MANAGERS NEED TO COMMIT MORE TIME AND RESOURCES TO DEVELOP TALENTS OF THEIR STAFF, SAYS KIM FAUNCE

Ms. Kimberly Faunce is a corporate trainer with Sobran, Inc. at the NIH Animal Center in Poolesville, Maryland. She has been chosen randomly by our editorial team as the personality of focus in this edition. In this brief interview with the Editor, Ayo Fawibe, our distinguished personality gives us an insight into why and how she gravitated towards her present career as a trainer. She also elaborates on common challenges facing today's trainers', among other issues. Please read details of the chat in the next page.
Please tell us something about your background?

I worked as a veterinary technician in private practice for eight years prior to working at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I started working for SoBran Inc at the NIH Bethesda campus in 2009 as a surgical tech, then worked in the ICU in 2011. I worked with many different species such as, Non Human Primates (NHP), pigs, mice, rats, dogs, ferrets, and rabbits. In July 2014 I took my current position as a Corporate Trainer. I currently work at the NIH Animal Center in Poolesville, MD. There are NHPs, sheep, and rodent quarantine at NIHAC.

What do you really enjoy about your job as a trainer in the lab animal research field?

I enjoy teaching people and the different variety of work I do. Every day is different. One day I can be working with animal caretakers and the next with the vet techs. I feel I have been successful at my job when others feel comfortable doing their job. I am a people person, so I love working with and meeting new people.

"I enjoy teaching people and the different variety of work I do"

What are some of the challenges you face in the execution of your responsibilities as a trainer in the lab animal research sphere?

Sometimes it is a challenge to figure out how others learn or comprehend things. When I am training individuals I have to make sure they fully understand what and why they are doing their job. Everyone is different, so training for each individual will be different. I want to make sure everyone I train feels comfortable doing their job and why they are doing it.

How do you think trainers can be empowered better to support the advancement of lab animal research?

More understanding from managers that training is not just showing staff how to do a job, but immersing them in an environment where learning and overall career development is as important as the task. Also, they are willing to commit the time and resources to develop the talents of their staff.

How do you unwind when you are not at work and what are your hobbies?

I don’t unwind much as I have one-year-old twin girls. They keep my husband and I busy. I enjoy the outdoors, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.
Greetings NCAB-AALAS Family.

Spring time is here! I hope 2017 is going well for you. Can you believe it is already May?! This means it has been five months since our big annual kickoff event, the International-themed Meet and Greet at the Silver Spring Civic Building. I hope you had as much fun as me. Such a memorable event. I am still hearing kudos about the food and the children dancers.

Immediately after that we had an awesome Laboratory Animal Tech Week in which we had the opportunity to honor technicians in the field. This year’s theme was Technicians Give Animals a Voice. So true! We kicked off the week with a virtual scavenger hunt lead by the Technical Branch Rep. Vaneesha Ali. Congratulations again to Andres Faudree, Sharon Fong and Rob Mitchell for scoring a perfect score! We also had our first tech lunch and learn of the year in which Mr. Dereje Tegegne, 2016 Lab Products Technician Award winner, discussed his journey from cagewash to technician and Ms. Claudine Bobb discussed communicating in a diverse workplace. The next tech lunch and learns will be May 26 on NIH Main Campus and June 23 at WRAIR in Silver Spring, MD. Also, stay tuned for more details regarding a tech lunch and learn in Baltimore on August 25.

In the month of February, we also had our first edition of the share your story article series. Ms. Isabel Figueroa highlighted Mr. Jean-Pierre Weba: Machine Whisperer from Cameroon. If you missed the article check out our website.

In March, we had our annual spring suture workshop spearheaded by the Education Committee (Chair: Ms. Claudine Bobb) and Drs. Evan Shukar and Brian Wilgenburg. It was a success! Stay tuned for the next suture workshop which will take place again at annual seminar. Both a beginners and advanced level will be offered this year.

Our Public Outreach committee (Chair: Dr. Tia Bobo) has been very busy organizing the t-shirt campaign for the March for Science on April 22. I hope you were able to purchase a shirt. We raised over $600 for the AALAS Foundation. I thank that is awesome! This committee also participated in the annual STEAM night at Takoma Park Middle School.

We also this year made our voices heard as the Government Relation Committee (Chair: Dr. Bill Iverson), spearheaded the efforts to combat a research adoption bill in Maryland. NCAB was actively engaged in opposing this bill. The bills were not passed in the Senate or the House. Thank you NCAB!

The Program Committee (Chair: Mr. Bryan Beltran) hosted our March Speaker series at the Bethesda Civic Center. Dr. Mark Pitcher, post-doctoral fellow with M. Catherine Bushnell at the NCCIH/NIH, was our March Speaker and gave a wonderfully informative talk on Rodent Pain Models. He is a very energetic and passionate speaker and all in attendance were very appreciative of his presentation. Pain is a very relatable condition that we all experience and to know what rodent models can and cannot tell us, as well as approaches that improve the translatability of these models was invaluable.

