A new project begins
As construction crews finish the new Pathobiology/Animal Health Laboratory building, project planners have completed details of the new OVC Animal Cancer Centre.

Work planned includes renovations and upgrades to laboratory and office space for the Department of Pathobiology.

The OVC Pet Trust Fund has raised more than $8 million for the project.

The OVC Animal Cancer Centre will include the following:
- linear accelerator
- two chemotherapy wards, one each for dogs and cats
- chemotherapy suite
- I-131 room (radioactive iodine for treating cats with hyperthyroidism)
- oncology ward
- client quiet room/consultation area
- four exam rooms
- procedure space
- conference room.

Primary Healthcare Centre opens

OVC has opened a teaching and learning centre intended to set an international standard for companion animal education and health care.

The Hill’s Pet Nutrition Primary Healthcare Centre integrates preventive and general medicine with nutrition, behaviour, public health, citizenship, rehabilitation, communication and animal welfare. The centre will be managed and operated by veterinary students supervised by OVC veterinarians and technicians.

“This is truly a groundbreaking centre — there is nothing like it in Canada,” University of Guelph president Alastair Summerlee said at the June 8 ribbon-cutting. "Students will learn about emerging technology and procedures and how to better understand and relate to pet owners. It will stand as a model for how animal health care should be delivered."

Working directly with clients, OVC students will provide current information and practices in health, nutrition and well-being for companion animals.

The centre occupies a new facility on the west side of OVC’s Small Animal Clinic.

“We are proud to help foster this innovative teaching facility, which is at the forefront of veterinary medicine,” said Suzan Harrison, president of Hill’s Pet Nutrition, North America. “Working at the Primary Healthcare Centre will give students a tremendous opportunity to hone their veterinary skills and develop the necessary confidence to be strong practitioners.”

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From the Dean

What Our Grads Are Doing

Alumni Weekend is one of my favourite times of the year. I look forward to seeing OVC graduates and hearing their stories and remembrances of their time at the College and in Guelph. I’m also very impressed with where they are today, which is the theme of this edition of the Crest. Our graduates span the globe and are involved in myriad enterprises.

One of the important ways they stay connected to us is through the OVC Pet Trust Fund, which will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year. Pet Trust honours the relationship between pets and their owners and veterinary caregivers by raising funds and supporting learning, health care and research at OVC.

From developing a new blood test for cancer screening to investigating topical treatments for skin infections, OVC researchers continue to improve veterinary health care with support from Pet Trust. To see the results of these donations at work, please visit www.pettrust.ca. Pet Trust is also raising funds for the OVC Animal Cancer Centre, including funds for a linear accelerator to provide state-of-the-art radiation therapy.

One of our grads recognized during Alumni Weekend this year was Dr. Mary DeCaire, chair of the Pet Trust Board and an enthusiastic board member since 2005. In and around Bracebridge, Mary has worked with the Georgian Bay Veterinary Association, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the St. John’s Ambulance dog visitation program.

Pet Trust is succeeding in its mission thanks to many OVC graduates. Your continued commitment to research, cancer care and other innovations is impressive.

I mentioned that stories are one of the great delights of Alumni Weekend. Sharing stories will be a key component of OVC’s 150th-anniversary celebration. Please visit our celebration website (www.OVC150.ca) and sign up to receive notification of the event launch and other activities. Look for more details in the winter 2011 Crest.

Dean Elizabeth Stone
OVC grad honoured for research, sports medicine work

A new specialty in veterinary sports medicine and rehabilitation was approved this spring by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), thanks partly to the hard work and vision of an OVC graduate.

Dr. Chris Zink, DVM ’78 and PhD ’86, was among canine and equine sports enthusiasts who helped create the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation (ACVSMR). She is now editing the first textbook on canine sports medicine and rehabilitation.

“There’s been tremendous growth in sports such as canine agility, obedience and field trials, but in many ways veterinary medicine had not kept up with their needs,” said Zink, a professor and director of the Department of Molecular and Comparative Pathobiology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

“The same is true when it comes to caring for equine athletes. The ACVSMR was created in response to the demand for more formal training and residency programs in these areas.”

