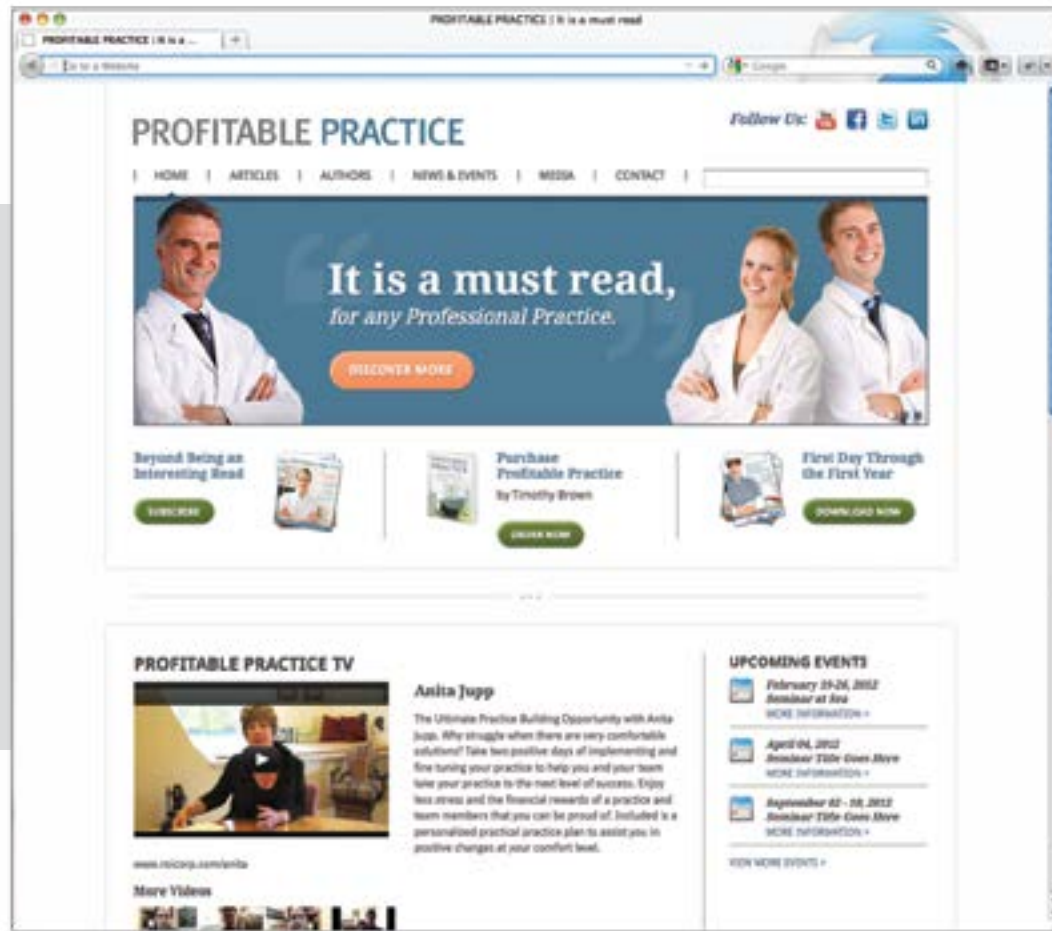


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EDITOR'S PAGES

## Notes on Content, Stress Reduction and Horses

by James Ruddy

This issue of *Profitable Practice* has two recurring themes - horses and stress analysis and its reduction. Many people have hobbies or interests that centre on horses, whether it involves thoroughbred or harness horse racing, equestrian competition events or simply horseback riding for pleasure. Women often gravitate to riding as a way to reduce stress and get away from the hustle and bustle in their lives.

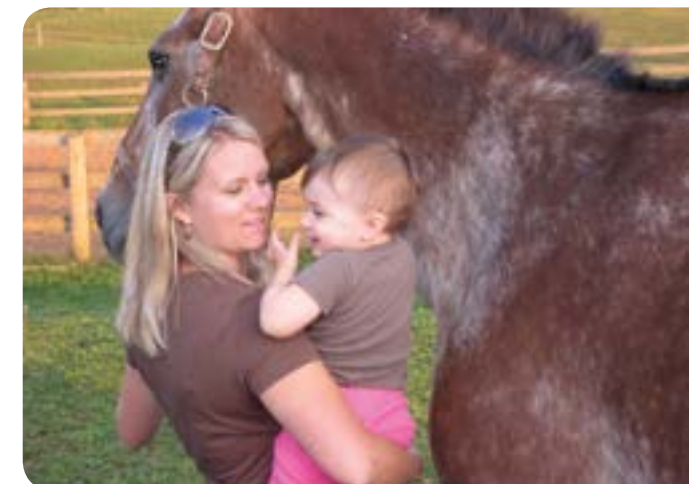
Larissa Voytek, Program Director at the Ontario Dental Education Institute and a regular contributor to *Profitable Practice* presents below advice on stress reduction, a balanced lifestyle and the importance of horseback riding in her life.

*Work-life balance is a phrase that has been used for over 40 years. Workers feel their work pressures are taking a toll on their health and their relationships, causing increased levels of stress. Those skilled at work-life balance have been able to achieve greater levels of happiness and life satisfaction and much less stress. The balance can take different forms - less time at work, no at-home working, more vacations or more activities that decrease stress.*

*Animals have known health benefits. So does exercise. So what could be better than combining the two for an even greater effect? As a busy professional and mother of a toddler, horses are my sanity and my balance.*

*Horses have known healing properties and are used in programs for mental illness, physical disabilities, inmate emotional rehabilitation and even workplace skills training. Horses are experts in sensing non-verbal communication and responding to it. In fact, they mirror the emotional state of people. Thus, they encourage people to be relaxed and confident to prevent bad behavior in the horse. By developing an increased awareness of our energies and intentions, increased emotional health automatically follows.*

*All of this along with the known benefits of exercise means that horseback riding is something that everyone should consider. I know of a medical specialist who retired and bought himself a horse, never having ridden before. He now spends six mornings a week with his new friend and he feels more life satisfaction than he ever did in his career helping people.*



Dr. Angela Whelan likes the feel of the wind in her hair when she rides. As a veterinarian and horse owner, she cares for 30 horses on her farm in Troy, Ontario. She states that horses can easily become constant companions and she loves looking into their big, brown eyes.

#### Some interesting facts about horses

- Equus caballus is a term given to modern-day horses.
- A horse is a member of the "equus" family. This word originates from the Greek dialect, and means quickness.
- More than 350 breeds of ponies and horses can be found.
- The height of a horse is measured using the unit *hand*, where one hand equals four inches.

- If you want to know how old a horse is, all you need to do is to count its teeth.
- Equinophobia, is the fear of the horses.
- An average horse's head weighs 11.84 pounds.
- A horse's heart weighs an amazing 10 pounds.
- A horse is able to drink 10 gallons of water per day.
- If you hold your hand out to a horse and it approaches you, while then blowing warm air onto the palm of your hand, it means that he/she wants to be friends with you. If it rests its head on your shoulder, it means that he/she trusts you.
- Horses use their facial expressions to communicate. Their moods can be determined with the help of their nostrils, eyes and ears.
- The hoof of a horse is like a fingernail; it keeps on growing and needs to be clipped.
- A horse is able to walk, trot, canter and gallop, in horse behavior lingo.
- Horses usually live for around 20 to 25 years. Some of them can live up to 5 years more.
- In most cases, the foal (young horse) is born at night, away from danger and prying eyes.
- After being born, it only takes a foal about 1-2 hours to stand up and walk.
- Foals are fully grown by 3-4 years of age.
- A breed of horses called Akhal-Teke from Russia can go for days without water or food.
- "Old Billy" was the oldest recorded horse that lived to be 62.
- Falebella of Argentina is the smallest breed of horse.
- "Little Pumpkin" is the smallest pony in history - it stood high at 14 inches and weighed 20 lbs.
- "Samson" was the tallest horse recorded in history.
- Another horse known for its height as one of the tallest was Dr. Le Gear, from the Pecheron breed.
- A farrier or blacksmith is the person who cares for a horse's feet.

By Rachna Gupta: Buzzle: <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/horse-facts-interesting-facts-about-horses.html>

Continuing with the horse theme in this issue, **Doug Evans** gives us a short story, a horse tale if you will, that will bring a smile to your face.

### More content notes

**Betty Franklin**, a registered nurse and author/speaker on how to reduce stress presents a stress primer and the

importance of a smile in your lifestyle. *Profitable Practice* welcomes **Carrie Lagrassé**, an RBC Vice President and a first time contributor who offers an analysis of whether or not veterinarians should buy or rent their office space. **Todd C. Slater**, The \$imple Investor and a regular contributor to the magazine presents a New Year's resolution goal that could have a generational impact on your financial portfolio. **Jon J. Walton** presents an article that will resonate with veterinarians undergoing a practice transition process and how it impacts on the existing staff.

### Feature interviews

This issue's interviews feature three very interesting veterinarians with much different career paths and a fourth interview highlights a recently retired dentist who has advice that applies to all professionals. **Dr. Christian Cumberbatch** was born in Trinidad, educated in Alabama, gained experience in a corporate American setting and now practices in Thornhill, Toronto. In his interview, he compares his early veterinarian training and work in the US with what he now does in Canada. **Dr. Chuck Lockton** enjoyed a career as veterinarian that took him to France, the US, the Arctic and to sites all across Canada. He has written a book entitled *Back to Willow Creek* that chronicles his career and travels. **Karen Henderson**, our Managing Associate Editor, reviews Dr. Lockton's book on page 17. **Dr. Angela Whelan** has a historical link with the Ontario Veterinary College and manages her busy career with her family and unique lifestyle in remarkable fashion. Finally, **Dr. Gene Cherewaty** along with his wife **Renia** have retired to their farm in Meaford, Ontario to raise Alpacas and blend into the pastoral community in which they live.