Please be sure to mark your calendars for the March Speaker Series/Professional Development workshop which will be held May 18 at the Silver Spring Civic Building, 5-7:30pm. The featured speaker will be Mr. Samir Balala who is a Facility Specialist at the NIHAC at Poolesville with over 17 years of experience. His topic, ’10 Things that Require Zero Talent’ is sure to be a must hear. So, you don’t want to miss. There will also be opportunities to participate in mini-mock interviews and one-on-one resume consultations.

NCAB Seminar (Chair: Kim Faunce) is right around the corner; September 13-14 at Turf Valley Resort. The Program Committee (Chair: Mr. Dariyen Carter) has put out the call for speakers. Please see the website for more information. Also, if you would like to volunteer during seminar please reach out to Ms. Cheryl Kothe (ckothe@niaid.nih.gov). If you want to recognize an outstanding co-worker the Awards committee (Chair: Dr. Jan Linkenhoker) is now accepting nominations. Please see the website for more details and consider submitting a nomination packet for a deserving person in the field. As you can see, your NCAB leadership is hard at work to make sure our members, YOU, receive the full benefits of being an NCAB member. NCAB Council and I are ecstatic about what is coming next in 2017 and we hope you are too! Please be sure to email me if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions. I am always ready to hear from you.

Sincerely,

LaTesa Hughes DVM, MS
2017 NCAB President
"Celebrating the Diversity of NCAB!"
hugheslj@mail.nih.gov
ELYSE TEOW- A VOYAGE ACROSS THE SOUTH-CHINA SEA

BY ISABEL FIGUEROA

What country is sliced by the South China Sea, like two pieces of cake, and sprinkled with hundreds of tropical islands? Elyse Teow would be able to tell you it’s Malaysia, the country where she was born. To the west, lies Peninsular Malaysia and the capital of Kuala Lumpur. Across the Sea rests East Malaysia, on the island of Borneo. Interestingly, one of the most important waterways in the world runs along the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Although it is not a very wide channel (only about a mile and a half wide at its narrowest point), the Strait of Malacca is the most popular route connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This nautical highway allows for the transportation of about a quarter of the world’s traded goods. For centuries, Malaysia and its surrounding waters have attracted all kinds of people and trade.

The country’s diversity is perhaps its defining feature. It is made up of ethnically Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Indigenous people, speaking different languages and practicing different beliefs. Elyse happens to be Malaysian Chinese and respects the principles of Buddhism. She speaks Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Bahasa Malaysia, and English.

When Elyse was thirteen years old, she moved to the United States with her parents and two siblings. Elyse experienced working with animals for the first time after high school, when she began volunteering with the Montgomery County Humane Society. At the Humane Society, Elyse became familiar with the sanitation of animal rooms, kennels and cages. She also learned how to care for dogs, rodents, rabbits, and chickens.

Elyse’s successful career in biomedical research began with Priority One Services, Inc. in 2013. In just three short years, she acquired experience as a Cagewash Technician and an Animal Caretaker. At the 2016 NCAB Seminar, Elyse was presented with the NCAB Durbin Award for outstanding performance in husbandry. She recently accepted a position as a Veterinary Technician at Bioqual, Inc. and is now exploring the world of nonhuman primates. How has Elyse managed to master so many different skills? From the start of her career in the field, Elyse has been committed to her professional development. RALAT certified, she also regularly takes advantage of NCAB AALAS opportunities. She remembers a suturing workshop hosted by Dr. Evan Shukan and Dr. Brian Wilgenburg, and a presentation regarding the importance of animal research given by Dr. Cindy Buckmaster, as being especially impactful. Keep up the great work, Elyse!

Malaysia at a Glimpse

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"Celebrate the Mouse"

AALAS Foundation Announces

"What's Happening in Heart Disease Research?" - Free Power Point Presentation

The AALAS Foundation is excited to announce the availability of the latest in its series of free "Celebrate the Mouse" fully scripted, speaker-ready Power Point Presentations!

The "What's Happening in Heart Disease Research?" presentation, similar to the "What's Happening in Breast Cancer Research?" is scripted with speaker notes, and ready to present to the general public in your local community.

All the Power Point presentation needs is YOU and YOUR PASSION to SHARE the important work being done in biomedical research and the important role mice - and other animals - have in the development of new treatment options for catastrophic diseases.

Additionally, the "Celebrate the Mouse" program makes it possible for AALAS members to request "Celebrate the Mouse" heart disease and/or breast cancer lapel pins for distribution at eligible public outreach events.

Click here for eligibility requirements and details on how you may request use of the Power Point presentation and "Celebrate the Mouse" lapel pins for distribution at your next qualified public outreach event!

Stay tuned as we continue to release additional Power Point presentations and lapel pins for other disease topics.

Questions? Contact us at foundation@aalas.org
CAN RFID TECHNOLOGY READ CAGES IN ADJACENT ROOMS?

By Daniel Kwoka

A major concern that we hear about RFID being used for cage census is the possibility of capturing or reading cages from an adjacent room. While RFID does have the ability to read at long distances, this concern is only valid if you must track cages by room. Even then, it is not a show stopper.

