IN THIS ISSUE…

04 NAVTA Strategic Plan
12 Nutritional Considerations in Allergic Skin Disease
20 The Relationship Between Continuing Education and Job Satisfaction for Veterinary Technicians
For every GI problem, there’s a solution

For more information, talk to your Hill's Representative.
Skin disorders are one of the common reasons owners bring their pets into the veterinary hospital. Harlingen Veterinary Clinic utilizes Julie Palmucci, CVT and her diagnostic skills to aid the veterinarian in obtaining an allergic skin disease diagnosis.

Photo courtesy of Nick Mistretta.
Branding

The new brand officially launched in January 2015, with a new NAVTA logo. VTSs, SCNAV-TAs, AVAs, and State Reps now have a colored logo designated for each. In addition to the new logos, a new booth for veterinary conferences was designed. Stop by and see us at NAVC, WVC, or AVMA this year!

Sponsorships/Partnerships

• Tier 1 Partner with Partners for Healthy Pets: A workbook was created specifically for Veterinary Technicians on how to take preventive initiatives and implement change within the practice. This 80 page step-by-step workbook is available free to members. To order, please visit www.navta.org and visit the store.
• Abbott/LifeLearn Diabetes Advocate: An interactive course was developed courtesy of a grant from Abbott to help increase Diabetes awareness and education. Please visit the Education tab on the NAVTA website and click Diabetes Management. This course is free and comes with RACE credit!
• NAVTA developed 7 new industry partnerships in 2015, that include present and upcoming CE opportunities.
• The VetTeam Coach book published in 2015 with NAVTA branding for SCNAVTA students.

SCNAVTA Chapters

A new co-chair of the SCNAVTA committee has been appointed and is creating an engagement strategy for the SCNAVTA students. Implementation for the initial items began in fall 2015.

NAVTA STRATEGIC PLAN

NAVTA, your professional organization, supporting you in your career, is movin’ and shakin’! NAVTA has seen extensive and exciting changes in the last couple of years, and this year has been no different! Our members wanted a credentialed technician in the seat of the Executive Director position, so at the end of 2012, we started transitioning to meet that request. During 2016, we will take the next step and become a fully self-managed organization, as we no longer need a management company to help guide our steps.

The NAVTA 2016 Executive Board include:

• President: Rebecca Rose, CVT
• Past President: Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)
• President Elect: Mary Berg, MS, RLATG, RVT, VTS (Dentistry)
• Secretary: Elizabeth Reed, BS, CVT, CCRA
• Treasurer: Becky Mossor, RVT
• Member at Large: Ed Carlson, CVT, VTS (Nutrition)
• Member at Large: Stephen Cital, CVT, VTS (Nutrition)
• Past President: Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)

We have made a lot of progress over the last few years. We can’t wait to see what 2016 brings! The following are some of the highlights since the reorganizing began:

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Veterinary Technician Specialties (VTS)
There are now 12 recognized specialties (Dermatology was most recently recognized in August 2015). There are 2 new petitions under review, with an additional 5-7 in the works. Currently, the Committee (CVTS) is reviewing guidelines and will propose changes in 2016.

Approved Veterinary Assistants (AVA)
The Approved Veterinary Assistant committee reviews and approves curriculum for assistant programs, as well as mentoring assistant programs in the approval process. Currently, there are 25 AVA programs, and 7 programs currently being reviewed. Graduates of AVA programs are allowed to sit for an AVA credentialing test, in which there are currently over 900 AVAs in the United States. AVAs are required to submit CE for renewal.

The NAVTA Journal
How do you like the new look? 2016 is bringing about changes for you! TNJ will continue to feature 3 CE articles per month that will be topic specific. CE quizzes can be taken at www.vetmedteam.com to receive 1 RACE credit per article. In 2015, TNJ began including AVA specific articles; in 2016, TNJ will also include articles written by students in SCNAVTA chapters. Watch for more fun changes in 2016!

National Veterinary Technician Week
National Veterinary Technician Week (NVTW) was held October 11th – 17th of this year. This year, TNJ included you, the members on our poster! Visit the website to download it if you have yet to do so. NAVTA had a large presence on social media during NVTW with over 940,000 total post reaches. In addition, NAVTA members created a video to help increase awareness with state and national associations, in addition to the proposed title change initiative. You can view this video on the website. Thank you to Hill’s for their continued support of National Veterinary Technician Week.

Website www.navta.net
The website has had impressive traffic since it’s new release in March of 2015. Members can log in and update their profile, obtain their member number, read industry and news updates, past editions of TNJ and review CE events that are unique to them.

