and water resistant shoes, any special needs items (such as latex-free gloves)

V. Evaluation/Grading:

Requirements for attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx. Grade points will be assigned according to the UF policies found at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

Clinical competencies evaluated (satisfactory/unsatisfactory):
A complete checklist of required “Clinical SLO” procedures is provided at the beginning of each clerkship rotation. The student is responsible for assuring that required procedures are signed off by a clinician or technician throughout the rotation.

Students receive a letter grade on their clinical assignments according to: knowledge of subject area, performance, professional attitude, readiness to practice, and satisfactory completion of required clinical SLOs. All clinicians, house officers, and technicians present in the clerkship contribute in the grading process. The grade also includes teamwork, respect, promptness, alertness, reliability, attitude, and attendance behaviors expected of a medical professional.

VI. Attendance:

The instructor should be contacted prior to absences when possible. Unexcused and unexplained absenteeism will result in a lowered grade or an Incomplete. Make-up clinic days may be required.

VII. Administrative Policies:

VIII. Other information:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu on the final day of the clerkship. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575

Contact information for the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.