Is room level accuracy required for census?
If your ultimate goal in performing census is to know that all of your cages have been accounted for in a timely manner with no requirement for room level accuracy, then RFID should not be a concern. With an RFID handheld, you can set the read range to its highest setting and capture data anywhere from 4-10 feet. Once you scan all of your rooms, simply upload that data and let your software do the rest.

There are cases where animal research facilities require room level accuracy, meaning these particular facilities need to know in which room a specific cage is being held. Now, some may believe that RFID will be a loser for census, but there are two ways to ensure room level accuracy while keeping the same benefits of RFID technology.

Here are two methods to eliminate reads in other rooms:
Tune down the RFID read power. Most if not all RFID readers have settings where one can adjust the RFID power. This setting allows the user to weaken or strengthen the range from inches to feet or vice versa.

Install RF shielding. While this is not the easiest method, it is very effective. In a laboratory setting, a sheet of aluminum or stainless steel between two rooms will prevent the RF from entering the adjacent room. This tactic will completely eliminate reading in other rooms and keep your RFID handheld settings the same throughout the entire process.

In summary, the two methods mentioned above, as well as several others can greatly reduce the problem of picking up cages in other rooms. No matter what method you choose, it is important to test as much as possible to find the best fit for your operations. If you have any questions about the two methods or any other methods we have to offer, feel free to contact us here.

The cage census process is an increasingly common RFID application since it is a great way to increase efficiency and accuracy in data input for billing or reports. The concept is simple, use an RFID cage card on each cage to reduce the amount of time spent counting/locating and increase the accuracy of data capture.

An RFID census system will need the same basic types of hardware that any other RFID system would require: RFID tags, RFID readers, RFID antennas, and Software. However, there is a big difference between a handheld reader system and a fixed reader system.

Handheld System
This strategy uses an RFID handheld with a Geiger counter function that will alert you as you approach a specific cage you may be looking for. Because all of the cages now have RFID cage cards, the handheld can excite specific cages to be found. Most UHF RFID cage cards that work well for census have read ranges from 1-9 feet (depending on the cage card holders and handheld reader settings). The handheld system is a great way to stop wasting your time on counting and looking for cages, and it is a fraction of the price of a fixed reader system.

Fixed Reader System
If you have a mobile reader system, you can place mobile readers in areas where you want to count items. This method is great for locations that have a large amount of space and need to count items in multiple areas. With this method, you can use fixed readers to count items in multiple areas at once. This method is great for locations that have a large amount of space and need to count items in multiple areas. With this method, you can use fixed readers to count items in multiple areas at once.

In summary, a handheld RFID reader system is great for mobile census and locating specific cages throughout your facilities. Fixed readers on the other hand are great for automatic and “real-time” tracking of items which move. No matter what RFID census system you use, it is important to test the various hardware components to determine the best fit for your organization.
NCAB News | May 2017

National Capital Area Branch
American Association for Laboratory Animal Science

Charles D. Durbin
- $300 & plaque
- Animal Caretaker

Curtis A. Black
- $400 & plaque
- Veterinary or Health Technician

Richard L. Pierson
- $500 & plaque
- Supervisory or Managerial

William I. Gay
- $400 & plaque
- Trainer

Service Award
- Plaque
- Volunteer Council or Committee Member

Joseph R. Held
- $500 & plaque
- Clinical or Facility Lab Veterinarian

NCAB
Nomination deadline
July 28th

District 3

National Capital Area Branch
American Association for Laboratory Animal Science

NCAB Certification Exam Scholarship – 2017

- A complete scholarship application includes:
  - Application form
  - Two signed letters of recommendation/support
  - Submit your complete application by email to:
    - NCAB Awards Committee
    - Jan Linkenhoker, Chair
    - linkenhj@mail.nih.gov

Nomination deadline:
None
Open until available funds are used
Locating misplaced cages
We are all aware that misplaced cages are a problem in animal research facilities. These cages cause a headache for billing and can cost operations thousands of dollars per year. Missing cages can also cost researchers time and result in valuable data being missed or lost entirely.

These particular cages can certainly be a burden. Cages may have been moved around to perform a procedure while a census is being performed at the same time. The movement of these cages isn’t always confined to honest mistakes. Someone may have known the date of census and moved the cage to a different room or facility to avoid being charged. At that time, techs, managers, and supervisors go on a hunt to track down and locate that specific cage.

The good news is that this problem is easily addressed through the use of RFID technology. Unlike manually looking, or even using a barcode scanner, RFID technology does not require line of sight. By pressing and holding the trigger of an RFID handheld, it will act as a Geiger counter to locate any specific cage, vibrating and alerting with more intensity as you approach the missing cage. This functionality allows institutions to quickly find cages that have been moved throughout the facility and it prevents unwanted labor costs.

It gets even better. Each RFID cage card or holder has a unique identification number encoded into the chip. Because this unique number is stored in a database, it can be associated with protocols, account numbers, names, etc. Tying the ID to any information you would like on the backend of a system – allows you to keep track of all of your census data in real-time.

If you find yourself having issues with finding cages in your animal research facility, do not hesitate to contact us here.

