

State of the Association – WSAVA in 2018 – Walt Ingwersen DVM, DVSc, DACVIM, WSAVA President

Vision: *All companion animals worldwide receive veterinary care that ensures their optimal health and welfare*

Mission: *To advance the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide through an educated, committed and collaborative global community of veterinary peers*

It has been another stellar year of progress and achievement for the WSAVA - the culmination of ten years of growth for our global veterinary community. It's salutary to think that we have twice the number of member associations and double the number of individual veterinarian members as we did in 2008.

This year also marks the successful final stage of our 2014-2019 WSAVA Strategic plan. I'm pleased to say that all of its 16 strategic initiatives have been delivered or are underway. The Plan's success is built on its founding tenet – member engagement - our volunteer base has doubled as we have launched a range of initiatives born from discussions at our Member Forums held around the world. We are now perfectly placed to enter our next round of strategic planning, led by Vice President Siraya Chunekamrai. We will build on this engagement to ensure that our community is keenly involved in setting our path for the next five years and beyond.

There have been so many highlights over the last twelve months. Here are just some:

1. We invested in our infrastructure in order to better serve the needs of our members. Our Central Secretariat became a team of four, led by our CEO Arpita Bhose and encompassing a bookkeeper (June Ingwersen), PR consultant (Rebecca George) and administrative assistant (Emma van Rooijen). Arpita and her team are firmly focused on supporting our leaders so that they can focus on realizing our vision and goals. They also run our community to a high professional standard.
2. Led by incoming President Shane Ryan, we developed and are now delivering a renewed industry partnership model to increase opportunities for our partners to engage in areas of mutual interest and benefit. We are providing stronger central oversight to ensure a mutually beneficial return on these partnerships.
3. Given our goal of member engagement and open dialogue within our community, we launched a communication strategy with our communications partner Vetstream that saw our website revitalized, our Bulletin enhanced, an increase in our presence on social media and the leveraging of our brand through our other partners. The aim was to ensure that every member of a WSAVA member association knew that they were also a member of the WSAVA global veterinary community – and to encourage non-members to aspire to be so in the future. The WSAVA online Global Village, currently under development, will be the focal point for our community engagement, once it goes live. Our efforts to enhance communication are working. Our website received >500,000 page views over the last year with an average of two minutes spent per page. Top destinations included the Global Vaccination Guidelines, Global Nutrition Guidelines and Global Pain Guidelines. Our monthly e-Bulletin has an audience of > 28,600 and our social media reach is building. We issued 18 press releases during the year which have been picked up on every continent.
4. The WSAVA Executive Board succession plan was introduced by Renee Hoyneck and voted on in principle by the Assembly last year. It will be formalized through by-law revisions set before the Assembly this year. It opens leadership opportunities more widely while streamlining key roles and responsibilities to better align with realistic expectations for volunteer commitment. It also sees the inaugural vote and addition of the newly formed Board Member position on the Executive Board, following an open nomination and election process.
5. Many of our Committees and Working Groups achieved milestones including:
 - a. An extensive CE program based on the Global Dental Guidelines organized by the Global Dental Guidelines Committee
 - b. The launch of the WSAVA Academy by the WSAVA CE Committee. It is an online library of CE content, WSAVA World Congress, together with content from educational sponsors and industry partners

- c. The revitalization of the Hereditary Disease Committee, including the leadership role we took on the issue of brachycephalism through the Expert Panel session we ran during World Congress in Denmark in collaboration with FECAVA and DSAVA
 - d. The creation of additional clinical tools to support both the GNC and GPC online resources
 - e. The gathering of data by the Vaccination Guidelines Group in LATAM which culminated in the new LATAM focused Vaccination Guidelines.
6. We are increasing our range of activity through the establishment of new Committees based on member feedback. Examples include:
- a. The expansion of the Animal Welfare and Wellness Committee to encompass a Task Force which has developed the first global Companion Animal Welfare Guidelines. They will be launched at World Congress 2018
 - b. The creation of the WSAVA Professional Wellness Group, led by Drs Nienke Endenburg and Derick Chibeu. It builds on the work of some member associations to recognize the global scope of the impact our career can have on the well-being of members of the companion animal healthcare team. They will pursue the forms this takes in different regions of the world and work towards the development of support-based tools. The proverb says “it takes a village to raise a child.” We take the view that it takes a community to ensure the well-being of its members
 - c. The creation of our Therapeutics Guidelines Group with a mandate to drive our campaign to secure equitable access to veterinary therapeutics campaign. See below. It will also work to coordinate global efforts around AMR, centered on small animal veterinary practice
 - d. Our soon-to-be launched Reproductive and Sterilization Guidelines Group which will develop Global Guidelines to ensure both reproductive health but also an evidence-based medicine approach to recommendations for age and other-related decisions on sterilization – both for individual and herd-based initiatives.
 - e. The expansion of our One Care initiative, which sees like-minded groups – whether regional or issues-based – come together to discuss collaborative approaches to addressing issues of mutual concern with a focus on community development. Recently, One Care brought together international NGOs focused on rabies prevention to discuss ways of coordinating efforts that respect and enhance the regional sustainability of veterinary practice. This supports our joint position statement with OIE to see the eradication of rabies globally by 2030.