Social Media
Have you liked us on Facebook? NAVTA has over 62,000 friends, with 1,393 new likes per week! Average posts reach 637,231 friends and post engagement averages 54,491. Visit us on LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter!

NAVTA welcomes any questions, ideas, or comments of any type at any time. We are very excited about everything that has happened in 2015. Our goal is to move our profession forward and educate the veterinary industry and public on the importance of veterinary technicians/nurses in the health and wellbeing of pets and the integral role they play within the veterinary healthcare team.
The 2016 Strategic Plan
In December 2015, NAVTA Leadership met to develop a strategic plan that will guide successive boards, committees and staff.

The Mission of NAVTA is to Advance Veterinary Technology and Veterinary Nursing. Four goals were set with action steps to carry out each.

NAVTA will Strengthen the Industry by developing a standardized and protected credential. In order to carry this out, a model practice act will be developed, and NAVTA will serve as the credible resource for veterinary technology. In addition, NAVTA will collaborate with state, national and global organizations.

NAVTA will Advocate for Awareness by differentiating the unique roles of the veterinary healthcare team. This will be achieved through public outreach, education campaigns, promoting the benefits of credentialed technicians and nurses, and global networking.

NAVTA will Support Members by providing relevance and value through benefits packages, collaborating with state associations and student chapters, and work to continuously improve member communications. In addition, NAVTA will provide educational opportunities and advancement pathways.

The Sustainability of NAVTA will be carried out by developing future leaders to guide the association and profession. In addition, NAVTA will maintain financial stability, quality industry relationships, transparency, and institute accountability. Performance measures will be implemented to monitor the progress.

The Executive Board adopted the goals and action plan on December 16, 2015, with the next step being to notify members and create community awareness. The alignment and assignment of committees will now occur, with the review occurring at each monthly board meeting. An annual review will occur annually during new board member orientation, with full review occurring in December of 2018.

NAVTA is looking for volunteers that would be interested in joining the following committees to help carry out the above goals.

- SCNAVTA
- CVTS
- State Reps
- AVA
- Legal
- Membership
- PR
- Continuing Education

Your Participation on the NAVTA committee will benefit your professional growth through networking, engaging, and volunteering. Contact Julie Legred NAVTA Executive Director, to learn more about committees and volunteering.

– The NAVTA Executive Board
Let’s treat them together

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REDUCES THE RECURRENCE OF FIC SIGNS BY 89%²

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For more information, talk to your Hill’s Representative.


Hill’sVet.com
2016 marks an exciting era for veterinary technicians all throughout the nation. Over the past couple of years, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) has been a catalyst to bringing state associations together to develop leadership and association organization, exchange practical solutions and experiences in common challenges, and discussing national and local visions and goals to bring cohesiveness to the veterinary technician profession.

Pursuing a nationally standardized credential for our profession is a large goal, yet only one of many profession-wide goals veterinary technicians in every state are major stakeholders in, and need to work in a coordinated manner to achieve. Veterinary technician advocacy associations vary in organizational structure depending on the state, and have differing needs. NAVTA aims to gather resources to aid their growth. The veterinary technician credential can be mandatory of voluntary in the state to practice, and can be governed by the state government or by private organizations. Veterinary technician associations vary in size from several dozen members to thousands, mostly staffed by volunteers though some have established themselves enough to sustain employed staff. Motivated groups of veterinary technicians in some states are aiming to form a veterinary technician association to pursue long term goals for the profession, and some states have opted to advocate through the state’s veterinary medical associations. Depending on the approach each state has taken to advocate for the veterinary technician profession and the state of growth associations are in, their needs are varied.

Despite the varying needs, veterinary technician associations face common challenges; public and professional awareness, membership engagement, leadership and governance, organizational sustainability, and legislative action.

The NAVTA Leadership Summit in January includes a workshop allowing associations to assess their progress through an association assessment checklist, essential policies for governance of an association, and creating practical sponsorship packages. The summit was also arranged to be in conjunction with the AVMA.
The committee communicates with veterinary technician associations through digital and face-to-face meetings throughout the year, publishing state updates to the national audience. The committee will continue to improve communication and dissemination of NAVTA resources to strengthen the profession as a whole. The State Representative Committee intends on continuing its major role in serving as an avenue for communication between state associations and NAVTA to bring cohesiveness to the profession in order to pursue large scale goals.