The myths of RFID cage cards and cage card holders
One of the main points while discussing a possible RFID census system is the topic of cage card holders. Throughout these discussions, I have noticed some misconceptions in the industry about incorporating RFID cage cards and RFID embedded cage card holders for census. Yes, while implementing an RFID census application may seem to be an intimidating project, there are a several methodologies that can facilitate a much smoother transition.

But I have metal cage card holders!

A major concern that I have been hearing is the fact that a majority of research facilities have already invested in metal cage card holders. The myth is that RFID cage cards do not work on metal card holders. Yes, the stories are true. RFID and metal do not work well together and many are led to believe that the only way to incorporate RFID would be to replace all of their current card holders and invest in plastic. Although using plastic cage card holders would be the premier option, there are ways to keep your current metal card holders in use.

A properly designed paper or poly cage card can debunk this myth. All cage cards are customizable to properly fit your card holder and provide minimal interference. These particular cage cards are also intended to be disposed of and are considered the most cost effective for many facilities.

If you follow the RFID market, you may know about RFID metal mount “labels”. These RFID labels are intended to be used on metal surfaces and may be disposed of after use or can be designed to be decommissioned and reactivated for multiple uses. To paint a mental picture for cost savings, this cage card acts as a license plate and has the durability to be used multiple times.

What about RFID embedded cage card holders?

While there are research facilities that use RFID embedded cage card holders, it is not a requirement. Depending on how a facility runs its day-to-day activities, it may help or hinder the process. With this particular method, the RFID card holder needs to be “married” to the census card that is associated with the cage. Although this method adds a layer of protection from any mistakes or misplacements, it does add an extra step and may require a commissioning station. There are cases where this extra step is a must, but the whole premise of incorporating RFID technology is to streamline the census process. Depending on the operations, using cage cards may be the best solution.

As Dee Commissariat, Ph. D., Administrator of the Comparative Medicine Program at Houston Methodist Research Institute put it, "An RFID system aids with accuracy and minimizes the time needed for tracking... but only when it works.” For anyone who has lingering questions, I would recommend finding a trusted RFID adviser that can help you with the best application for your operations.
There are three basic methods used for RFID cage census:

RFID-Embedded Cage Cards
Arguably, this is the most preferred method throughout the industry by both solution providers and institutions. The card that is used is an all in one, RFID embedded cage card where the RFID chip and inlay are strategically placed inside of the card during production. This method allows flexibility in both printing and card distribution to the principal investigators. With this method, you also have the ability to choose the exact card type and size you would need for your current card holder. Typically made from a paper or poly material, cage cards come is standard or custom sizes to fit both metal and plastic card holders.

RFID-Embedded Cage Card Holders
The RFID-embedded card holder is essentially the first generation method of RFID cage census. With an RFID-embedded card holder, the RFID chip and inlay are permanently placed into the card holder which allows it to be reused multiple times. This method allows you to reuse the RFID technology, but it comes with a higher price tag and it requires an extra step in the census process. The RFID card holder must be “married” to the card that is associated with any specific cage. There may be cases where this method may be required for some institutions, but the whole premise of RFID is to streamline the census process, not to add extra work.

RFID Peel and Stick
The RFID peel and stick method is the lowest cost option that can still provide an institution with the ability to locate specific cages and perform a rapid census. Rather than purchasing either RFID-embedded cage cards or an RFID-enabled printer, you can physically adhere a standard RFID inlay onto your current cage cards. Once the inlay is placed on the card, it can be married to the cage card. While this method does work, and it is the least expensive, it is by far the most time consuming way to implement RFID for your census process.

What RFID sounds like in research facilities
I recently received an email from a concerned partner about the ultrasound and EMF noise that is given off by RFID census systems and its potential health effects. Although RFID is a form of EMF radiation, it is one of many technologies that emits this “radiation” and is considered harmless... to animals of course.

After speaking with Honeywell’s North American RFID Leader, Mike Nichols, he reassured that “all RFID technology follows strict rules from the FCC and shouldn’t be a concern”. Also mentioning that anything above 900 MHz causes little or no damage to 99.9% of the population.

RFID in a laboratory environment typically operates using one of two frequencies; low frequency (LF) which operates in between 125-135 kHz and ultra-high frequency (UHF) operating above 900 MHz. Both frequencies serve their purpose in a cage census application. The tags used in these applications are passive tags which do not have any internal power source. In return, there is no power output from the tags themselves.

Many of the UHF RFID applications operate in the 915 MHz range which is well above the hearing range of mice and rats. They also operate with a maximum of one watt of output power. Today, most cell phones operate at three watts and are considered harmless. Let’s put it this way: If there are no regulations in place regarding cell phones, passive RFID should not be a concern. As for EMF strength, it drops rapidly as you move away from the RFID source. Considering that in most applications the RFID device is used anywhere from 1-3 feet away from the cages, there is minimal EMF exposure and virtually no “noise”.

So, do not fear the power of RFID! Stress level studies on mice have verified that there is no change in behavior or health with the introduction of the technology. For anyone who is overly concerned about the output of EMF from RFID, I would recommend purchasing an EMF Meter. Available on Amazon.com for around $120 per device.