We continue to receive expressions of interest and proposed opportunities to develop additional Global Guidelines on issues of relevance to companion animals. These form part of a dynamic process of prioritization and implementation, based on need, available resources and stakeholder interest. If you have a suggestion that would not only benefit your member association but also the wider WSAVA global community, please suggest it to your Regional Member Advocate or a member of the WSAVA leadership team.

7. ‘Finding our voice’ - raised consistently at Members’ Forums, we have embarked on a campaign to raise awareness of and address the issue of inequitable availability of and access to veterinary therapeutics. This is an issue that affects all of us albeit in different ways. Whether it’s through the animal welfare implications of the use of inadequate medicines or the growing online market penetration of counterfeit medicines, it significantly undermines our ability to maintain our Hippocratic Oath and the sanctity of the Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR). A survey we conducted among our members confirmed that a staggering 75% felt that the lack of access to medicines impacted their ability to address the needs of their patients – 20% cited it as a ‘serious restriction.’ We have already addressed this issue in many ways and have now created a joint position statement on the clinical relevance and impact of the inequity in access and availability of veterinary therapeutics. It has been signed by virtually every other international veterinary association (including WVA, FECAVA, FASAVA, FIAVAC, FAFVAC, CVA, and FAVA), as well as by Health for Animals, the animal health industry association. The issue is complex so we plan to host a summit on the subject during WSAVA World Congress 2018, bringing stakeholders together to identify key issues, to develop plans and to prioritize their implementation. One of our priorities is to develop minimum standards of veterinary pharmacy to ensure patient well-being and welfare.

We could not have achieved so much without the generous support of our industry partners and association patrons. From our key industry partners – Boehringer Ingelheim, Elanco, Hills, Mars-Waltham, MSD, Purina, and Zoetis – to our association patrons including ASAVA, BSAVA, DSAVA and NACAM, we say a big thank you for investing in our community. For those interested, opportunities exist to support a host of community enhancing opportunities – from CE to supporting colleague attendance at World Congress - please contact Arpita Bhose for further details. And please consider attending our Committee Forum at Congress, where one-on-one conversations can provide more insights into the opportunities available, including the investment of your time.

Not only has the WSAVA Community been blessed with an abundance of resources – both human and financial, we have also benefitted from exceptional resource management. Our Financial Advisory Committee, led by Debbie Osborne in conjunction with our financial team, Ellen van Nierop, Michael Day, Arpita Bhose and June Ingwersen, has ensured that industry partner investments have flourished and provided a mutually beneficial ROI, while delivering growth that is measured and sustainable. Many thanks – not only for your sharp pencils but also for your flexibility in resource allocation and in your determination to focus on initiatives with clear relevance and benefit.

Aiding in these efforts and supporting our engagement, as evidenced by our growing number of volunteers, are our Committee Chairs. We now have 20 standing or Guidelines committees and active community-based projects – with more coming. Opportunities for involvement abound. If you'd like more information, please contact Käthi Brunner, chair of the Leadership and Nomination Committee.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt thank you to all my fellow Executive Board members and each and every one of you - not only for your support during my Presidency but, more importantly, for your passionate engagement with the WSAVA. We are a family. Our passion for animal care is what drives us and you are the life blood of our global veterinary community.

The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated. Mahatma Gandhi (attributed)

Based on this adage, the *WSAVA Nation* is truly great!