The Goals of the State Representative Committee include:

• Pursuing a nationally standardized credential
• Gather resources to aid the building of a strong foundation and create organizational strength in state associations
• Help each association grow its member database

Veterinary Leadership Conference where personal leadership, association board responsibilities, and membership growth and engagement are major workshop topics. Just as important, is the ability for veterinary technicians to attend a national veterinary leadership conference to forge new relationships with veterinary leaders throughout the nation. A similar meeting and workshop is planned to be held in August in conjunction with the AVMA Convention to provide further guidance and follow up meetings.

Pictured: NAVTA and state leaders worked through an all day workshop to develop national and state goals and plans.
NOW ACCEPTING STUDENT ARTICLES

The NAVTA Journal is a bi-monthly, peer-reviewed publication providing information pertinent to the veterinary healthcare team. We welcome articles on a variety of topics pertaining to veterinary technology. Please contact studentarticles@navta.net, before submitting articles to ensure that there is not another author working on the same topic. All articles are submitted with the understanding that The NAVTA Journal staff, CE editors and editorial board will edit as deemed necessary and appropriate.

The staff reserves the right to edit and print articles in the edition of their choice, based on editorial focus.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT ARTICLES:
• From 1,000 to 1,500 words (not including cutlines, breakout boxes, footnotes and so on).
• Minimum of two references.
• Include drug footnotes.
• Authors must complete a short biography to be published in The Journal.
• Include a statement of purpose/objective for the CE article with specific information, concepts and/or skills that participants are expected to obtain when they complete the offering.
• Authors are asked to cite all quotations and references at the end of the article. Citations should be numbered in the order of their citation with superscript numbers. Follow the AMA Manual of Style format.

Photos, images and illustration guidelines:
• For print, photos/images must be 300+ dpi.
• Digital photos only.
• We encourage authors to submit images and illustrations to supplement their article.
• Tables, figures, photos and other images should be submitted as an individual high-resolution (>800 dpi) JPG or TIFF (do not embed within the article).
• Captions.descriptions should be provided for each photo at the end of your document, not on the photo itself.
• The author must obtain permission from individuals in the photos.
• Identify individuals in the photos.

*See the NAVTA Editorial Guidelines for examples http://www.navta.net/?page=editorial_guidelines
2016 welcomes a new SCNAVTA chair, Ms. Beckie Mossor. Many thanks to Lori Renda-Francis, PhD, LVT for her many years of service. We are looking forward to her role as committee advisor to ensure a smooth transition. Beckie is very excited to be taking on this role and working closely with all the advisors and programs across the country.

The updated database will bring many opportunities for students and advisors alike. It will allow each advisor to interact with their student accounts and help their students participate to a higher degree. A new ‘group’ will be launched for all advisors to interact through the website. Additionally, we will be launching a group for the students to interact together and share ideas. Throughout January, Beckie will be reaching out to all current advisors and relaying instructions and information about logging into their own accounts, as well helping students log in.

New Items for SCNAVTA this year

Student article in The Navta Journal: NAVTA has launched a student article section in the NAVTA Journal and the first article has already been received! All students are encouraged to submit articles to studentarticles@navta.net. Dr. Oreta Samples will help guide students to build articles to perfection!

SCNAVTA e-newsletter for advisors: The Committees goal is to help keep communication and interaction alive. NAVTA wants to be able to provide support to these chapters, help integrate ideas and bring new ideas into our field.

Other new ideas! The committee continues to brainstorm ideas for student activities within the website area for SCNAVTA. Ideas include a Tech Tutor Corner, an events calendar to help notify students of events that may be nearby them, and interactive webinars/work sessions for students to talk with current technicians. In addition, NAVTA is seeking opportunities for SCNAVTA driven events at major conferences to give the advisors and students an opportunity to meet with the NAVTA Leadership.

The SCNAVTA Committee welcomes your ideas and is always seeking advisors to join. Please reach out to Beckie Mossor at SCNAVTA@NAVTA.net with any comments, questions, or concerns!

The Goals of the SCNAVTA Committee for 2016 include:

- Recruiting advisor members to the SCNAVTA Committee
- Creating a contact point for advisors to share ideas
- Encouraging participation from advisors in yearly awards (Chapter of the Year and Advisor of the Year)
- Increasing participation and communication throughout the SCNAVTA Chapters
Learning Objective: After reading this article, readers will be able to describe inflammatory skin diseases in dogs and cats, the application of nutritional therapy in managing these disorders, and the important role veterinary technicians play in improving patient care through client communication and enhanced compliance.
Flea Allergies

Flea allergy dermatitis (FAD) is the development of hypersensitivity reaction(s) and ensuing skin lesions accompanied by variable pruritus in response to exposure to flea salivary antigens. Pet owners often refer to this as flea bite allergy. It is reasonable to assume there is high vari-ability within individual patients as to the amount of flea salivary antigen required to induce clinical flea allergic dermatitis.