### Things to remember

Readers are reminded that for subscriber information, please go to the inside back cover of this magazine. Don't forget to check out our Fun Facts on the inside back cover. As always we welcome your comments and suggestions for the magazine or if you would like to write for the magazine and have a story to tell that would interest our veterinary professional reading audience, please send inquiries to: [editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com)



**James Ruddy**

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## A Life Changing Goal... For Generations

by Todd C. Slater



I hope that 2013 has started off well for you, and that your New Year's resolutions are progressing in the manner you had hoped! Have you been able to lose those few pounds? How about swapping some healthy habits for those less than healthy ones?

Goals are personal; some you will share with those around you while others you will keep to yourself. Typically, goals fall within one or another of the following categories: personal, relationships, work, health (physical, mental or spiritual) and of course, financial. I am sure there are a few more, but you get the idea.

As a former national athlete, one of the most important things I learned about goals was setting realistic ones and learning to focus on step-by-step programs that allow you to see success. If you decide for instance, that this year you want to lose 20 pounds (not that you need to!) how would you set up your goal? Do you expect to lose 5 lbs a week over 4 weeks and call it a success? If you do that, chances are the 20 lbs may come back,

and even bring a few extra friends! The true way to success is slow and steady. If you were to lose a half-pound a week, it would take 20 to 40 weeks to reach your goal. The most important thing here is that perseverance will change your lifestyle and show you that you CAN achieve something. You also stand a much better chance of keeping your 20 lbs and all their friends from joining you again!

So how does this apply to financial goals? This is the area that I am most qualified to speak on, not that I couldn't stand to lose a few pounds! A financial goal is normally the easiest goal to achieve. Providing that you set it up properly, you can monitor your success. Naturally, you have to select the best path for success. In previous articles, I had mentioned that I would break down the rent vs. ownership numbers for your practice. The average professional rents their office space, primarily due to location considerations. For most, this is the sticking point; however, purchasing a new location (in close proximity to your existing location) with a well advertised and marketed move might just increase your revenue, but it will definitely build your assets. Let me break down some numbers for you to show you how.

Let's assume you are renting 2500 sq. ft. of office space. If we look at renting vs. owning, we see the following:

	Rent	Own
VALUE	\$0	\$800,000
DOWN PAYMENT/DEPOSIT	\$10,000 (FIRST/LAST)	\$240,000 (30%, BANK MAY ALLOW LESS)
MONTHLY EXPENSE	\$5,000.00/MONTH	MORTGAGE - \$3,000/MTH PROPERTY TAX -\$1,000/MTH MAINTENANCE - \$1,000/MTH  TOTAL = \$5,000/MTH
UTILITIES	SAME AS OWNING	SAME AS RENTING
RETURN ON \$240,000	(NOT INVESTED IN PROPERTY) SIMPLE RETURN @ 4% PER YEAR = \$9,600/YR.	USED AS DOWN PAYMENT \$560,000 MORTGAGE PAY DOWN = \$19,600/YEAR  \$800,000 X 2% = \$16,000/YR (ASSUMING CONSERVATIVE 2% ANNUAL MARKET INCREASE)
EQUITY INCREASE	\$0	
END OF YEAR 1	\$9,600.00 GAIN	\$19,600 + \$16,000 = \$35,600 TOTAL EQUITY GAIN
5 YEAR GAINS**	\$48,000	\$178,000

As you can see, the numbers simply don't lie. As an owner, at the end of a 25-year period, you will have a building worth more than 1.3 million, fully paid for, and generating income if you so decide. As a tenant, you will have a happy landlord that may thank you and send you a gift basket for paying off his/her mortgage.

So, let's go back to our goals. Owning your practice location is one goal you can set that is achievable and one where you can monitor its progress. The same formula is applicable to all rental properties as well. You can grow a portfolio of investment properties separately from your work that will do the exactly same thing.

I wish you good luck in your goals for 2013 and always remember, we are here to help make reaching some of those goals...\$imple.

*Bottom Line: This article deals with the renting/buying issue of office space with a numbers analysis chart to consider.*

\*\*For illustrative purposes, calculated simply with no compounding



#### Todd C. Slater

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## None of Your Business

by Mariana Bracic



Imagine that one of your employees has downloaded pornographic images of a paediatric patient of your practice onto your office computer. Let's say that it was done on the employee's personal time.

Is it "none of your business"? Do you have the right to search the computer? Do you have the right to hand the files over to the police? These were the questions raised by the recent, much anticipated decision of the Supreme Court of Canada: *R v. Cole* [2012 SCC 53]. The case highlights the overwhelming importance to us as employers of having in place workplace policies that reserve our right to treat everything that happens on our computers as "our business".

In *R. v. Cole*, the accused, Cole was a high school teacher whose job included policing student use of their networked laptops. Accordingly, the school board provided him with one of its laptops and domain-administration rights on the schoolboard network. Using this access, he logged into a female student's email which contained naked photographs of her, and he saved them into a hidden file on his laptop. The file was discovered during routine maintenance by a computer technician. The school turned over the file to the police. While the issue in the case involved the exclusion of the evidence that

the police had obtained without a warrant, what is relevant for employers across Canada to note is what the highest Court in the land has to say about privacy rights in the workplace.

#### The supreme court said:

*Computers that are reasonably used for personal purposes—whether found in the workplace or the home—contain information that is meaningful, intimate, and touching on the user's biographical core. Canadians may therefore reasonably expect privacy in the information contained on these computers, at least where personal use is permitted or reasonably expected.*

The Court concluded that the police had infringed the teacher's rights under section 8 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (which guarantees to everyone the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure) by seizing and searching his employer-issued laptop without a warrant. However, the Court felt that the breach of the Charter was not so significant as to justify excluding the evidence during the accused's trial. This was particularly so as the police had reasonable and probable grounds to obtain a warrant and would undoubtedly have discovered the evidence in any case.

From an employer rights' perspective, it should be noted that the Court held that the employer had the lawful authority to seize and search the laptop (although this authority did not extend to the police). The school board, in the Court's view,

was legally entitled to report its contraband findings to the police, who would presumably have then been able to obtain a search warrant.

For those of us seeking to protect employer rights, it should be noted that the Supreme Court was influenced in its decision by the following factors:

- The fact that the laptop belonged to the employer;
- The fact that the policies and practices of the employer permitted only incidental personal use;
- The fact that the technology in place at the school involved routine maintenance of computers which would thereby uncover information on the computers of whatever nature; and,
- The school's statutory duty to maintain a safe school environment.

The decision is generating controversy in legal circles and the Court has given out somewhat conflicting guidance. One thing is clear, however: if as an employer you have any hope of maintaining the comprehensive right to search or examine what is being done on your computers (as, in our opinion is required for any prudently managed, successful business) it is now, as never before, imperative that your Workplace Policy Manual contain an expertly drafted policy on the issue.

When we prepare policies for our clients as part of their Practice Protection Package™ we generally recommend that we include language making it clear that the employees have no expectation of privacy on any office-owned technology. As a destination employer myself, I find that very lamentable. I have said to MBC's own, highly valued staff, that I wish that we could allow them to make whatever personal use they wished to do of any technology we give them (and we give them a lot as our work is highly technology dependent—laptops, BlackBerry® smartphones, VOIP phones, etc). I trust my staff and want to give them as many perquisites as possible. However, we cannot do so as the Courts have tied our hands. In order to preserve what I consider indispensable, namely, the right to search and examine any technology belonging to MBC at any time, in my opinion, we are forced to preclude any personal use by staff. Unfortunately, this is yet another of the many ways that Canadian employment law, by overreaching in its attempts to protect employees, creates the opposite result by forcing the hand of employers and leaving employees less protected.

A similar result happened, for example, a few years ago with a case involving disability insurance. An employee became disabled after he was fired during what would have been his “reasonable notice period”. Disability insurers do not like to continue coverage for disability insurance once the employee ceases to be actively working (for example, if they receive pay in lieu of working notice, or they are terminated summarily). The Courts have held that, in such cases, the employer steps into the shoes of the insurer, and is therefore liable for any disability the employee may develop, a potentially devastating financial result for a small business, if say the employee is incapable of working for many years. For example, in one such case, the employee received two years of compensation for lost wages, plus almost \$260,000 (!) for lost disability benefits. As a result, we always advise our employer doctors not to provide disability insurance. (If you want to do something nice for your staff, take the money you would have spent on disability premiums and just give it to your staff, or give them some other benefit.) Again, this highlights how when Courts are overzealous in “protecting” employees while ignoring business realities they end up actually leaving employees in a worse position. No small business which has access to the best employment law advice would, in my view, choose to risk the viability of their business by offering disability insurance to its employees.

Similarly, in the context of our legitimate business need as employers to examine what is being done on our office technology, the Courts have effectively told us that we had better have a proper policy in place, unless we expect to be told that it's “none of your business”.

*Bottom Line: This article recommends employers have a Workplace Office Manual in place and an agreement with their employees delineating what can and cannot be done by employees when using an employer's office technology.*



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Mariana is proud of the dramatic benefits her completely unique, niche specialization (employment law + doctors) provides to her clients' wealth and happiness.

## To Buy Or Not To Buy...

Here are the questions you absolutely must consider before purchasing real estate for your practice

by Carrie Lagrassé



It's an age-old question for veterinarians: “Is it better to rent or to buy real estate for your practice?”

With so many variables at play (e.g. geographical location, economic conditions, growth rate, career stage, etc.) there's no one right answer for everyone. But it is possible to figure out if your current situation is the right one for your practice by answering seven important questions:

### 1. Is this the best location for my practice?

Remember that old real estate adage, “Location, location, location?” Well, it applies to veterinary practices too. Selecting the right location is an important decision and should be one of the top priorities on your list. Here are some questions to ask yourself when assessing your current location or scouting for new ones:

- Is there room to grow my business?
- Does the building have the proper zoning?
- Is there adequate on-site and free or affordable parking for clients?