Have lingering questions about the output of RFID? Feel free to contact us here.
My Journey to Making a Difference

By Janet Bello

Just like many people, wanting to be a veterinarian was a dream that started for me when I was a child. Being from Capitol Heights, Prince George’s County, Maryland I didn’t have a lot of guidance on pursuing my dream. Although I grew up in a single parent household, like many of my classmates, my mother was determined to make sure I didn’t fall through the cracks. She continuously talked to me about going to college, but I really didn’t take any interest in the conversations. By the time my 12th grade year had rolled around, I was talking to recruiters about joining the military; let’s just say my mother was willing to put up a huge fight for that not to happen, because she wanted me to go straight to college like she did.

As soon as she received word that I was meeting with recruiters, she vigorously began taking me on college tours. After going on a few tours and learning first-hand about college, I decided to give it a shot. I enrolled at Morgan State University as an undecided major. Still holding on to the idea of wanting to be a veterinarian, but I just didn’t know where to start. This was the first time I had ever lived away from home and now I was living in an unfamiliar place, with unfamiliar peers and unfamiliar professors.

As an undecided major, I was assigned a liberal arts professor. To this day, I still don’t know why, but my advisor was awesome. I constantly had meetings with her to figure out what was my calling, also known as what in the world am I doing here and what should I choose as a major. I respected her a lot for always making room in her schedule to talk with me. She had a PhD in Communications with a specialization in Public Relations. Besides teaching, she was also a model, modeling coach, and a Public Relations practitioner, so she would ask me to assist her at photo shoots on the weekends. I loved how cool her job was outside of the classroom; even in the classroom, she always taught with lots of enthusiasm. Needless to say, I had chosen a major.

I graduated from Morgan State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, concentrating in Public Relations. I was well on my way, right? Wrong! Although I had a skill that set me apart from others when it came to applying for jobs, a BA in Communications, I just wasn’t enjoying what I was doing. That’s when life hit me, about the same time Sally Mae called and asked could I pay a gazillion dollars a month to repay my student loans.

I told the representative I was flat broke and hardly had enough for my next meal. She was very understanding and worked with me to give me time to get my finances in place. That’s when I quit my job and went to live with my father in Florida, hoping I could find a way to fix my life that was now full of debt.

After a few months in Florida, I returned back home to Maryland and moved to the farm where I was in charge of taking care of all the horses, chickens, turkeys and our goat Annabelle. I made frequent trips to the feed store and set up appointments with the farrier and veterinarian. I was constantly asking the veterinarian, Dr. Stott of Arundel Equine, tons and tons of questions. That’s when a light finally clicked on in my brain. How could I forget how bad I had always wanted to be a veterinarian? But how on earth could I, a person with a BA in Communications, ever become a vet is a question that daunted me for months.

I was advised by my mother and Dr. Stott to call around to vet schools that interested me and ask them. Of course I called Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine, well because Dr. Stott graduated from there and I thoroughly appreciated the history of the University. The recruiter told me I would have to go back and take the prerequisites that are found on the school website. I was crushed that I was holding a bachelors and would have to go back and take more undergraduate classes. He giggled and advised me on what schools I should go to in order to fulfill the courses.

I thanked him and he ended the conversation with, “well I’ll see you in a couple years.” Although I was bummed out that I had to take more undergraduate classes, I was determined! I had my vision in line and now I really knew how to get there. I enrolled as a non-degree seeking student and began taking all science and math courses.

I noticed I was making better grades taking all science and math courses than I had ever made taking liberal arts courses during my Bachelors. Although I was not seeking a degree, I was still assigned to an advisor in the Agriculture, animal science department, because my goal was to become a veterinarian. After about a year of acing Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc., my advisor at the time offered me an assistantship to get a Masters in Animal Science while doing research on Poultry. I was speechless. I accepted the offer and was now taking advanced level science courses, doing research while still fulfilling prerequisite courses. It was not easy, but anything worth having isn’t going to be easy.

"I am very grateful for my experience working in the different lab animal research facilities. ugh my journey to veterinarian school has not been a conventional journey, it’s my journey. I’m not too late and I’m not too early. I tell myself everyday, I am right where I am supposed to be.”

I graduated with my Master of Science from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in May, 2016 and have been accepted into the class of 2021 at Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine. Since graduating, I have been working with Charles River Laboratories as a Corporate Response Team Member. Gaining knowledge and experience with lab animals has been phenomenal, it’s open my eyes to a profession I honestly never knew existed.

I am very grateful for my experience working in the different lab animal research facilities. ugh my journey to veterinarian school has not been a conventional journey, it’s my journey. I’m not too late and I’m not too early. I tell myself everyday, I am right where I am supposed to be. The road may look long, but our time here is limited. So my advice to anyone reading this, please follow your dreams and your heart. My journey is not over, it’s just beginning and I have never felt more alive than right now. Have you started your journey yet?
NCAB Professional Development Workshop

Are you looking to enhance your skills and advance in your career?
Then this is the perfect workshop for you!