Flea allergies are the most common type of allergic skin diagnosed in dogs. It is also one of the most commonly diagnosed skin disorders in cats. Specific breed of gender predilection has not been seen in patients with flea bite hypersensitivity. Dogs that are predisposed to flea allergy and live in a flea-endemic area typically show clinical signs by 5 years of age. However, clinical signs can develop at any age, especially if animals move from a low-exposure area to an area where fleas are widespread. Flea allergies typically present as a pruritic papular dermatitis, concentrated on the rump, dorsal thorax, flanks, tail, and perineal area. Pruritus occurs on the caudal areas and tail, although generalized pruritus may be seen. Papules in the umbilical area is also very suggestive of flea hypersensitivity. Front limb “corn cobbing” is another characteristic behavior seen in flea-allergic dogs. Cats are more prone to miliary dermatitis lesions on the back, neck, and face; although lesions may be found anywhere.

Allergic dermatitis might be the cause if the pet has seasonal pruritus, lichenification (thickening of the skin which indicates chronic inflammation), hyperpigmentation.

Nutrition plays a primary role in the management and treatment of skin disorders. The use of dietary fatty acids, antioxidants, and novel and hydrolyzed proteins can be beneficial in managing skin disorders. This article discusses how to provide the health care team with an understanding of inflammatory skin diseases in dogs and cats, the application of nutritional therapy in managing these disorders, and the important role veterinary technicians play in improving patient care through client communication and enhanced compliance.

The skin is the largest organ of the body and protects the animal against water loss and physical, chemical, and microbiologic injury. It also serves as a sensory organ with the ability to perceive temperature, pain, touch, pruritus, and pressure.

Skin disorders are a common reason owners bring their pets to the veterinary hospital. Allergic skin disease is one of the most common types of skin disorders. Allergies in dogs and cats can affect quality of life for the pet as well as the pet parents; thus impacting the human-animal bond. Pruritic pets are often uncomfortable; leaving owners to ascertain the reason for the itching and what can be done to stop the itch. Common skin allergies diagnosed in dogs and cats are fleas, atopy, and food. It is estimated that 15 to 25% of hospital visits involve treating and diagnosing skin and coat problems.
Atopic dermatitis is one of the top claims submitted by Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) policyholders year after year.
thus stimulating the epidermal immune system. The immunologic response results in release of inflammatory mediators.⁶,⁷ As cats have increased in popularity, the recognition of atopy in this species has increased.

Atopic dermatitis is one of the top claims submitted by Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) policyholders year after year. In 2012 alone, policyholders submitted over 68,000 claims for skin allergies in dogs, accounting for more than $5.6 million in medical claim amounts. This resulted in atopic dermatitis being the second highest claim submitted for dogs. Skin allergies also fall within the top 10 claims for cats (2012 data – VPI).¹⁰

The most commonly diagnosed breeds are: golden retriever, West Highland white terrier, Chinese Shar pei, bull terrier, Bichon frisé, and the Tibetan terrier.⁶,⁹ In cats any breed can be at risk; however, the Devon rex, purebred cats in general, and orange cats or cats with orange color in their coats seem to be more predisposed than other breeds and colors.¹¹ Most dogs are diagnosed with atopy from 6 months to 3 years of age.⁶ Cats diverge from dogs and the range is 6 months to 14 years.¹¹

Adverse food reactions typically occur as nonseasonal pruritic dermatitis, occasionally accompanied by gastrointestinal signs.⁴,¹²,¹³

In dogs, adverse reactions to food are ~10% as common as atopic dermatitis and conceivably as common as atopic dermatitis in cats.

Allergic dermatitis might be the cause if the pet has seasonal pruritus, lichenification (thickening of the skin which indicates chronic inflammation), hyperpigmentation. The feet, face, ears, flexural surfaces of the front legs, axilla and abdomen are most affected. Lesions can develop due to self-trauma. Also otitis, pyoderma or Malassezia dermatitis are seen secondary to atopy.⁹

Diagnosis for atopy involves eliminating other conditions with similar symptoms.⁶,⁹ Thus, diagnosis includes appropriate control for external parasites, and potentially elimination food trials. Intradermal skin testing or serologic testing can also be performed to identify possible antigens, but they are not a definitive diagnosis of atopy. Skin testing or serological testing is only used to guide immunological therapy after a diagnosis of atopy is made.