“Personally, I would want to be on the edge of a residential area where property values are cheaper and you're closer to your clientele,” says Dr. Jeffrey Latimer, owner of Princess Animal Hospital in Kingston, Ontario. “A veterinarian practice is more of a destination business than an impulse business so you don't necessarily need to be in the city core or in a high traffic area. But it's important to make sure the location suits your long-term requirements.”

### 2. Will the cash flow from my practice be sufficient?

Some veterinarians simply prefer the idea of owning versus renting. But before you enter into a commercial real estate deal, you need to determine if the cash flow generated by your practice will be sufficient to service the debt that will come with owning your new property. Account for short-term costs such as property management, maintenance and repairs – additional costs that you don't have to contend with as a renter.

By the same token, if you're a renter and your practice is a stable one with a low rate of growth, it could be safer to own and have more control over

your mortgage costs than to have to refinance your lease every five years. “What you want to avoid is a situation where your revenues are stable but your rent continues to increase,” says Dr. Latimer, who has experience both renting and buying real estate for his practices.

### 3. What’s my personal ‘risk comfort level’?

Every vet has to answer this one for themselves. Some see debt as a tool to grow and manage their business and have no problem sleeping like a baby despite servicing a commercial mortgage. Other vets may find the prospect of carrying the added debt of a mortgage undesirable or downright scary. Ultimately, you have to make the decision you will be comfortable with.

### 4. Is the building structurally sound?

A commercial office building is a big ticket item. The last thing you want is to be stuck with a money pit that needs constant repairs. Consider consulting with a professional engineer to assess your potential office location before you make an offer. An engineer can see things you can’t and predict problems that might pop up down the road. For example, will the roof need to be replaced soon? Will the HVAC systems be adequate? Be sure to get the answers to these questions before you buy.

### 5. Have I negotiated the best deal possible?

It’s a competitive market out there. Whether you’re dealing with your landlord on your next lease or a bank or mortgage broker on a purchase, do your research and negotiate to get the best value and advice you can. Keep in mind the best deal doesn’t always mean the best price. There are other factors that add up to the total value of your transaction, including return-on-investment, price, financing terms and more. Check with the experts who can help you get the best deal.

### 6. Do my clients know what’s going on?

If you make the move to a new location, be sure to communicate with your clients early, clearly and often. Let them know about the move well in advance. Tell them when, where and why you’re moving. Share the details about the move on your practice’s social media pages if you have them. Your clients (and their pets) are the lifeblood of your business and if you keep them up-to-date throughout the process, they’ll be more inclined to follow you to your new location.

### 7. Do I have the right banking partner?

Not all banks are created equal and your choice of financial partner can play a big role in making or breaking your proposed commercial real estate transaction. You’re better off to work with a bank that has a deep understanding of the ins and outs of the veterinary industry and which has specialized expertise working with vets and their unique needs. Do your homework and pick the banking partner that’s right for you.

The decision to buy or rent is an important one. The right path for you will depend on the answers to a range of questions and variables encompassing your business and personal goals. The important thing is to do your homework, ask yourself the important questions and consider all the associated costs, and measure these against the expected returns and benefits of other investments you might be able to make (other than real estate).

Ownership has its advantages and while it can offer a greater degree of control, there’s also some risk involved. Be sure to educate yourself, do your homework, engage the right professionals to advise you along the way and ensure that your real estate decision is done as part of an integrated tax planning strategy.

“If I had to do it all over again, I would certainly buy land and build,” says Dr. Latimer. “And I would encourage other vets to do that. But I would also advise them to be aware of the potential pitfalls so they can minimize the risk.”

The information contained in this article is for informational purposes only and is not intended to provide specific leasing, financial, business, tax, legal, investment or other advice to you, and should not be acted or relied upon in that regard without seeking the advice of a professional. Your advisor can help to ensure that your own circumstances have been properly considered and any action is taken on the latest available information.

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*Bottom Line: This article contains sound advice for veterinarians as to the pros and cons of practice office ownership and explains why it is an individual decision.*



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## Smile and Your Whole World Feels Less Stress

by Betty Franklin, RN



Smiling is a simple, low-energy and cost effective way to help you not only look better but feel better. A pleasant and cheerful disposition puts you and others at ease. When you relax and smile, you feel more confident and so do those around you. Smiling is a choice that improves your health and well-being. Smiling feels good and decreases stress.

Stress impacts our lives and bodies in more ways than we realize. To be and stay healthy involves a dynamic process of successfully adapting to and maintaining biological stability in the midst of ever-changing conditions and situations. Our bodies strive to sustain a steady state of internal balance, or homeostasis.

Dr. Hans Selye (1907-1982) was one of the early pioneers in the study of stress and disease and the mind-body connection. In his book, *The Stress of Life*, he described three stages our bodies go

through when we are adapting to stressful conditions or situations.

- 1. Alarm:** When our bodies sense stress, our central nervous system is aroused, mobilizing the fight-or-flight response or what some call the adrenaline rush. Our heart rate and blood pressure increases. Breathing becomes faster. Our metabolism and mental activity also increase.
- 2. Resistance:** Using its physiological resources, our body attempts to adapt to the stress or the challenging situation in order to return it to a homeostatic state.
- 3. Exhaustion:** When the stressful situation lasts too long, our body’s resources are depleted and can no longer produce needed hormones. Our immune system is impaired, organ damage occurs and illness sets in.

Every cell in your body is involved in maintaining homeostasis. These cells are your basic building blocks. They are minute portions of

living substance that create and renew all parts of your body. Groups of cells come together to form organs, tissues, bones, teeth and more. Your body produces trillions of new cells every year to replace those that are worn out. You cannot exist without the constant reproduction of cells. It keeps you internally balanced and your body in a homeostatic state.

Stress disrupts this balance. When the balanced interaction of your cells is disrupted by stress, your health and well-being are impacted. Whether it is an injury, lack of nutrients, an invasion of parasites or life challenges, stress impact's your body's homeostasis. Stress speeds up your body's internal responses.

Picture someone spinning their wheels, going round and round, trying to maintain their balance while dealing with life's trials and challenges. As the wheels spin faster and faster, their body tires from the continuous release of epinephrine (adrenaline) that speeds up their internal functions. If brakes are not properly activated to slow them down in time they will begin to wobble. Struggling and exhausted they eventually lose their balance. They may breakdown, spin off their axis and crash.

When you experience stress you will adapt successfully or you will fail to adapt. When you do not adapt well, your body will continue to function at an increased rate and exhaustion will eventually set in. Your homeostasis is disrupted. There is no peace or balance. Illness and disease set in. Not a nice picture.

As physical or psychological stressors cause increased activity inside your body and cells, certain symptoms present themselves externally. When you are dealing with stress you may:

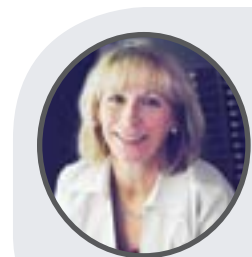
- Always be in a hurry
- Be unable to concentrate
- Be irritable
- Clench your fists or jaw
- Experience loss of appetite
- Cry, yell or have mood shifts
- Smoke or drink excessively
- Gamble, overeat or use drugs
- Lose your sense of humour, self-esteem or sexual desire
- Feel lonely, anxious or depressed

Smiling relieves stress and changes your mood. It helps prevent you from feeling tired, worn down and overwhelmed thus better enabling you to take action. Smiling relaxes you, lowering your blood pressure and your heart rate. It helps your immune system function better. Smiling is a natural drug. It releases serotonin and endorphins, a natural painkiller.

The muscles you use to smile lift your face muscles making you look more attractive and younger. When you smile you appear more confident. You are more likely to be promoted and to be more successful. People react differently to you when you smile; they are more attracted to you. Smiling is contagious. It lightens up a room, changes the mood of others and makes everyone feel better.

Smiling helps you stay positive. Try this test: Smile. Now try to think of something negative without losing the smile. It's hard. When you smile, your body sends you a message that life is good.

*Bottom Line: Smile and your whole world will smile with you!*



#### Betty Franklin

Betty Franklin is president of Let It Begin with Me. She is a registered nurse working in the field of health promotion. She is the author of *GUTS, Get Uncomfortable to Succeed, Embracing Health, Balance and Abundance*, a book that not only addresses the impact of stress but provides simple, practical ways to reduce it. She can be reached by visiting [www.letitbeginwithme.ca](http://www.letitbeginwithme.ca), by email at [betty@letitbeginwithme.ca](mailto:betty@letitbeginwithme.ca), or by phone at 905-275-2795.

## Feature Interview with Dr. Christian Cumberbatch



When you listen to Dr. Christian Cumberbatch speak, you are struck by the enthusiasm he has for his profession and his clients/patients. There is a willingness to laugh at daily events and candidly share his experiences. This interview was delayed because of a pet emergency in his practice that turned out to be a false alarm. However, what became obvious was Christian's first priority was to his patient/client.

Christian's background and his career path are not typical of the average Canadian veterinarian's experience. Born in Trinidad, he avoided "trouble" because a friend gave him a puppy to care for when he was 15 years old. If the pet was to be kept, Christian's parents insisted the dog had to be trained properly. Soon, Christian was smitten with animals and was involved in the program known as Schutzhund (the training of German Shepherds to become police dogs). This program required regular participation in very competitive trials that these dogs had to pass. The dye was cast and when Christian was 22, he found himself in the U.S. enrolled in an all black university at Morehouse College, Atlanta, then to Tuskegee University, Alabama to become a Doctor of veterinary medicine. Even in 1995, black students had to go the extra mile to prove their worth and competence in any professional field that they were enrolled in.

The program was exacting and demanded a higher standard than other universities offering similar courses. There was a high priority placed on 'hands-on' veterinary medicine and surgery. Christian sees his experience as unique and invaluable because of the real case practices and procedures he experienced.

Upon graduation, Christian worked in two emergency clinics simultaneously where his surgical prowess proved to be a much-valued skill. He worked long hours and honed his craft. After that he worked in a corporate setting which used a business model to administer pet and animal care. Five years taught him the value of the business side of veterinary medicine and the potential benefits to young veterinarians of utilization of computer generated diagnosis and treatment. What these years left out was developing the *art* of veterinary medicine and developing the 'soft skills' necessary for client/patient treatment and communication.