Specialists will develop greater expertise in areas that address the structural, physiological, psychological and medical needs of athletic animals and the restoration of normal form and function after injury or illness.

Zink has trained her own dogs and competed since 1979, after having first volunteered for the dog show at College Royal in 1976.

“I owe a tremendous debt to OVC and U of G for giving me the best education and training available anywhere,” she said. “It set up my life for a fun and amazing career.”

In 2009 Zink was named Outstanding Woman Veterinarian of the Year by the Association for Women Veterinarians Foundation. She received the award at the AVMA’s annual convention.

“I was delighted to receive the award,” said Zink. “As a medical school researcher, it was great to be recognized by my fellow veterinarians. It was especially gratifying when I found out that my nomination had been put forward by my students.”

For two decades, Zink has used animal disease models to study the neurological impact of HIV. Although more HIV/AIDS patients are living longer, they often experience pain and toxic side effects from antiretroviral drugs. Four years ago, Zink found that an inexpensive and safe antibiotic called minocycline suppresses HIV-related brain damage and replication of the virus.

The drug is in clinical trials in the United States and Africa. Its anti-inflammatory and neuro-protective effects may also help treat strokes and ailments such as Parkinson’s disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis as well as canine inflammatory conditions of the brain.

“Everything that I do to help learn more about protecting the central nervous system is applicable to both animals and humans — the ‘one health’ model at work.”
Ask these men whether they’ve chosen the right profession, and there’s no doubt about the answer.

Drs. Ralph Watt, Bill Combe, Bob Black and Harry Bacon — classmates who graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College in 1960 — are still practising veterinary medicine and loving it.

“I’m still working because I honestly don’t know what else I’d do,” said Watt, who celebrated his 80th birthday in February and has operated an exclusively equine practice for 30 years. “I guess my practice is my life. I don’t play sports. I’ve never learned to golf. I’ve made a lot of good friends through my work and enjoy a good relationship with my clients, and I still feel an obligation to be there for them.”

Members of the Class of 1960, who have been meeting every five years since graduation, gathered in Guelph for the first time for their 50th-anniversary reunion during Alumni Weekend 2010.

“I’ve been blessed with half-decent health, so as long as it stays that way I’ll keeping on practising,” said Black, who played halfback for Guelph under legendary football coach Tom Mooney and still plays golf and curls.

“We’ve seen a lot of changes. In those days, there weren’t any specialists to help us out like today, so we had to do everything ourselves,” Black said.

The son of a horse trainer, Black still owns the Toronto practice established by his grandfather, a member of OVC’s Class of 1899.

Veterinary medicine is also a family affair for Watt and Combe. Watt’s son, Dr. Bruce Watt, DVM ’89, is a board-certified equine surgeon. Combe practises in St. Catharines, Ont., with his daughter Heather, DVM ’88. His granddaughter has her eye on a veterinary career as well.

Ask these men whether they’ve chosen the right profession, and there’s no doubt about the answer.

OVC Research News

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

A new education program to combat Johne’s disease is being introduced across Ontario.

The Johne’s education and management assistance program for Ontario dairy producers is administered by the University of Guelph and is supported by $2.1 million from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and $300,000 from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

“This is an exciting initiative, because it truly is a proactive, cross-industry partnership that will benefit producers and consumers,” said Dr. David Kelton, Population Medicine.

Nicole Perkins, a former Guelph graduate student and research assistant, is the program co-ordinator.

Funding also comes from the Holstein, Guernsey and Jersey breed associations; CanWest DHI; the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association; Progressive Dairy Operators; and the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners.
A LONG AND INSPIRING ROAD TO OVC

Roman Poterski, longtime anatomy technician in the Department of Biomedical Sciences, has been named honorary class president by the Class of 2013. A refugee from Communist-era Poland who came to Canada in 1986, Poterski is also a PhD candidate and hopes to graduate along with his honorary classmates.

“Roman has made such an impact on our class,” says DVM student Carina Cooper. “His dedication and efforts on our behalf continue to touch each DVM 2013 student and will no doubt inspire every other student who enters the anatomy lab from here on, as long as Roman is there.”