Adverse Reaction to Food

Adverse reactions to food are not easy to diagnose as they frequently imitate allergic diseases. Additionally, adverse food reactions often mimic a variety of canine skin disorders (e.g., pyoderma, pruritic seborrheic dermatoses, folliculitis, ecto-

The severity of the pruritus is extremely variable. Lesion distribution is often indistinguishable from that seen with atopic dermatitis; feet, face, axillae, perineal region, inguinal region, rump, and ears are often affected. 25% of dogs with adverse food reactions have lesions in the ear area.¹ Therefore, adverse food reactions should always be suspected in dogs with pruritic, unilateral or bilateral otitis externa, even if accompanied by secondary bacterial or Malassezia infections.

Patient History

The first step in evaluating patients with potential skin disorders is to obtain a patient history. A complete history should include signalment (i.e., species, breed, age, gender, reproductive status, hair color), presenting complaint, weight and body condition score, nutrition regimen, medical history, and home environment.
The patient’s nutritional history should be reviewed carefully for allergens or ingredients believed to be commonly associated with or at risk of exacerbating skin disorders.

A complete nutritional history should determine the quality and adequacy of the food being fed to the pet, the feeding protocol (e.g., meal fed, free choice, amount, family member responsible for the feeding), and a thorough history of the types of foods fed, including access to treats, supplements, and/or other foods. All members of the health care team should be familiar with taking a nutritional history and should ask open ended questions to stimulate conversation with the owner. A proper nutritional history will result in uncovering the following:

- Specific foods pet ingests
- Commercial snacks or treats
- Supplements
- Chewable medications
- Chew toys
- Human foods
- Access to other sources of food

It is prudent to have the pet parent maintain a diary for several weeks prior to the visit and document the types of food and other items the pet ingests daily. The patient’s nutritional history should be reviewed carefully for allergens or ingredients believed to be commonly associated with or at risk of exacerbating skin disorders.

**Nutritional Management**

The nutritional status of the animal affects the health of the metabolically active organ known as the skin. Inflammatory skin disorders result in inflammation and infection and require additional nutritional support. It is important to ensure that essential nutrients to support normal skin and hair as well as reparative functions are available to the pet suffering with a skin disorder. If the patient is believed to have an adverse food reaction, the offending ingredient(s) must be eliminated. Key nutritional factors that help maintain healthy skin and aid in the management of skin disorders are protein, energy, essential fatty acids (EFAs), minerals (copper and zinc), and vitamins (A, E, and B-complex). The pet’s food should include ideal levels of these nutrients and the nutrients should be highly digestible and available to the pet. The protein in the pets’ food is the nutrient of most concern in suspected adverse food reaction. This is due to the belief that most food allergens are thought to be glycoproteins. Consequently, the healthcare team should be cognizant of the following:

- Protein and energy are crucial for new hair and skin synthesis. The pet’s food should provide optimal protein quality with appropriate levels of essential amino acids, adequate protein quantity, and digestibility. Growth, gestation, lactation, and illness require increased protein and energy. Subsequently if nutritionally inadequate foods are fed during these specific life stages, abnormal skin and hair may be noticed. Inadequate intake of protein and energy may result in depigmentation, dry, dull haircoat, and hair loss. Changes in the epidermis’ lipid content may affect the protective barrier function of the skin. This predisposes the pet to secondary bacterial or yeast infection. Inadequate protein and energy are also associated with impaired wound healing. Pets with severe seborrhea have amplified epidermal cell turnover which may result in an increase in protein and other nutrient requirements.

- The protein in the pets’ food is the nutrient of most concern in suspected adverse food reaction. This is due to the belief that most food allergens are thought to be glycoproteins. Consequently, the healthcare team should be cognizant of the following:
Pet parents should be educated that pet food additives, such as antimicrobial preservatives, colorants, antioxidant preservatives, and emulsifying agents, rarely cause either food intolerance or food allergy.