With these experiences behind him and being married with a family, Christian relocated to Canada where his wife had family ties. Soon, he was working in Thornhill, Ontario where he continues to do so to this day.

At age 39 and firmly entrenched in the Canadian veterinary world, Christian answered the following questions.

### 1. What advice would you offer recent veterinarian graduates with regard to the following:

#### a) What is the role of professional development?

Find the right mentor and learn all you can from whatever setting you are in. For me, it was not so much one person, but the setting I found myself in. I never wanted to work in emergency clinics but that's exactly what happened and I do not regret it. I learned so much, loved doing it; the time spent in those clinics is the undercurrent of all I do today. Young veterinarians should not be afraid to try and experience all areas of veterinary medicine. Explore and educate yourself in the different avenues that are part of being a veterinarian. For example, new graduates may not be aware of

the areas of research that are available to them – areas like food/diet regimens for animal health that have not yet been fully developed.

I am increasingly interested in the rehab aspects of animal care that is largely not being serviced and have potential for growth.

**b) As a new graduate should you associate or go directly into solo practice?**

Of course, it's an individual decision, but I suggest that graduates should associate first before making a decision about buying or starting a practice. For most, this is necessary in order to pay off debts and build sufficient capital to buy a practice. There is much to learn about the responsibilities of running a practice and the 'soft skills' necessary, like bedside manner, that take time and observation to master. There are administrative and management decisions to be made daily with an eye to profit, payroll ratios, inventory controls and other considerations. These can be a 'turn-off' to some people.

**c) What is the right balance with regard to work/life?**

The younger generation of veterinarians seems more in tune with having a balance between work and life. It took me a while but I've learned to switch work off when I get home. It is a positive act to 'unplug' and leave the workday behind you in order to spend proper time with your wife and kids. This is easier to do now because there are emergency clinics available to pet owners and Internet websites that offer advice and answer questions. This does not mean that I do not get calls about what my clients should do – but, after a little counseling over the phone, many of these can wait until the next day in the office.

It is necessary to cultivate other interests and I often spend time with other professionals and discuss what challenges they face in their careers.

**2. What actions do you take as a stress buster?**

I *dumb-bell down* and lift weights and work out at a local gym. For me doing some physical exercise reduces my tensions. I also like to ride my motorcycle.

**3. As a black man and a veterinarian, have you experienced any racial discrimination?**

Many years ago, in the States, someone said to me, "I didn't realize black people could become veterinarians." In Thornhill, Ontario, the exact opposite has been my experience. There is such diversity and acceptance in Southern Ontario. I regularly work with recently arrived veterinarians from Iran and Iraq and we all have not suffered any discriminatory negative comments.

**4. What are your final thoughts about Canadian veterinary medicine?**

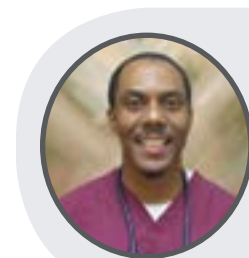
There seems to be a trend toward a corporate model for veterinarian care. This should not be threatening to those who do not favour this development. While the corporate model may pose challenges to some practices, it may mean that many practices will move to using shared resources and linking their areas of specialty and expertise. This will involve both cost savings and revenue generating features not often used today.

Also, there is a shift toward Internet pharmacies providing drugs and products for animal care. In general, the Internet has opened up an avenue for clients to access and self-diagnose their pets' particular ailments. This, at times, can and will be misleading.

Today I discuss with many of my clients treatment for their animals after they have done some research into the problem being faced by their pets. It is often enlightening for my clients and me. They have a greater stake and role in their pets' care. I offer advice to direct them to conventional treatment and sometimes look at alternative solutions. Many clients appreciate this approach to animal care and it is a very collaborative process.

One thing is certain... even with a new Internet explosion of knowledge and Internet drugs for treatment available, there will always be a need for individual practices, with associates who offer superior, personalized service to their clients and their pets.

*Bottom Line: This interview features a veterinarian with a unique background and perspective of Canadian veterinary medicine.*



**Dr. Christian Cumberbatch**

Dr. Christian Cumberbatch was born in Trinidad, educated in the USA and now is a partner in a veterinary practice in Thornhill, Ontario.

He can be reached through the editor of this magazine.

# The Transition of a Veterinarian Practice – The Staff

by Jon J. Walton



As a business broker who specializes in leading veterinarians through the transition process, one topic is always brought to my attention – the staff. One of the greatest fears and area of immense stress for any business owner are the employees. Although owners compensate employees to help distribute the burden of running a business, employees keep you up at night; they require much of your time and attention, and yet you become quite attached to these individuals, because without them you could not run your businesses.

As a veterinarian, you spend many hours of every day with your staff, working side by side in close quarters. Through this daily interaction, a strong personal relationship and sense of camaraderie is built. You have staffed your practice with individuals who not only get the job done, but who typically share a

similar vision with you with respect to how animal care should be provided. Whether you realize it or not, many owners regularly choose their staff as a result of emotional and compatibility considerations. They hire individuals that they can see themselves being around and interacting with on a daily professional and on a more relaxed personal level.

Because of the close bonds and mutual loyalties that often result, many doctors ask us the question,

**“What will happen to my staff when I sell my business?”**

In addition, in seminars and in listening to staff members during and after the transition process, we have learned some of the common concerns of associates and other staff members. Essentially, we have identified two phases that typically concern the associates and other support staff; the pre-sale years of a practice, when clearly the practice's owner is nearing a transition stage, and the post-sale 'great unknown' phase of the practice and what role they, the staff, will play. Both stages cause stress and uncertainty for the staff.



If there is one constant we can grow to expect in life, it's change. Change happens and will continue to happen and most often, change is beneficial. How a practice is positioned in the years leading up to the transition can reduce the fear, stress, and importantly, the liability of the current practice owner. The staff have to be prepared for the practice transition in ownership that allows them to start a successful voyage into a not-so-scary 'great unknown'.

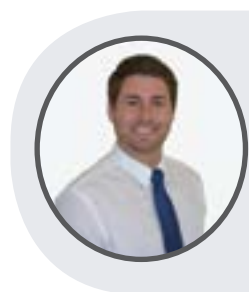
At ROI Corporation brokerage, we educate all potential purchasers about the value of the existing staff, why they should be retained and how they can be transitioned into the new ownership of the practice. A purchaser must realize that the existing staff is familiar with the clients/patients of the practice, who make up an important portion of the goodwill value. Existing staff are also familiar with the policies and procedures of the practice; this will allow the purchasing veterinarian to take over the practice while minimizing or eliminating any potential loss in revenue from the existing client base.

After consultation, many purchasers decide to keep the existing staff for at least one year at the same rate of pay, number of hours and current benefits. Many realize they do not want to upset a smoothly running practice. This period of time allows staff to get to know the purchaser and demonstrate how valuable they are to the practice, and why the previous owner put his/her confidence in them. The practice will be experiencing enough change for the clients to digest; changes in staffing at this time may not be a wise decision.

When a transition is performed correctly, the new veterinarian is not perceived as the *big bad wolf*. Transitioning a practice is not just about putting a new veterinarian into the practice, but also about finding the right veterinarian with a vision and demeanor similar to the selling veterinarian. Many potential veterinarians are reviewed and interviewed. When a match is found, a successful transition occurs for clients and staff. Minor changes may be made to grow the business as the purchaser typically has a large part of his/her career ahead and he/she is paying a premium for an established practice for a reason! The purchaser is investing in a turnkey business that has fully integrated systems and procedures producing a cash flow that they have based their purchasing price on. The debt level he/she has assumed in purchasing the practice necessitates avoiding any disruption to the practice's revenue generation.

As a veterinarian or as a staff member, know that while a purchaser may make the decision to hire existing employees, from a legal perspective nothing obligates them to do so. They are free to hire new staff if they so choose. If the selling veterinarian's primary concern is the well-being of the staff when their practice is being sold, it is necessary to plan well ahead and consult with a transition specialist to ensure every possible precaution is taken not only to make the transition as seamless as possible for staff, but also to allow you, the veterinarian, to sell with dignity and profitability!

*Bottom Line: This article provides insights for veterinarians who are in the process of a practice transition to ensure a smooth transition for their staff.*



**Jon J. Walton**

Jon J. Walton is a national sales representative at ROI Corporation Brokerage and one of the directors of the Hamilton Academy of Veterinary Medicine. He can be reached at 519-829-5953 or jon@roicorp.com.

## Feature interview with Dr. Chuck Lockton

Callander, Ontario



Dr. Chuck Lockton is no stranger to controversy. As a veterinarian for the Department of Agriculture in 1990, he was involved in the highly publicized Moravia Game Farm incident in which many animals had to be destroyed because of tuberculosis infection. It was a very complicated case with many levels of intrigue that caused much public debate and name-calling. In his book, *Back to Willow Creek*, Lockton explains some of the inner workings of the case that were not widely known at the time.

*Back to Willow Creek* also chronicles Lockton's interesting career as a seasoned veterinarian dealing with many animal health issues. From his work dealing with the diseases of the muskox for the Inuit in the high Arctic to restoring moose diminished by deer generated brain worm disease

in Marquette County, Michigan, his career has taken him far and wide and given him memorable stories to tell.

Dr. Lockton answered the following questions:

### **How would you describe your childhood growing up in rural Alberta?**

Hardscrabble-rustic! We had a small (half section) mixed farm. My dad died at age 46 leaving mom and four kids, 12 and under. There was no will or cash reserve but we had good work ethics.

### **When did you know you wanted to be a veterinarian?**

I knew early (perhaps after seeing my first horse gelded when I was about 9 years old) that I wanted to be a veterinarian. It was only after getting a diploma in Agriculture from Olds College in Alberta that I realized perhaps I could become one.

### How would you describe your life in Guelph as a veterinary student in the 1960's?

A whole world opened up! There was so much more for me than just vet school – fun, girls, Little Theatre, new friends that I still cherish, parties! It sure beats the stuffing out of hand-milking cows and cleaning the chicken house!