- NCAB presents Samir Balala, an accomplished manager with over 17 years of experience. Mr. Balala will be giving a talk on “10 Things That Require Zero Talent.”
- Bring your resume because there will be one-on-one resume consultations with professionals in the field
- Opportunities to participate in mini-mock interviews will be provided
- There will be tips on how to network effectively
- Light refreshments will be provided

May 18, 2017
5:00pm-7:30pm
Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Place
Silver Spring, MD 20910

For more information visit ncabaalas.org or Contact Bryan Beltran at bbeltran@tecniplastusa.com
Working with the Brazilian Gray Short-Tailed Opossum (Monodelphis Domestica)

By Shanna A. Redfearn

The Brazilian Gray Short-Tailed Opossum is from South America, generally found south of the Amazon River in central and western Brazil. They can also be found in eastern Bolivia, northern Paraguay, Chile, and in northern Argentina. Natives call them “cachita” and consider them to be good luck. They are very friendly, docile, curious, active, and entertaining. If handled at an early age, they are easy to tame and become very friendly.

The Brazilian Gray Short-Tailed Opossums are not rodents. They are part of the “infraclass” known as marsupials. They are about 12-18 cm in length. They are omnivores, and their diet consists of rodents, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, breads, vegetables, and some fruits. You can also offer them a high quality cat food, other dry foods such as a ferret food, baby foods, or special diet of Brisky’s Short Tail Possum feed. They are nocturnal, and have poor eyesight. Allow them to smell you before handling. Smell is very important in communication. They can be safely picked up by allowing them to climb onto your hands, arms, clothing, by grasping around the middle section of their body, or by grasping them at the base of the tail, and giving their front paws something to cling to. They have opposable toes, and on their hind legs they have an opposable big toe that works much like the way a human thumb would work. They also use their tail as another limb. They have smooth pads on their toes and feet that enables them to climb up really smooth surfaces such as glass. The fur is a thick velvety grey-brown with a lighter tone underneath, but the fur color can vary with some reddish, orange, or whitish fur. They have a hairless, semi-prehensile tail, which is half the length of their body, in which they use to grasp and balance while climbing. It is also used to assist with carrying nesting materials and other things, but it is not weight bearing. They have a muzzle quite like a rat, with very sharp teeth. Their ears are large, hairless, very thin skinned, and are sensitive to sound, and their eyes bulge out, giving them good night vision. The front legs are shorter than the hind legs. They weigh 90 to 155 grams, with the males weighing more than the females. If they are scared, they will open their mouth to show all 50 of their small teeth, but usually it is a bluff, and most rarely bite, if ever. They are very clean, and quick to a corner of their enclosure for a bathroom. Some can even be trained to use a litter box. They are basically odor-free, and their cage only needs to be cleaned about once a week. They need a draft free warm environment. The temperature should be between 68° - 88° F, and at least 40-50% for humidity.

It can be a little on the warmer side for mothers with babies. More or less, humidity is not usually harmful, though some suffer from dried and cracked ears if the humidity is too low. Their environment should not receive direct sunlight or UV-light from reptile lamps because they are susceptible to skin cancer.

Because they are naturally solitary polygynandrous (promiscuous) animals, and should be housed individually. They are nomadic animals and do not defend their territories. The only time they should be put together with other opossums is when they are being bred, and then only for only a short time. Cage mates will eventually become aggressive, and begin to fight one another, possibly killing each other when they reach the age of maturity. Young opossums should be housed separately by the time they reach 9 weeks of age. The females are induced ovulators, and mating’s are tied to olation. The males possess a prominent suprasternal scent gland that they use to attract females. This gland is situated medially between the neck and sternum, is ovaloid and devoid of fur. During mating, they may sniff one another, bite, and chase. If one another, show opened-mouthed displays, or spit and hiss at one another. Opossums exhibit neither elaborate courtship displays nor does long-term pair bonding. The male typically initiate contact, approaching the female while making clicking vocalizations. A non-receptive female will either avoid contact or show aggression. This goes on about 4 to 5 times for about 6 to 7 minutes, and sometimes one, or both may end up wounded.

Unlike other marsupials, they do not have a pouch. Sexual maturity is reached by 18 to 20 weeks of age, and their gestation lasts for 14 to 15 days. On average, they breed about four times a year, and females can have up to five to six litters per year. Their oestrous cycle is 28 days. They build a compact, tightly woven, sometimes unwoven, tunnel shaped nest. Some will occasionally sleep on the cage floor and dispense with nest building altogether. The paper strips provided for nest-building are grabbed with the mouth and transferred to the forefeet, then with the animal posed on its hind limbs, pushes along the ventral surface to the tail where it can be gripped in a loop at the tail tip. Then they carry the gathered material with their tail, making a stopper to plug the hole of the tunnel. They push the material out to go in and out of the nest.

The average litter size is about 7 to 9 fledglings. They can have up to 15 joeys. The joeys are born altricial. Immediately after birth, the newborns crawl up to the nipples, which are arranged in a circle on her abdomen, where they will attach themselves to their mother for three to four weeks. They possess thirteen teats, which can be retracted into the body by muscles at their base. The jacks (males) and the jills (females) can be seen following their mother, climbing, and riding onto her back at the age of three to four weeks. At the age of 5 weeks, the fledglings enter a nesting phase where they will begin to eat solid food. They become independent at 6 to 8 weeks of age. They can be weaned at the age of seven to eight weeks. They live 6 to 10 years in captivity, and 3 to 6 years in the wild. In research, they were the first marsupial to have its genome sequenced.