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are poly-unsaturated fatty acids found in phospholipids. EFAs are key in the structural function of the lipoproteins of cell membranes and allow for conformational responses during temperature fluctuations. They also provide a barrier function to prevent the loss of water and other nutrients. EFAs provide a source of energy to the skin and are precursors to assorted important molecules involved in the inflammatory response. EFA deficiencies may result in scaly skin, matting of hair, loss of skin elasticity, alopecia, dry and dull haircoat, erythroderma, hyperkeratosis, interdigital exudation, otitis externa, and poor hair growth. These changes affect trans-epidermal water loss, epidermal cell turnover, poor wound healing, and increased vulnerability to infection. EFAs also act as antipruritic agents. The inflammation and dermatitis associated with allergic skin disease may be partially caused by abnormal EFA metabolism. The presence of EFA in the cellular membranes is believed to decrease inflammation through competition with arachidonic acid for metabolic enzymes or by anti-inflammatory properties. The effect of EFAs on pruritus have been studied and on average, it has been found that 50% of dogs and cats with allergic pruritus improve with modification in EFA intake providing secondary bacterial and yeast infections are also controlled.

Skin lesions are often the result of mineral and vitamin imbalances. Deficiencies in copper can lead to loss of normal hair coloration, lack of hair, and a dull or rough coat. Zinc is an important enzyme cofactor and modulator of many biological functions. Zinc deficiency can lead to a dull, rough coat, skin ulcerations, hyperkeratosis, and other dermatoses. Vitamin A, E, and B-complex imbalances are associated with a variety of skin disorders. Given this, it is suggested that foods be evaluated for appropriate quantity and balance of these vitamins and minerals. Overall, most commercial pet foods contain excessive vitamins; consequently, skin disorders caused by vitamin deficiencies are rare. However, vitamin deficiency should be considered in animals being fed homemade, non-commercial, or species generic foods.

### Nutritional Plan

The key nutritional factors are important to managing skin disorders, but the healthcare team must also be working with the pet parent on an overall nutritional plan for the patient. This plan includes insuring the key nutritional factors are part of the patient’s diet, as well as discussing the feeding method, and insuring compliance.

The feeding route, amount fed, how the food is offered, access to other food, and who is responsible for feeding the pet all make up the feeding method. This information is collected with the nutritional history. Although it is important to carefully evaluate the feeding method, it may not indicate change is needed in the nutritional protocol.

Appropriate food selection is an important consideration when managing patients with inflammatory skin disorders. There are a number of influences which must be considered when treating skin conditions. The healthcare team should ascertain the patient’s access to treats, table scraps, and flavored medicines. For generalized nutritional skin disorders, the diet should be transitioned to a highly digestible food with increased levels of protein and EFAs and an appropriate balance of minerals and vitamins.

Nutritional management which aids in dietary-related skin problems in dogs and cats may also be of benefit in inflammatory skin disorders and dermatologic signs associated with metabolic diseases. Studies show the use of novel-protein foods with enhanced levels of omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants aids in the management of pets with chronic, nonseasonal pruritic dermatitis caused by suspected atopic dermatitis and/or adverse food reaction. Pet owners noted improvements in itchy skin, otitis externa, skin redness, and hair loss. Veterinarians recognized the overall improvement in skin and coat condition in the majority of dogs. Novel protein foods with enhanced levels of omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants should be considered in managing dogs with suspected allergic dermatitis.

Patient’s with skin disorders caused by nutrient deficiencies respond positively when their diet is changed to a high-quality, highly digestible food. Improvement is relatively fast - a few days to a couple of weeks. The healthcare team should closely monitor and document any food and supplement changes. The patient should be examined on a weekly to monthly basis, depending on the diagnosis and severity of the lesions.

An adverse food reaction diagnosis involves a series of elimination trials with novel protein foods or protein hydrolysate foods. Dietary elimination trials are the main diagnostic method used in...
dogs and cats with suspected adverse food reactions. An ideal elimination food should provide a limited number of highly digestible protein sources, preferably a protein hydrolysate or one to two different types of intact protein to which the animal has not been previously exposed. Again, a complete nutritional history is imperative to the success of an elimination trial. A protein hydrolysate food works well in managing adverse food reactions. Protein hydrolysates have molecular weights below levels that commonly elicit an allergic response. Patients should also be evaluated for concurrent allergic skin diseases, particularly atopy and flea allergy hypersensitivity as these patients may only partially respond to an elimination trial.

The healthcare team must remember that client compliance is crucial to a successful outcome. Proper management of skin disorders is a long-term investment by the veterinary health care team and the client. Management involves symptomatic treatment until a definitive diagnosis and appropriate treatment protocol are determined. The technician has a great opportunity to provide vital client support by reinforcing the veterinarian’s diagnosis and treatment protocol, educating the client about the importance of and proper application of nutritional protocols, and monitoring patient care through follow-up communications with the pet parent.