### You began your career as a 'mixed veterinarian' in North Bay. Can you describe what kind of work this entailed?

I spent my first three years working for Dr. Jack Smylie. He had a mixed practice – both food-producing animals and pets.

I was particularly interested in horses and did most of the equine work involving saddle horses, standard-breds and even bush camp, heavy horses; but I took my turn on rotation and on call for everything.

### You landed a job with the Department of Agriculture where you worked for 32 years as a district veterinarian. Can you give us some highlights of what you did during your career with the federal government?

There were lots of highlights. The most exciting work was capturing moose from Algonquin Park and relocating them to the Upper Peninsula in Michigan; I spent two winters with the Inuit in the high Arctic looking for disease in common food sources – muskox and caribou; and finally I took seven trips to France by ship with horses (500-700 per load).

### What in your long and colourful career gave you the most satisfaction?

Any live birth was always a thrill and still is but particularly so if I had made a significant or perhaps crucial contribution – everything from foalings to the caesarian birth of a nutria. Seeing the origin of new life is always an awesome privilege.

### What inspired you to write your book, *Back to Willow Creek*?

I've always dabbled with writing and actually started out years ago but James Harriot came along and did such a wonderful job in our genre that I knew I could never hold a candle to him and backed off.

### What surprised you the most when you were writing your book?

That I remembered pretty well everything where I screwed up and very little of the good stuff! I encourage my colleagues to keep a few notes of both the good and the bad. They all have stories to tell.

### Having finished writing your book, what are you doing now and what plans do you have for the future?

I am damned busy peddling it right now, but I also do some part-time work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and I am about halfway through a novel based on Canadian migration to settle western Canada.

### What are your thoughts on retirement?

I retired suddenly to grab an opportunity to go back out and spend months every summer for the last ten years as a cowboy on a community pasture in the mountains south of Banff. Age and obligations caught up and I finally retired from that job which I sure do miss. But I have no regrets.

Editor's Note: Dr. Lockton had an opportunity to take one of his grandsons with him to the mountains where he introduced him to the cowboy lifestyle. This was a great joy and fond memory for the both of them.

### If you were speaking to the graduating class of veterinarians from Guelph University, what thought or idea would you leave them with?

I would hope that they wouldn't allow themselves the notion that they had to do just one thing or exploit one facet of veterinary medicine all their lives. There's a great big world out there.

*Bottom Line: This interview features a retired veterinarian who has written about the highlights of his notable career in his book, *Back to Willow Creek*.*



**Dr. Chuck Lockton**

Dr. Chuck Lockton is a retired veterinarian who served as a district veterinarian for the Department of Agriculture where he dealt with a variety of animal issues both across Canada and in the U.S.

## BOOK REVIEW by Karen Henderson



### Back to Willow Creek: Stories of a Horseman & Veterinarian by C.R. Lockton, DVM

Like so many Canadians I have owned domestic animals over the years and have had to call upon the services of my local veterinarian to keep them healthy. This has given me a picture of a typical city veterinarian – one who lives above or near his office and works limited, set hours with all the usual suspects – dogs, cats, birds etc. I know there are emergencies and things in the office can become a little chaotic at times but all in all it's a routine, quite predictable business and career path.

I also watched *All Creatures Great and Small*, the lovely English television series about country veterinarians who have to deal with all manner of animals for a huge variety of reasons in settings that are way beyond ideal. Dr. Chuck Lockton's book *Back to Willow Creek* adds yet another dimension to the practice of veterinary medicine, one unique to Canada and one which provides a fascinating read.

Chuck Lockton was born on a small mixed farm in Willow Creek in southern Alberta. At 11 years of age he experienced the brutal gelding of a beloved young horse by a cousin – no veterinarian was available in the area – which resulted in an agonizing death for the horse. As Dr. Lockton

wrote: "The country boy, now eleven years of age but older by experience, knew what he had to do with his life."

After agricultural college he was accepted into the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph, Ontario. There was very little money available so he took odd jobs around the school to help make ends meet. But this farm boy was completely unprepared for all the extra-curricular activities that came with college, namely the girls and the parties! Dr. Lockton quite openly admits he took six years instead of the required five to earn his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine but in return he started to learn a valuable life lesson: that there are endless things to learn and do in life and to not limit himself to the usual or accepted in veterinary medicine.

Summers were spent on the ranch doing chores and slugging hay bales. He and his friends made trips on horseback into the mountains where they met up with bears and cougars; he even summoned up enough courage to ride a bull in a rodeo. He managed to emerge unscathed but humbled by all his animal encounters.

Soon after graduating Dr. Lockton opened up a practice in North Bay, Ontario. His medical adventures sound like the things you see in the movies – including the castration of an old boar and the tranquilizing of a sow exhibiting post-partum hysteria for starters. His encounters with

the owners of these animals can only be described as eye opening.

As one might expect, many of Dr. Lockton's early medical experiences were hilarious. Take Mrs. Spaul who "still harboured reservations about my professional capabilities...". She owned an aged female cat named Chilly who appeared to be suffering from a bowel obstruction. After an examination Dr. Lockton concluded the cat had a highly malignant tumour which was causing the obstruction. He broke the news as gently as he could and suggested that Chilly be put to sleep as soon as possible. A few days passed before he heard from Mrs. Spaul and the telephone conversation that ensued is truly comical.

"Dr. Lockton, do you know who's speaking?"

"Yes, Mrs. Spaul," I mumbled.

"You recall the cat?"

"Yes."

"You recall the tumour?"

Again, "Yes."

"And did you expect the tumour to come out?"

Now I was waking up fast and starting to think a bit. "Well," I stammered, sensing something more in her tones and searching for further clues, "It could perhaps break through the skin I suppose".

The she administered the coup de grace. "And did you expect it to crawl around the floor with hair on it?" After a long pause while the enormity of the error sunk home, I managed a weak response. "Well, Mrs. Spaul, I'd be damned lucky if all my mistakes worked out that well..."



"Some ectopic pregnancy! Some tumour!"

Mrs. Spaul named the kitten Cancer in Dr. Lockton's honour.

Dr. Lockton went on to many more unique veterinary

adventures. He represented the Canadian Department of Agriculture for many years; in this role he made several boat trips to France to accompany hundreds of horses to help build up France's horse industry. Ottawa took the input from all the veterinarians involved in these trips to formulate regulations and a procedural manual to ensure the transport of horses by sea is done humanely. His contributions remain reflected in these regulations.

Dr. Lockton was also part of a project that relocated moose from Algonquin Park to Michigan. He was chosen to work with Canada Agriculture's Meat Hygiene division to provide the technical help to look at the Inuits' animal based food source and help incorporate a set of practical meat hygiene standards. His work in these two areas proved to be the most satisfying part of his career; he wrote that if he had to do it over again, he would consider a career in wildlife management.

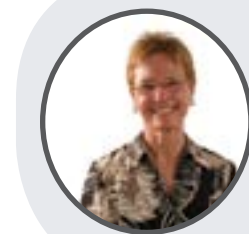
As he approached retirement, Dr. Lockton was suddenly offered the opportunity to return to Willow Creek and the mountains as a cowboy on a community pasture. He returned to his first love, horses, and spent several summers looking after a thousand head of cattle on 22,000 acres.

Dr. Lockton exhibits an interesting writing style. The first few chapters, written in the third person, feel awkward – very much like 'the boy' himself. As he matures, so does the writing style...I was completely drawn in by his humanity, intelligence, curiosity and wonderful sense of humour.

I would love to share more of Dr. Lockton's adventures but you'll just have to read the book.

I would choose Dr. Lockton as my veterinarian in a heartbeat. In fact, I would love to meet him some day, visit his beloved Willow Creek and hear more of his tales first-hand.

*Bottom Line: A review of Back to Willow Creek, an entertaining book that chronicles the childhood, travels and career of an Alberta born veterinarian, Chuck Lockton.*



#### Karen Henderson

Karen Henderson is the Managing Associate Editor for Profitable Practice magazines; she is an accomplished writer and researcher and brings a wealth of experience, particularly in the area of long-term health care.

She can be reached at [karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com).

## A Municipal Horse

by Doug Evans



Big Daniel had been born an ordinary farm horse, but it didn't take long before his natural talent for the horse business began to attract attention. From Farm Horse to Municipal Horse in a few short years, everyone knew Big Daniel was headed for the major leagues of horsedom.

Dressed in his best harness, he was always at the head of the First of July parade pulling the town float. In winter, wearing his own Clydesdale Tartan horse blanket, he snorted child-pleasing clouds of steaming breath as he dragged the school sleigh ride out to Ice House Lake and back.

Most people have a vision of knights of old charging into battle on some slender-legged horse of the type found hurtling around today's race tracks, but Big Daniel knew that this was far from the truth.

No, it wasn't the spindly-legged racehorse types that went to war; it was the likes of the ancestors of Big Daniel ... Clydesdales, Percherons, Suffolk Punches and the giant Shire horse. Once or twice, Big Daniel had gotten so deeply into his dreams of glory that he had actually lashed out a great hairy foot and sent the side of his stall scattering in splinters across the barn.

Most everyone in our town had grown up with horses, understood and loved them; it was a good town in which to be a horse, especially a horse showing the big league potential of Big Daniel. There was one person, though, that didn't like horses, and that was the Town Engineer. For Daniel this was something of a problem, since, as Municipal Horse, he reported directly to the Head Teamster who in turn reported to the Town Engineer.

The Town Engineer was a small man, invariably wore a Smokey the Bear type hat and riding britches.

He was intensely proud of that hat. He was a man who understood the world in terms of machines and he dreamed of the day when the town would graduate from horsepower to tractor power.

The town council meeting was in full drone and near the end of an over long agenda when the budget of the Works Department came up.