Poterski helps lead first-year anatomy classes that give DVM students their first inside look at vertebrate structures and systems. Besides allowing hands-on dissections, those classes draw on a small museum’s worth of teaching tools prepared by Poterski during nearly 20 years in the nearby plastination lab.

Plastination allows the department to teach numerous students and courses while reducing the number of dissections and preserving animal organs for display and handling — without decaying or smelling — for decades.

There was no straight line to plastination or anatomy from Poterski’s roots in Gniezno, the ancient capital of Poland. There he studied animal husbandry and leather tanning. By 1985, he and his wife ran a small garment-cleaning business.

Poland’s military government had lifted martial law by then, but Poterski was worried that he might still be arrested for his involvement with the solidarity movement. He and Barbara were being watched by police at home and at work.

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They isolated us.” Seated in the OVC cafeteria, he pauses and sighs: “We were simply given the choice — leave or go to jail. The choice was obvious.”

They arrived in Canada in 1986 and moved within a year to Kitchener, which is still home. Roman was hired at OVC in 1987 to clean labs and animal facilities in biomedical sciences.

A year later, U of G president Alastair Summerlee became a professor in the department, and Poterski began working as a technician in his lab. Poterski earned a master’s degree in 1995, studying hormonal effects on pregnancy in mice. Since then, he’s spent about a decade on his PhD, supervised by Summerlee. Poterski is looking at how the relaxin hormone might benefit stem cell transplants, perhaps helping to prevent rejection of donated tissues.

WALTNER-TOEWS RECEIVES ‘ECOHEALTH’ AWARD

A professor in the Department of Population Medicine was honoured this summer for his role in promoting the emerging field of ecosystem approaches to health.

Dr. David Waltner-Toews, who is also the founding president of Veterinarians Without Borders/Vétérinaires sans frontières-Canada, received the inaugural “Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Ecohealth” award at the EcoHealth 2010 conference in London Aug. 18 to 22.

The third biennial conference of the International Association for Ecology and Health was hosted this year by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Ecohealth brings together experts, to study how ecosystem health impacts human health.

Waltner-Toews was nominated by the Canadian Community of Practice for Ecosystem Approaches to Health.
CONVOCATION AWARDS RECOGNIZE OVC SCHOLARS, TEACHERS

OVC scholars received awards during convocation June 16, including Dr. Tina Gagnon, who was given the prestigious Andrew Smith Memorial Medal. Named for the college’s founding principal, the award honours scholastic ability and clinical proficiency.

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The OVC “Year 68” Award for Teaching Excellence went to Dr. Danielle Richardson, DVM ’02. The recipient, chosen in a vote by the graduating class, shows exemplary teaching, support and care for students.

Professor Emeritus status was awarded to Drs. Alan Meek and Dana Allen.

Meek, former dean of OVC, helped establish the Department of Population Medicine, a world leader in teaching and research in animal and public health.

Allen, former chair of the Department of Clinical Studies, retired this year after 38 years at OVC. An internal medicine specialist, he has written five textbooks in small-animal internal medicine.
The University of Guelph recognized a founder of the OVC Pet Trust Fund during convocation 2010.

Roger Warren, a longtime supporter of the Ontario Veterinary College and an advocate for health sciences and veterinary medicine, received an honorary doctor of laws degree. Warren helped create the OVC Pet Trust Fund 22 years ago and still serves on its board of trustees.

Dr. Karol Mathews was named University Professor Emerita. She retired in 2009 as chief of emergency and critical care medicine in the OVC Teaching Hospital. An OVC graduate, Mathews pioneered pain management for companion animals and, in 1993, became the first Canadian diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care.
SMALL ANIMAL ICU EXPANDED

The OVC Small Animal Clinic will have a new intermediate care/fluid ward and an updated and expanded intensive care unit.

Renovations will expand hospital space and make that space more efficient, said Dr. Alexa Bersenas, head of emergency and critical care.

“The goal is to redevelop our facilities so we can provide optimal and appropriate care without providing excessive care,” said Bersenas.