Skin disorders can be extremely frustrating for owners, healthcare team members, and the pets themselves. Skin disorders can affect quality of life for the pet as well as the pet parents; thus impacting the human-animal bond. Pruritic pets are often uncomfortable; leaving owners to ascertain the reason for the itching and what can be done to stop the itch. Veterinary nursing and execution of the nutritional plan allows for effective patient care, owner satisfaction, and improved quality of life for the pet.

REFERENCES
Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)

Vicky received her technician degree in 1983. She served in private practice for 18 years in California, and then 14 years ago began a new career with Hill’s Pet Nutrition. In 2007, she completed a Bachelor of Science and in 2008, she completed a Masters in Business Administration.

Vicky obtained her Veterinary Technician Specialty (VTS) in nutrition in June 2013 and serves as secretary for the Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians. She is also the Secretary/Treasurer for the Kansas Veterinary Technician Association. She is a life member of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), and was the 2014 president of NAVTA. Vicky is currently the past president of NAVTA.

Vicky speaks national and internationally and is a published author.

Kara M. Burns, MS, MEd, LVT, VTS (Nutrition)
VTS-H (Internal Medicine, Dentistry)

Kara Burns is a licensed veterinary technician originally from New England, now living in Kansas. She holds a master’s degree in physiology and a master’s degree in counseling psychology.

Kara is the Founder and President of the Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians, the tenth recognized specialty for veterinary technicians and has attained her VTS (Nutrition).

She teaches nutrition courses around the world on the VIN/Veterinary Support Personnel Network and on VetMedTeam. Kara is a consultant for the Lafeber company and Emeraid. Kara is the Director of Nursing for Brief Media as well as the Editor of Veterinary Team Brief. She also works as an independent nutritional consultant.

She is a member of many national, international, and state associations and holds positions on many boards in the profession: AAVN executive board technician liaison; Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics Board Member; Western Veterinary Conference Technician Education manager; LGVMA; International Society for Sports Nutrition; and the Pet Nutrition Alliance, to name a few.

She has authored many articles, textbooks, and textbook chapters and is an internationally invited speaker, focusing on topics of nutrition, leadership, and technician utilization.

Ms. Burns has been featured on the cover of the Veterinary Technician Journal and the NAVTA Journal. She was named the 2013 North American Veterinary Conference Technician Speaker of the Year. She was granted an honorary VTS (Internal Medicine) in 2011. She was also granted an honorary VTS (Dentistry) in 2012. She is the 2010 NAVTA Veterinary Technician of the Year, as well as the 2011 Dr. Franklin Loew Lecturer.
Veterinary technicians are key players in the veterinary healthcare team. Unfortunately, the turnover rate for veterinary technicians is 35%, with the average veterinary technician only remaining in the profession for just over 12 years. With the employment outlook expected to grow by 52% from 2010 to and 2020 and the number of positions available expected to outpace the number of new graduate veterinary technicians, it is important to identify ways to keep current veterinary technicians actively working in the profession longer. Veterinary technicians who are satisfied in their current position are more likely to remain in the profession, therefore identifying strategies for increasing job satisfaction among veterinary technicians can help to increase the professional longevity of veterinary technicians and decrease the turnover rate.

**Literature Review**

Data on whether or not Continuing Education (CE) has an effect on the job satisfaction of veterinary technicians is scarce if it exists at all. However, many studies can be found that show a relationship between CE and job satisfaction in the human medical field and there is also evidence from studies involving veterinarians. One study looking at primary care physicians found that a perceived lack of opportunity for CE was “significantly associated, albeit modestly with job stress, burnout and job dissatisfaction”. In a study which looked in part at the motivations of veterinarians in seeking out continuing education, participants reported that they attended CE to rejuvenate their enthusiasm for practice and prevent practice burnout. In that same study, veterinarians also reported using CE to maintain the enthusiasm of hospital staff. Several studies related to the nursing profession, which the veterinary technology profession is often described in terms of, have also found a link between continuing education and job satisfaction. In 2011 a study found that continuing education "has the potential to
improve job satisfaction and retention of clinical nurses. Another study found increased scores on the job satisfaction scale from nurses who participated in more continuing education activities. From these studies, it is possible to assume that continuing education activities are also likely to improve the job satisfaction of veterinary technicians.

When looking at the types of continuing education that veterinary technicians engage in, social interaction, or the lack thereof, may also play a role in whether or not the CE affects job satisfaction or to what extent it affects job satisfaction. Moore et al. noted that the chance for social interaction with peers was the most reported benefit of veterinary continuing education. Social support and interaction has a favorable impact on workers, however for veterinary technicians this support may not be available in their clinical setting due to a lack of other technicians in the practice or an “us vs. them” mentality that is often seen in practices between veterinary staff in different roles. For this reason, the attendance of continuing education events where social interaction with others of their profession may be of more benefit in relation to job satisfaction than other types of continuing education.