Several features make the species a good experimental animal for studying the effects of Ultraviolet radiation induced skin and eye cancers and dietary induced hypercholesterolemia (cardiovascular disease.) Their omnivorous characteristic make it a better model than conventional laboratory animals for research on physiological effects of dietary fat and cholesterol. They exhibit extensive individual variation in response to dietary fat and cholesterol, and that variation appears to be largely controlled by a single recessive gene. Like other marsupials, the inadequacies of the neonate’s immune system function make it an ideal model for both transplant and cancer research, as well as general investigations into immune system development. In general, they could possibly be the future in research for cancer or cardiovascular diseases.
PHOTO GALLERY

NCAB live at March for Science in Washington, DC

The Medimmune Laboratory Animal Resources group had an exciting 2017 Tech Week.

Dr. LaTesa Hughes presents the AHCS Sentayahu Eskeziaw award to recipient Mr. Teklemariam Degefu. This is a NINDS/NIH departmental award created in memory of Ms. Eskeziaw, an excellent animal care technician, who passed away suddenly in 2014. Mr. Degefu is the second recipient of this peer nominated award. He received 12 nominations!

Just as colleagues celebrate Moya Getrouw at FDA, White Oak, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Dr. Mark Pitcher making a presentation at the NCAB March 2017 March Speaker Series and General Members Meeting.
CARING FOR RODENT MODELS WITH DEGENERATIVE DISORDERS

By Candace Mallow

Caring for rodent models with degenerative disorders can often be a burdensome task. These animals may be afflicted with multiple symptoms that progress over time including difficulty reaching food and water, lethargy, dehydration, and weight loss.

Frequently one of the biggest challenges when caring for these models is providing proper nutritional support when they are unable to do so for themselves. In addition to nutritional support, placing an alternative bedding in the cage may benefit the animal(s) as well. Nutritional supplementation and alternative bedding may be necessary to support the model until it has reached the specified study endpoint and can be collected by the investigator. As always, it is important to ensure the animal study protocol allows for intervention prior to starting any type of treatment regimen.

There are multiple ways to offset the detrimental symptoms seen with degenerative disorders, and although these were specifically used in rodents they would likely work with other species as well.

Nutritional support may be provided in the form of fruit slices like apples and oranges to provide a palatable food source as well as providing additional liquids. These can be placed on the cage floor for easy access. Bacon treats and high calorie gelatin can also be used as a food supplement. Both offer extra calories, are soft and easy to eat, and can be placed on the cage floor as well. These supplements should be replaced daily or as directed by the facility veterinarian. Since some degenerative models can progress to the point where they cannot access food from the hopper softened chow and hydrogel may be placed on the cage floor for easy access. Other high calorie nutritional supplements like Stat, Boost, and Ensure can be given carefully by mouth or mixed into the soft chow.

In addition to placing hydrogel, an alternative to water, on the cage floor animals that are severely dehydrated may require additional fluid supplementation. Fluids like saline and lactated ringers solution may be given subcutaneously up to twice a day to help combat dehydration.

Altering the type of bedding may benefit animals that have difficulty navigating loose pellet type bedding. A compressed cotton pad may be used in place of traditional bedding, be cut to fit the cage, and used in conjunction with normal enrichment. The cotton pad also provides a graspable surface for those animals that may be having trouble walking.

At this point you may ask yourself, well what good is this treatment doing? While this type of treatment does not change the course of the disease it helps the animals maintain a good quality of life, and support their nutritional and physical needs until they reach a usable time point.
ASPIRATION

My name is Sarah Morton. I have been a veterinary technician for a total of 5 years. Prior to my work experience I graduated from Roanoke College with a B.S. degree in Biology. My time in school I was able gain more experience in the veterinary medicine field by shadowing an ambulatory equine veterinarian for a semester. Post-graduation, I worked in private practice for two years and then to Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI) as a laboratory technician where I assisted with a protocol studying prophylactic drugs for radiation exposure with non-human primates. After a year on the study, I decided to come back into the veterinary world and started working as a veterinary technician at AFRRI where we focus on animal welfare throughout the facility. While at AFRRI I have received my ALAT certification and am working towards my LAT. Most recently, I have been accepted into Drexel University’s Masters of Laboratory Animal Science program and hope to one day pursue my dream of becoming a laboratory animal veterinarian.

My name is Kalyn Alloway and I have been a Veterinary Technician for a total of 11 years. I graduated from the Vet Tech Institute in Pittsburgh, PA in 2006 and passed the National Veterinary Technician Exam in 2009, earning the Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) certification. I worked in private and corporate practice until 2010 when I joined the Army as a 68T Animal Care Specialist. I was stationed in Maryland and eventually got into research where I earned the ALAT, LAT, and most recently, LATG certifications. I eventually have aspirations to earn my CMAR certification. I currently attend University of Maryland University College where I am working towards a Bachelor’s in Social Science and also work as a full time veterinary technician at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute in Bethesda, MD where I focus on animal welfare and protocol support. I have found that I am passionate about animal behavior and enrichment, so I plan to study and learn more about enhancing the lives of animals in captivity.
THE BOT SPOT

By Dr. Larry Shelton, Trustee, AALAS District 3

Greetings, D3! I’m very excited to bring back the Board of Trustees Spotlight. The BOT SPOT name was created by Dr. Shannon Stutler, who completed her second term on the Board of Trustees at the end of the 2016 National Meeting in Charlotte. I want to take a moment to recognize Dr. Stutler for her unwavering dedication to District 3 and National AALAS. Shannon always has the best interests of our organizations in her heart and mind, and it was an honor to serve alongside her as a co-trustee!