In one of those inexplicable oversights that happen now and then during the pursuit of the democratic process, the Town Engineer's request for a new tractor was approved without comment and the meeting adjourned. The next morning, going over the minutes, Mayor Two Bob sighed with resignation and asked the town clerk, George Burton, to place an ad in the Winnipeg Tribune calling for tenders for a tractor.

"What kind of a tractor?"

"Why a Caterpillar D2, of course. That's what the engineer's specs called for."

"I'll get on the phone this morning."

Two Bob had some misgivings about George and the long distance phone. George was still having a lot of trouble with his new teeth and it took a bit of getting used to understand him at times.

"Hello! Hello! Is this the Winnipeg Tribune in Winnipeg?"

George was of that generation that conceived of the long distance phone as some sort of pipe that you shouted down, louder shouts being necessary for longer distances.

"Hello Hello! I want to plathe an ad."

"Yes sir. Just go ahead. I will write it down and give it to the advertising copy writer."

George gave the ad, trying his best to get his new teeth to stay put as he talked. "Requesths thenders for D2 thractors." he shouted.

“I didn’t quite get that sir.”

“D2! D2!” George shouted, but with his teeth rapidly losing their grip it sounded more like ‘Thee Thoo’.

“Got it, sir, thank you. Your ad will be in the Monday edition of the paper.”

The advertisement that appeared in the Monday edition of the Winnipeg Tribune gave the Town Council quite a shock. ‘D2 Tractors’ filtered through George Burton’s new teeth had reached the advertising department as ‘32 Tractors’.



Mayor Two Bob, realizing what must have happened, reassured the councilors that a correction would appear in the next paper. There was, however, another and completely unexpected result of the decision to buy a tractor that was demanding the attention of the councilors.

An uproar outside the Town Hall was rising to near riot level, urged on to greater and greater outrage by a strident female voice that sounded horribly familiar to Two Bob.

“What on earth is all that hubbub about?”

“It’s about this!” Laura Langmuir, the Town Secretary held out a copy of the Daily Staple:

‘Town Goes Diesel Big Daniel to the Glue Factory’

At that moment the Town Engineer burst into Two Bob’s office. In one hand he held a copy of the Tribune, with the error in the Town’s ad that changed D2 to 32 underlined. In his other hand he held a sheaf of telegrams, all from different tractor companies, all saying they were shipping sample tractors up on the next train.

Two Bob had been right about the voice hectoring the crowd outside his office window. Mrs. Teddy-Keedy had sewn herself a red dress with the outline of a big black hammer stitched down the back. She was standing on

the steps of the Town Hall waving a huge red banner with painted on it in bold black letters.

‘Northern Luddites Against Heartless Machines’

Most days, Two Bob would join the local businessmen at Wong’s Golden Gate Café for coffee.

“The crowd in front of the town hall is getting pretty testy. Thought I could hear Mrs. Teddy-Keedy out there.”

“She has sewn herself up a red dress with a big hammer cut from black cloth on the back of it,” Moishe put in.

“A big hammer, you say. Has she taken up communism or something?” Even as Two Bob posed the question he knew it was most unlikely given Mrs. Teddy-Keedy’s feelings about the monarchy, and a mercantile nobility appointed by God.

“No, not communism, she is carrying a big sign that says:

‘Northern Luddites Unite To Destroy The Godless Machine’.”

“Luddites?” Two Bob was mystified. “We got three kinds of Catholics: Roman, Greek and Orthodox.” He ticked them off on his fingers as he spoke. “We got Anglicans high and low; we got Lutherans, reformed and standard; we got Baptists, Southern Conference and Northern conference; we got Mennonites, dippers and dunkers; but we ain’t got no Lignites, as I know of, and Mrs. Teddy-Keedy was born a card carrying Anglican.”

“In England, in the early eighteen hundreds ...”

McQuorquedale continued “there was considerable unemployment and hardship when the introduction of machinery began to replace weaving done at home on hand looms. A movement arose led by a gentleman called Ned Ludd, hence the term Luddites, who took up hammers to smash up the machines and return to the older way of doing things.

“Since that time, those opposed to the replacement of living beings by machines have identified themselves with the Luddite movement and the hammer has been the symbol of that movement.”

Two Bob was no slow learner, he took a long sip of his coffee and said resignedly, “Like tractors replacing horses. I see your point, McQuockle, but we can’t have these Lignites ...”

“Luddites.”

“That’s what I said. But I hope they aren’t plannin’ to take their hammers to the town’s new tractor.”

“It might very well come to that. Feelings are running pretty high, especially after the reference to Big Daniel and the glue factory in the Daily Staple.”

Two Bob turned to the town constable, who was just finishing his coffee. “Maybe you could go out and tell that crowd in front of the Town Hall to go home or something. Sort of calm things down a bit?”

The constable didn’t respond immediately and seemed particularly tense as he adjusted his Sam Brown belt with the big, holstered revolver and settled his Mountie hat on his head with unusual care. “Mr. Mayor”, the chill in his voice caught Two Bob’s attention immediately, “Mr. Mayor, it is true that I serve as the town’s constable but I am, as you know, a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police... Mounted Police, Mr. Mayor... mounted on horses. “The town constable paused a moment to let this sink in. “I see nothing unlawful in the citizens of this town protesting against horse mistreatment. In fact, Mr. Mayor, mistreatment of horses is itself against the law.”

Before anyone could recover from this wholly uncharacteristic behavior on the part of their usually soft-spoken constable, Angus Bell the owner of the Bell Hardware stomped in.

“Two Bob, you got to do something about that damned horse thing. There is going to be trouble, mark my words, more trouble than you can imagine. That damned Teddy-Keedy woman and those four flat cars of tractors that came in on the train this morning and Staples Dibson and his bloody glue and ...”

“Wait, wait, hold on, Angus! It’s true there has been some opposition to the town switching over to tractor power but ...”

“Two Bob, you gotta listen. It’s gettin’ outa hand, I tell ya. Now the Women’s Christian Temperance Union have joined up with her sayin’ that the godless tractors will lead men to drink and the Anglican Ladies Altar Guild and the Lutheran Ladies Choir, not to mention the...”

“Well, hey, Angus, a bunch of ladies most of ’em pretty old and ...”

“There ain’t been nothin’ like this, I tell ya. They’re buyin’ hammers, all kinds of hammers, and when I run out of hammers that Mrs. Questerling bought herself that big fire axe that I had in the window.”

Two Bob was definitely paying attention now. The thought of Mrs. Questerling with a fire axe was enough to chill the blood of the most hardened mayor and Two Bob was only in his third term. Angus continued, “And Mrs. Wienermacher ...”

“That little old lady that lives up on Hillcrest Street, the one that came here because she said it was as far away from anywhere as she could find on the map? That little old lady? She couldn’t even lift a hammer, Angus.”

“She bought a one pound ball peen hammer, an Eastwing with a long handle. My God, Two Bob, I still got the shivers!”

“Hard to get a picture of that into your mind, ”Two Bob mused. “That tiny little old soul with the frizzy hair that might have been red once and those spindly little legs, she ...”

The tractors and all their attachments had been unloaded and were all parked in a row across the south end of Main Street. The noise was deafening, and it wasn’t just the roar of the tractors. A considerable crowd had gathered, shouting and waving signs and banners.

Two Bob had the windows of the Town Hall closed to cut down on the noise and went back to working on the speech he was to give that evening at the grand opening of the Town’s newest beer parlor. A whole shipment of beer had come in on the same train that brought the tractors, beer that was to be given out free after the opening ceremonies. With the beer had come a very important looking representative of the brewing company, all the way from Chicago.

At the far end of Main Street, workmen were just putting the finishing touches on the new hotel. You couldn’t have a beer parlor in those days unless it was part of a hotel so our town that already had three hotels, was about to get a fourth.

Suddenly a huge roar came up from the crowd surrounding the tractors. The Earthworm Tractor salesman had been about to demonstrate the ripper hook attachments used by their tractors. A heavy steel hook that when pulled by a tractor rips up the ground like a crude plow. The Earthworm salesman had just lowered his hook when an astonishing apparition darted out of the crowd.

Wearing a long purple dress, a tiny woman dodged through the mob and leaped onto the Earthworm tractor. Alerted by the Town Engineer, the Earthworm salesman tried to mount the tractor but was met with a barrage of blows from a ball peen hammer. Mrs. Wienermacher began yanking every lever she could find and inevitably yanked the lever that set the machine in motion.

Off down the street she went, whanging away with her hammer at any part of the tractor she

could reach, with the ripper hook leaving a trail of torn up street behind her. The half frozen permafrost that lurked under most of the roads in town was already starting to ooze to the surface through the gash in the roadbed when the change in the crowd noise alerted the other salesmen.

“Boys, it looks to me like that miserable little Earthworm rep has made a private deal with the Town Engineer to get a little city work done and make himself look good. Well damned if he’s going to get away with it. Our ripper can make that puny little can opener of his look like a toy... fire ’er up, Midge and catch up to that little four-flusher.”

In less time that it takes to tell about it, all four tractors were racing down Main Street, ripper hooks down, leaving a trail of ripped up street and a menacing upwelling ooze of half frozen muskeg in their wake.

The Earthworm, given its head start, was the first to finish and ended up with its hook caught firmly in the rails of the CNR team track. Within moments, the other tractors crashed into the same rail embankment and sputtered into silence. Behind them, under the heavy haze of blue exhaust smoke, the entire length of Main Street had been turned into a sea of oozing mud.

For a few moments all was quiet, no chanting, no motors roaring. From the Town Engineer to the Second Vice President of the Anglican Altar Guild, every one stared dumbstruck at the scene before them. Main Street was a sea of mud from Pyrite Road to First Avenue. No one knows what might have happened next in this mad spectacle because the silence was broken by the sudden urgent wailing of the town’s fire siren.

“Fire in the new hotel!”

The fire already had a good hold and it looked certain that the kegs of beer that were to have been given out free at the grand opening that same evening, were going to go up in hops flavored steam. A cheer went up as the fire truck roared around the corner and a collective moan of despair followed as the great red truck, loaded with tons of water, hoses, axes and ladders sank to its axles in the roiling ooze that had been Main Street.