While these other studies point towards the likelihood that continuing education affects the overall job satisfaction of veterinary technicians, having evidence related specifically to the veterinary technology profession can be beneficial to veterinary technicians and their employers in making choices about the types and amounts of continuing education in which to invest. The assurance that there is more benefit to continuing education than simply the acquisition of knowledge may also be sufficient to tip the scales in favor of veterinary technicians and their employers in investing both time and money on continuing education when they would not have previously supported such expenditures.

Research Objectives & Background
This study was performed as part of the coursework for a B.A.S. in Veterinary Technology from Tarleton State University in the spring of 2014. The purpose of this study was to investigate the possibility of a relationship between the job satisfaction of veterinary technicians and the amounts and types of continuing education experiences had by veterinary technicians, thereby helping both the veterinary technicians and their employers to take steps to extend the time veterinary technicians remain active in their profession.

Method & Sample
A survey of 90 veterinary technicians, 77 still active in the profession and 13 who had left the profession, was performed with data collected on their CE activities and the length of time that they were active in the profession. Participants ranged in their time in practice from 1-3 years to more than 16 years and were both credentialed technicians and “on-the-job” trained. Invitation to participate in the digital survey was posted to both open, public forums and a private veterinary hospital staff community forum. The self-administered survey consisted of either 6 or 12 questions, depending on whether or not the respondents attended continuing education. Survey questions included how long the participant has or had been involved in the veterinary technology profession, how many hours or units of continuing education were accrued each year, the types of continuing education formats utilized, rating of overall job satisfaction and of the different types of continuing education available. The data was evaluated both statistically and through comparison of the quantitative data to the qualitative data for evidence of a relationship between the number of years participants remained active in the veterinary technology profession, the number of hours/units of continuing education they accrued and their professed level of job satisfaction.

When looking at the types of continuing education that veterinary technicians engage in, social interaction, or the lack thereof, may also play a role in whether or not the CE affects job satisfaction or to what extent it affects job satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Rank 1</th>
<th>Rank 2</th>
<th>Rank 3</th>
<th>Rank 4</th>
<th>Rank 5</th>
<th>Weighted Rank</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Major Conferences</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 (252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (233)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 (218)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-House</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4 (206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5 (183)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Ratings given to each type of continuing education presentation by participants based on the effect each had on job satisfaction.
Summary and Discussion
The study did not show evidence of a relationship between the amount of continuing education accrued yearly and the length of time that veterinary technicians remain active in their profession. However, it did show a correlation between the type of CE events experienced and the job satisfaction experienced by participants. Out of all 90 participants, 81 (90%) acquired CE and 9 (10%) did not. Of those 81 participants who attended CE, 73 participants (90%) felt that CE improved job satisfaction while 8 (10%) participants felt that it did not. This effect on job satisfaction occurred regardless of the number of years spent in practice. The ability to interact socially with others in the same profession was also a common reason listed for CE being valuable both to improve job satisfaction and to keep participants active in the profession. In fact, major CE events which allow the most opportunities for new social interactions and more prolonged social interactions was ranked as the type of CE event that had the most impact on job satisfaction, with local events ranked second. One participant stated “I find it motivating and encouraging. I love networking with other techs and vets and gathering new ideas to take back to my work. I feel the people that leave the profession aren’t involved enough.”

The findings from this study would indicate that continuing education that involves social interaction with others veterinary technicians outside of the workplace are the most beneficial for building excitement about the profession and increasing job satisfaction. This is based upon the top two ranked CE types, Major CE and Local CE, both of which allow for new social interactions as compared to the other 3 types of CE which allow for little or no new social interaction. These finds are consistent with research related to other professions that studied the effects of social interaction and/or “social isolation” on job satisfaction.

Based upon the perception of participants concerning the effects of the different types of CE presentations on job satisfaction, in those instances where money and time allow, attending CE events that allow for new social interactions (local or major conferences) should be given priority. These types of CE events were ranked higher in value related to participant job satisfaction and longevity in the profession by the majority of participants in this study. Participants also consistently commented on the importance of face-to-face social interaction with others in their profession as important to improving job satisfaction and excitement about their profession. As one participant stated, “Being around others who are passionate about the field helps me to continue to be inspired and uplifted.”

References
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