Previously, patients requiring fluids ended up in the ICU by default. But the majority of cases receiving diagnostic and other procedures don’t require an ICU stay, she said.

The renovations will add space for seriously ill patients, a new isolation area for infectious cases and new dog runs. A new emergency entrance on the west side of the clinic will give emergency cases direct access to the hospital.

Improving radiation therapy

Cancer patients receiving radiation treatment at the Ontario Veterinary College will benefit from equipment upgrades supported by the OVC Pet Trust Fund.

Using computer software under a partnership with Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), OVC specialists will offer “three-dimensional” radiation treatment planning that promises more precise tumour therapy, fewer side effects for patients and more peace of mind for pet owners.

Said Dr. Paul Woods, DVM ’85: “Working with our colleagues at WCVM provides us with the leading-edge radiation treatment planning that we need to continue offering comprehensive cancer care to our clients until the redevelopment of the OVC Animal Cancer Centre is completed and we have an operational linear accelerator.”

Recently, the OVC Pet Trust Fund board of trustees committed to raising funds for the linear accelerator, expected to cost between $3 million and $5 million.

The OVC veterinary hospital is the only one in Ontario with a radiation unit, acquired from a human hospital in 2001 with support from the OVC Pet Trust Fund. Dogs and cats have come to Guelph from eastern Canada, New York and even Korea for radiation therapy for common cancers such as mast cell tumours, lymphosarcoma and osteosarcoma.

Under three-dimensional planning, OVC’s radiology team led by Dr. Stephanie Nykamp, DVM ’97, conducts a CT scan to accurately measure and assess the tumour. Results are evaluated and sent electronically to WCVM in Saskatoon, where a radiation oncologist develops the treatment plan to be implemented by OVC radiation therapists.

“Treating cancer is a team effort. Every discipline has a role to play, and we need all the tools available to provide the highest standard of care for our patients,” said OVC surgical oncologist Dr. Sarah Boston, D.V.Sc. ’04. “With these improvements, we’ll be able to provide clients with more advanced treatment options with fewer side effects for their pets.”
The University of Guelph has become the first Canadian institution to join the U.S. National Cancer Institute’s Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium (COTC).

That places U of G’s Institute for Comparative Cancer Investigation (ICCI) and the OVC Animal Cancer Centre among 19 other academic oncology centres leading cancer research in North America.

“This is an exciting step for us,” said Dr. Paul Woods, a cancer specialist in the OVC Animal Cancer Centre and ICCI co-director. “We look forward to working with the consortium to answer important questions that will help develop new cancer-fighting drugs for use in veterinary and human medicine.”

COTC members will conduct clinical trials with canine cancer patients at veterinary hospitals in the U.S. and Canada. Those trials will be co-ordinated by the National Cancer Institute’s comparative oncology program, part of the National Institutes of Health in Washington, D.C.

Because canine tumours resemble human tumours, dogs may provide researchers with important information unavailable in a laboratory.

“It’s a big leap from laboratory mice to humans, so perhaps it’s not surprising that it has been difficult to translate success in the lab into effective treatments for cancer,” said ICCI co-director Dr. Brenda Coomber, a cancer biologist in U of G’s Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Unlike traditional lab studies, this new approach will mimic natural cancer development involving interactions among genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors.

“The comparative approach puts the dog in the middle of that investigation pathway, between the laboratory and humans,” said Coomber. “The hope is that this will expand our understanding of cancer and lead to breakthroughs in treatment and diagnosis that will benefit pets and people.”

Woods said the COTC infrastructure will allow scientists, clinicians and pharmaceutical companies in human and veterinary medicine to share information and co-ordinate studies.
Helping pets and people in need

OVC graduates are reaching out to communities lacking access to regular veterinary care.

For the past seven years, Dr. Michelle Lem, DVM ’01, has cared for the pets of people living on the streets and in homeless shelters in Ottawa. She is the founder of Community Veterinary Outreach, a non-profit organization that grew out of the Mission Veterinary Care Program she established in 2003.

“I see them as relationships,” she says of her clients. “I don’t see them as charity. They take ownership and responsibility. They’re proud of the fact that they take care of their pet. All they’re lacking is access to knowledge and education to do it better.”