Some of the firemen began pulling hose off the truck and laying it along the street toward the hotel but it was obvious that it was never going to reach. Somehow that heavy truck was going to have to be moved down the street and it was then that the cry went up ...first one voice and then many: “Big Daniel! Big Daniel! Get Big Daniel down here or the hotel’s a goner!”

Dragging his teamster and about thirty feet of heavy logging chain behind him, Big Daniel moved out in front of the fire truck. By the time he was far enough

out in front to give the logging chain a decent angle for pulling, it was evident that there was going to be trouble as he was already up to his knees in muck.

Everyone who could get a grip on the truck pushed, pulled and heaved while Big Daniel, head down and every muscle straining, hauled on the tow chain until it seemed to sing under the tension, but only succeeded in driving himself and the truck deeper into the muck. The new hotel and the free beer seemed all but lost but just at that moment a loud clattering and clanging announced the arrival of Big Daniel’s arch-enemy, the Town Engineer.

Behind him, and following his urgent orders came Big Barny and Ole Thorstienson, each dragging a long sheet of roofing iron from the Monarch Lumber Company’s yard. Goaded by the sharp barking voice of the Town Engineer, they rammed the two slabs of iron under the front wheels of the truck.

It had only taken the engineer one glance to figure out that without some sort of slide to lift the front wheels out of the muck, nothing was going to move. He didn’t have the strength and beauty and crowd-pleasing abilities of Big Daniel, or the organizing skills of Mrs. Teddy-Keedy, but he knew his angles and inclined planes. Even Big Daniel, who didn’t like to admit the Town Engineer had any redeeming features, was impressed.

Mayor Two Bob up on top of the truck warned everyone to put their utmost into it on the count of three and started to count. Big Daniel then did something that was to be talked about in the beer parlors and kitchens for many a day after. Surging forward through the mud until he had the chain as tight as it would go, he moved his back legs forward until his hind hooves were almost touching the front ones. Then, as if to show the Town Engineer that he wasn’t the only one who understood angles, leverage and points of purchase, he suddenly raised his huge body into the air, balancing on his hind legs. The crowd gazed in awe then as Big Daniel, lifting his forelegs clear of the mud threw his full ton and a quarter of weight down, using his firmly planted back legs as a pivot. It was a demonstration of professional heavy horse technique the likes of which no one, even old hardened teamsters, had ever seen.

“The hotel and the free beer were saved!”

The crowd of admirers around Big Daniel was three deep; everyone wanting to touch his heaving sweat-soaked sides. By his head, the town teamster stood holding Big Daniel’s beloved summer straw hat in his hand. It had fallen into the mud and been trampled into a ruined rag. Then an odd thing happened.

The Town Engineer, covered with mud walked right

up to Big Daniel and stopped not a foot away from him. Without for a moment breaking his eye contact with Big Daniel, the Town Engineer took off his prize hat, pulled his folding knife out of his pocket, and right then and there cut two big holes in the brim and set the hat right on Big Daniel’s head.

It took quite a long time for the cheering and yelling to die down. In fact the noise still hadn’t died down much when the beer company representative, up from Chicago for the grand opening, waded through the mud and tugged at the Town Engineer’s elbow.

“That horse, that horse, that’s the most magnificent horse I have ever seen. Who owns him? And how much would you sell him for?” The Town Engineer, looking somewhat less pukka without his hat, turned to look at the crowd. Everyone was holding their breath waiting ...

“As to who owns this horse, I don’t think anybody can claim to own him. He does report to the town teamster and the town teamster reports to me so I guess you could say he is a member of my department, public works. “Then, remembering the ball peen hammer hastened to add, “And I don’t know about selling him either.”

“Well, I want to say right here and now that that is the most magnificent horse I have ever seen. As you know our brewery prides itself on having the finest horses in the land pulling it’s Oktoberfest beer wagon and I am offering this horse a place on that team.”

Big Daniel lifted his proud head as a collective gasp rose from the crowd. Big Daniel was being offered a chance at the really, really big time. The NHL of horsedom, a spot on the Chicago Oktoberfest Beer Wagon!

“Now sir, you say this horse is not for sale but money talks sir, money talks. Name your price and my company will meet it.” The Town Engineer, sunk as he was up over his knees in the mud and minus his trademark hat, hardly came up to Big Daniel’s chin. When at last he spoke he raised his voice high enough that the whole crowd could hear.

“This horse is not for sale but, given the great contribution he has made to this town on this day, there is no one would deny him a chance at the majors. There are, however, a few conditions and I think that, as head of the public works department, I am qualified to act as his agent.”

“I am listening.”

“First he gets top post, right hand lead horse...” The crowd murmured at the audacity of the engineer’s demands but he wasn’t finished yet, “... a private stall, his own teamster, a double ration of oats every Sunday...”

The beer company agent had paled a little but he was still nodding his head up and down,

“ and a guaranteed lifetime membership at a Kentucky Blue Grass horse farm when he chooses to retire.”

“You drive a hard bargain mister, but this horse is one of the most up and comingest horses I have ever seen. You got yourself a deal.”

“Oh, and one more thing...” By now the Chicago beer man was beginning to think he would have nothing left but his paisley patterned shorts to go home in.

“One more thing... Big Daniel gets to wear his new hat whenever he wants to and wherever he wants to as his own personal trademark.”

On Tuesday there was a big parade down Main Street, Big Daniel in the lead, wearing his new hat. The Town Engineer walking on one side of him and the Chicago beer man on the other side, he passed through the cheering crowds come to see him off. It seemed odd to have the Women’s Christian Temperance Union marching, all flags flying, in a parade for a beer wagon horse but Big Daniel’s fans weren’t about to spoil his triumph on a technicality.

Big Daniel had achieved his goal, a spot in the big league of horsedom. And no one even thought to question whether he could handle the job.

It would have been like asking if Bobby Clark could play hockey.

*Bottom Line: A tale extolling the virtues and differences between horsepower and machine power.*



**Doug Evans**

Doug Evans is the author of *Noah's Last Canoe*, *Tales from a Town with a Funny Name* and *A Child's Garden of Rocks* as well as a regular contributor to several magazines.

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# Feature Interview with Dr. Gene and Renia Cherewaty



*Editor's Note. While Dr. Gene Cherewaty was a dentist. He has much in common with veterinarians and his advice about retirement and professional practice applies to all health care givers.*

Dr. Gene Cherewaty is just two weeks into his retirement after having sold his practice in Meaford, Ontario. He is ready for retirement and looks forward to spending time on his Heron Hill Alpaca Farm on the outskirts of Meaford.

Gene and his wife Renia raise alpacas along with some goats, Shetland sheep and two llamas. The llamas are guard animals adept at biting, kicking and spitting foul intestinal fluids in order to ward off any predators that may be lurking in the area. The alpacas and the sheep offer wool that eventually may be sold commercially but at this time the animals are primarily just 'pets'.

Both Gene and Renia love their herd and have names for all 30 of their animals. Gene relates that alpacas are gentle, curious animals that require little care. Open fields with grass to graze on, a little hay thrown in and water are all that are necessary for comfort and survival.

However, raising alpacas is not without costs, both emotional and financial. Some of the herd has died as a result of meningitis and this causes Renia and Gene sadness and discomfort when they are forced to call in a veterinarian to end the animal's plight. The symptoms of meningitis are obvious in that the infected animal often isolates itself from the herd and has trouble with its balance. Meningitis is a result of a deer and snail virus that ends up being ingested into the lungs of the alpacas and once introduced is often fatal because no remedy that works is available to offset the animal's ailment.

Raising alpacas provides joy for Gene and Renia. Newborns (cria) arrive invariably between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. as they need to be sundried and on their feet within 20 to 30 minutes to go to their mother to be accepted. This is the normal procedure but sometimes there is rejection on the part of the mother and the newborn has to be hand fed by the Cherewatys to ensure its survival. It is obvious to observers that a close bond exists with all the members of the herd and their owners. There is a sense of pride and achievement as the newborns grow and develop into adults. Most of their animals have been born, raised and died on the farm.

Gene offers that he is privileged and has a stress relieving lifestyle because these animals respond so favourably to affection and care.

Dr. Cherewaty answered the following questions:

## What advice do you have for recent graduates?

Things are so different today than when I graduated. There is much more competition out there. When I graduated I was busy from day one. There was camaraderie and you knew there was someone there who would share advice on a procedure you had questions about.

Today it is much more complicated; graduates have to find good associateships and mentors who can advise and guide them. For me there are two main things to keep in mind as a new graduate:

## Where do you want to raise your family assuming you want a family.

and

## If you want to own a solo practice make sure it's the right one as it is hard to change your mind once you have made a decision about your practice.

Another concern worth debating is that professionals are trained to be perfect and 'mistake free'; this was almost the 'mantra' of my training. I think this expectation caused problems for many practitioners who suffered depression as a result. Of course, it is a fallacy that we can be perfect. We can and do make mistakes. I learned to apologize to my patients when something went wrong and promised them I would correct the problem at no extra charge.

## When and why did you know it was time to retire?

I loved my work and would still be doing it if I could. About six months ago I knew my career was going to have to wind down; the rheumatoid arthritis in my hands and my transplanted kidney were making it too difficult to continue.

## What advice would you give to professionals considering retirement?

I would advise them to know what they are going to do after retirement. They should be aware of their finances and how much they have to spend each month. Also I would suggest that they hire competent professionals to guide them through the process. There is much to consider.

Renia Cherewaty answered the following questions:

## How would you describe your career?

I started as a receptionist and later became an office manager doing mostly the books for Gene. When we bought the practice up here, I assisted Gene in the day-to-day procedures.

## How would you describe the life of an average Canadian professional health care doctor?

When you're a young professional it is very hectic; you have debts and need to establish your practice by working long hours. Most doctors are very dedicated to their patients. In our practice here, most of our patients were also friends and acquaintances. Our office manager was from Meaford and lives in the farm across the road from us. She was invaluable because she knew everyone and put us in touch with the locals.

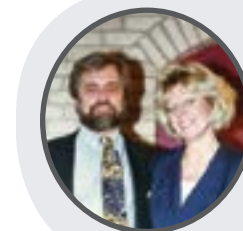
## What advice can you offer other professionals and their spouses about a balance in the work/life equation?

You have to have a lot of patience and things will work out.

The Cherewatys are delightful, hospitable hosts eager to show visitors their farm and their animals. They see themselves as blessed and have become very much part of the picturesque agricultural community. That night, they were on their way to a local church roast beef dinner that was totally sold out. Neighbours and friends of all ages attend and there are many such dinners and gatherings every year. For example, last year the Rotary fish fry had over 900 people attend.

Dr. Cherewaty was asked if he had it to do again would he become a veterinarian? He said that he had thought about it many times and yes, he would consider it because he liked working with his hands and performing surgery. Laughing, he added, "Sometimes working with animals is a lot easier than working with people!"

*Bottom Line: An interview with a recently retired dentist that describes how he and his wife have settled into retirement on their Heron Hill Alpaca Farm.*



### Dr. Gene and Renia Cherewaty

Dr. Gene Cherewaty recently sold his practice in Meaford, Ontario, after a long and successful career. He can be reached through the editor of this magazine.

# Feature Interview with Dr. Angela Whelan



Dr. Angela Whelan graduated from Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) in 1990. She practiced in Brantford for six years then accepted a position, in Hamilton where she no longer had to worry about juggling emergency duty and her young family. In 2002, she decided to branch out on her own and opened Spencer Creek Animal Hospital in Dundas, Ontario. Dr. Whelan lives with her husband Jim on a farm in Troy, Ontario where they raise and train standardbred racehorses.

Dr. Whelan volunteers her time as one of three directors for the Hamilton Academy of Veterinary Medicine. In the past year since taking the position she has helped restructure the academy to become more of a platform for local veterinarians for continuing education and social camaraderie.

Dr. Angela Whelan answered the following:

## **Please tell us about the notable historical link you have with the Ontario Veterinary College.**

My great-great-grandfather on my mother's side was Andrew Smith who founded the Ontario Veterinary College when it was still affiliated with the University of Toronto. The OVC celebrated 150 years in 2012 and I was honoured to be asked to take part in several events not only as a relative but also because I am his only descendant who has elected to pursue veterinary medicine.

## **When did you know you wanted to become a veterinarian?**

When I was quite young, my mother made a special trip to the OVC for us to view the family pictures of Andrew Smith and I can remember feeling very proud of this heritage and a strong sense of providence. I already had a passion for animals and now it seemed I also had purpose; becoming a veterinarian became my motivator throughout my school years.

I was accepted into the Agriculture Program at the University of Guelph in 1982 but it took three attempts applying to the Veterinary College before I became a successful candidate. At this time I began to rethink my options, as perhaps veterinary medicine was not my destiny. I realized my education opened so many alternate doors and I began to gain maturity and confidence in myself. Once a person crosses that threshold I think others can appreciate the change. With my next formal panel interview to apply to OVC, I felt that my interviewers could see that I was now able to put my dreams into reality.

Throughout my childhood I had a great passion for horses and did competition riding in dressage, hunting and eventing. During my school years, I wasn't content with doing the routine part-time jobs so I decided to go to Flamboro Downs race track and see if I could work with the horses. It was here that I met my husband Jim. Jim was born in Prince Edward Island and had been racing horses with his father and brothers and had recently moved his stable of horses to Ontario. Throughout my university years, Jim was strongly supportive and instrumental to my success with my veterinary studies.

## **Please tell us about your family; have any of them expressed an interest in becoming a veterinarian?**

We have a blended family of five children with the two eldest Garrett and Justin actively involved in harness racing. The third, Brett manages a harness racing track in Newfoundland. My only daughter Abilene attends university in PEI back in her father's province where we have spent many family holidays and still have strong ties. The youngest, Marshall is finishing grade 12 and has applied to several universities, including Guelph, for business. All the children have interests in various professions but as yet none have expressed a desire regarding veterinary medicine; however I think a child with a degree in business and accounting may be a real benefit in the future for my own business at Spencer Creek Animal Hospital!

## **How do you manage being a veterinarian, business owner, mother and wife?**

Throughout my career I feel I have been very successful at balancing both family and veterinary medicine because I have never thought of my roles as being separate but rather blended. Living on a horse farm is 24-7 job and our family has always combined socializing and working: family picnics while racing stakes horses in small Ontario

towns such as Leemington, Dresden and Sarnia and *fancy* overnights swimming in the pools of the Holiday Inn in Sudbury and Ottawa. We also combine an extended family vacation in PEI, Orlando and Bermuda with a veterinary conference.

## **What lies ahead for you in the immediate future?**

Now that the children are moving in their own directions, I have more time for other more personal pursuits. Jim and I still combine our love for horses and de-stressing; however, currently the racing industry is going through some major changes and we are actively lobbying for its survival in Ontario which is very consuming both emotionally and physically. My other passion has been yoga. I have always been a very physically active person but yoga has become more than just a workout. I have found ways to help focus my intentions and utilize my mind that have now been incorporated into the way I live my life and practice veterinary medicine.

## **What advice would you give to recent graduates of veterinary medicine?**

It is not just a love of animals that is going to keep you in this profession for a long time; you also have to have a compassion for life - the lives of the patients under your care, the lives of their owners, the lives of the people you work with and lives of your own family. Don't ever sacrifice one life for another; you will need all of them at one time or another. Remember too that it is not all about financial wealth; wealth comes in a variety of forms.

## **What trends do you see happening in veterinary medicine today?**

With the current economic trend, veterinary medicine is also experiencing a change. Owners are becoming more conscious of the financial aspect of owning a pet. A veterinarian who is receptive to this trend has to learn to adapt. We have to adapt in our communication abilities so that owners can see the 'value' of the choices and treatment/diagnostic plans that we are offering and how this is better and more successful medical management of their beloved companions.

As veterinarians we must have more empathy for our clients and understand what their financial limitations are. The old adage about 'treating the owner being 80% of the job' is very true; however, if you are not committed and compassionately working with the owners, you will never be able to do the other 20% of treating the animal which is what every veterinarian actually aspires to do!

Educating owners is also an area to focus on. In this computer age with Internet and social media, it is actually very surprising how many people actually believe everything they read and see. Making suggestions to owners about how to properly research using the Internet is not only helpful to fully understand certain diseases and fads but also for the ongoing health and safety of their pets.

There is a lot of misinformation and I have seen many a pet suffer needlessly for several days while an owner 'surfed the web for home cures' without seeking proper veterinary care. I see it as my duty to the patients under my care to make sure their owners are using the Internet wisely. I encourage owners to email me sites they have visited or have questions about and stress the importance of reliable sources of help. My clients know from their first appointment that 'We are only a phone call away if you have any questions of concerns'.

Lastly, I feel as veterinarians we have to advocate more for the health of our patients at a much earlier stage. We have to stress the importance of health maintenance on the first puppy and kitten visits. Today, we are seeing more life threatening issues, which could be prevented with proper education. Obesity, severe periodontal disease and even certain cases of diabetes all cause needless suffering to pets and can easily be prevented by spending a little more time developing a client bond so that owners will actively seek out regular veterinary care and take to heart our advice.

### What final thoughts do you have for your chosen profession?

I would like to see more veterinarians working together. There is enough work for everyone. Unfortunately, in some localities, competition is becoming a hindrance to proper veterinary care. Undercutting prices and high volume practices are sacrificing the individual on so many levels. With the advent of changes to the bylaws of advertising, I worry about veterinarians forfeiting their professionalism. We have to get back to our roots and remember the reasons why we decided to become veterinarians in the first place: a love for a being that has the unique quality of just loving us for who we are, whenever the time and whatever the circumstance.

*Bottom Line: A comprehensive interview with a very busy veterinarian, business owner, wife and mother who has a personal philosophy that in her words 'works for her'.*



## Good News & Fun Facts

### Canadians optimistic about economic outlook for 2013 - poll

29 December 2012 - The majority of Canadians are optimistic about the country's fiscal fortunes heading into 2013. Western Canadians are slightly more optimistic about the Canadian economy going into the New Year, with more than three-quarters of Albertans (77 per cent), Saskatchewanians and Manitobans (76 per cent) and 72 per cent of British Columbians showing bright outlooks for the country's finances. Two-thirds of Ontarians and Atlantic Canadians believed next year would be a 'good' year for the Canadian economy, while just over half of Quebec respondents felt the same way.

Source: Global Good News

[www.globalgoodnews.com/business-news-a.html?art=135675139716494340](http://www.globalgoodnews.com/business-news-a.html?art=135675139716494340)



### FUN FACTS ABOUT THE ANIMAL WORLD

- Turtles can breath through their rear-ends
- Bullfrogs do not sleep
- Butterflies taste with their feet
- China produces more pigs than all other countries combined
- The hair on a polar bear is not white; it is transparent
- 70 per cent of red meat eaten worldwide is goat meat
- Flamingos get their unique colour from the food they eat
- The total weight of all the ants in the world is about the same as the total weight of all humans
- There are more chickens than people in the world
- Dolphins sleep with one eye open
- A flea can jump about 130 times its height
- The largest animal that ever lived is still living – the blue whale

Source: Reader's Digest

## Some quotes of note

"People always ask, 'How do you handle pit bulls and rottweilers and big German shepherds?' The truth is, the dogs that scare me most are the little Chihuahuas. They're much more likely to bite."  
—Mark Howes DVM

"I understand the value of dog parks, but I personally wouldn't take my dog there. We see a lot of dogs who were injured at dog parks."  
—Rachel Simpson, a vet tech

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### Dr. Angela Whelan

Dr. Angela Whelan is the owner of the Spencer Creek Animal Hospital and a director of the Hamilton Academy of Veterinary Medicine. Along with her husband, she also cares for 30 horses on her farm in Troy, Ontario. She can be reached through the editor of this magazine.