Lem is halfway through a master’s degree at OVC, working with population medicine professor Jason Coe, DVM ’01, PhD ’08, on pet ownership among young people who are homeless or at risk. Lem said preventive veterinary education and care not only improve animal health but also support owners and help protect public health.

Lem also participated recently in a pet wellness clinic held by the Six Nations reserve and organized by the Grand River Veterinary Hospital in Caledonia, Ont. Held in a hockey arena, the eight-hour event replaced the community’s annual rabies clinic and saw nearly 300 pets examined.

The clinic was sponsored by Merial Animal Health and IDEXX Laboratories, which supplied free medication and heartworm tests.

Organizers hoped to teach owners about zoonotic disease, heartworm and tick-borne illnesses, and the importance of vaccinations, said Dr. Paul Robinson, DVM ’90.

“In some ways, the rabies clinics provided a false sense of security,” said Robinson. “A quick needle, and the owner thinks everything is taken care of, when really there are a lot of other potentially serious problems to consider.”

Robinson was part of a team from the Grand River Veterinary Hospital that included Drs. Jackie Day, B.Sc. ’03 and DVM ’06, and Tammy Hornak. Also involved was OVC’s Dr. Shane Bateman, director of the Hill’s Pet Nutrition Primary Healthcare Centre.

Working with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO), Hornak hopes to help streamline such initiatives. This year the CVO updated regulations on mobile clinics to help veterinarians reach underserved communities through health and public education initiatives.

“Putting on the clinic was physically exhaustive, but it was a very rewarding experience,” said Robinson.

PHOTO BY ANDREW VOWLES
The inaugural OVC Alumni Association Class Participation Award will be presented at the OVCAA 60th annual general meeting in 2011.

The award will recognize the class with the highest participation rate from May 1, 2010, to April 30, 2011, determined as the percentage of donors among living class members.

“It is a fun way to give alumni an opportunity to participate in supporting their alma mater,” said OVCAA president Blanaid Donnelly, B.Sc. ’06 and DVM ’09. “Who knows? Maybe we’ll have classes striving for 100-per-cent class participation in order to come out on top.”

For a first-place tie, the alumni advancement manager will use average participation rates from the preceding three years to determine the winner at the end of the fiscal year.
College News

OVC history on ice

The “new” Challenge Cup — an antique donated by biomedical sciences professor Brad Hanna — will be presented for the first time in 2012.

Ask OVC graduates about their fondest college memories, and many will likely mention hockey — specifically, the annual Challenge Cup tournament involving teams of DVM classes and faculty/staff members.

Starting in 2012, those teams will vie for a new Challenge Cup commissioned by Dr. Brad Hanna, B.Sc. ’87, DVM ’89, M.Sc. ’92 and PhD ’97, Biomedical Sciences.

“Hockey has been a part of OVC almost from the beginning,” said Hanna, who often dons his striped jersey to make sure the games stay friendly.

His love of the game extends beyond refereeing to what he sees as its unique place in OVC history. The 2010 tournament — won by the OVC 2011 Black Mambas on the co-ed side and by the 2010 Crimson Crocs of the women’s division — was the 79th inter-year hockey tournament since 1932, when principal C.D. McGilvray donated a shield for house-league hockey.

Mention of a college team goes back to before 1911. But, said Hanna, “it was probably the donation of McGilvray’s award that formalized the inter-class competition, which has been a regular event ever since.”

By the 1980s, the tournament involved two men’s and two women’s divisions, and individual DVM classes had up to six teams participating. “The name Challenge Cup wasn’t used until sometime in the late 1970s.”

Hanna commissioned a new trophy to be engraved with the names of each winning class and to be presented for the first time in 2012 to mark OVC’s 150th anniversary.

He’s collected lots of information so far, but he hopes grads can help fill in the blanks. Track his progress at http://www.referee.ca/OVC/OVC-Challenge-Cup.html.

If you have information about OVC’s Challenge Cup history, including photographs or other memorabilia, contact bhanna@uoguelph.ca or call 519-824-4120, Ext. 54534.