National AALAS is in the implementation phase of our recent governance change. Our current model has one (vs. two in the past) trustee per district voted in by the respective district and at-large trustees voted in by the national membership. As this is a recent development, the Board continues to monitor its implementation. So far, so good!

Your national trustees are in the midst of the ‘busy season’, serving as active liaisons to the various National Committees. These committees are diligently holding teleconferences, face-to-face meetings, and other activities to accomplish present objectives and shape the future of our organization. These will go on through the July AALAS Leadership summit at National HQ and right up to the National Meeting in Austin.

By the way, are you ready for the National Meeting? This year’s meeting will be held in Austin, Texas from 15-19 October. Stay tuned for emerging details on what promises to be yet another phenomenal program!

Did you know?

1. National AALAS has a new membership structure, effective 1 January 2017. For details on background and how this new structure effects you, please visit: https://www.aalas.org/membership/2017-membership-dues.

2. Voting season is near! Please keep in mind that Branch membership does not equal National Membership and vice versa. To vote in the upcoming elections, please ensure your NATIONAL membership is current; you have a unique and current e-mail address assigned only to you; and be sure to add vote@simplyvoting.com to your list of safe senders. Voting will begin on June 1st and includes this complete list of candidates and bios: https://www.aalas.org/get-involved/election/whos-running-for-office. VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!!!

3. Next year’s National AALAS meeting will be right here in District 3 from 28 October to 1 November, 2018 in Baltimore!

4. The deadline for submission of Action Resolutions (ARs) for consideration at the next BOT meeting in July is 15 June. If you have an AR in mind, I am happy to discuss it with you. In fact, it’s my duty to discuss it with you! 😊 For more details on ARs, visit: https://www.aalas.org/leadership.

Until next time, I hope to see you around the District and remember to peruse the National AALAS website at www.aalas.org!
GOAL GETTERS CORNER

AFRRI
Kalyn Alloway
Priority One Services
Ejae O’Connor
Erin McCalla

Priority One Services
Phillip Griffin
Zachary Sarmiento

MedImmune
Cristian Rivera

Priority One Services
Francis Forseh
Kaci Mack

Is there someone in your organization who recently achieved their AALAS certification? Recognize and congratulate them in the newsletter!
TRIBRANCH 2017 - DELAWARE VALLEY

TriBranch 2017 - Delaware Valley Branch of AALAS Member

TriBranch 2017 Save the Date! June 5-7th at the Tropicana Resort.

The poster/presentation abstract submission form is now located under the “Abstract Submission” tab.

For more information, please visit: www.tribranch.org

NCB AALAS CERTIFICATION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (NACMP)

The NCB AALAS Education Committee will be conducting another series of the NCB AALAS Certification Mentorship Program (NACMP). The goal of this program is to foster AALAS Certification among NCB members. This program will partner a senior laboratory animal professional with an individual desiring to obtain AALAS LATG certification.

This type of collaboration will provide NCB members the benefit of one-on-one training sessions with a senior lab animal professional and scheduling flexibility. This will also give the mentee a personal cheerleader!

This is a 12-week commitment starting in June. The mentor and mentee must “meet” at least 3 hours/week for 12 weeks. The individual training sessions can be accomplished in many ways i.e. face-to-face, phone, FaceTime, skype, WebEx (free accounts available), etc. The meeting times will be decided between the mentor and mentee (For example, before work, during lunch, after work, weekends, etc.).

You, as the mentor, will be provided with a set schedule and additional materials for training (i.e. PowerPoints, outlines, practice exercises). The mentee will be responsible for completing weekly assignments.

ARE YOU QUALIFIED FOR NCB COMPLIMENTARY MEMBERSHIP?

If you have received your AALAS certification (ALAT, LAT, LATG, or CMAR) within the past year, you are eligible to receive a complimentary one (1) year NCAB membership for the current year.

Please send a copy of your certification to Individual Membership at ncabmembership@gmail.com.

Your certification document must be submitted within 3 months of obtaining certification.

Also, NCAB will only accept certifications that have been sent from the National AALAS office.

NCB CERTIFICATION EXAM SCHOLARSHIP - 2017

- A complete scholarship application includes:
  - Application form
  - Two signed letters of recommendation/support.
  - Submit your complete application by email to:
    - NCAB Awards Committee
    - Jan Linkenhoker, Chair
    - linkenhj@mail.nih.gov

Nomination deadline: None. Open until available funds are used.

NCB AALAS CERTIFICATION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (NACMP) CONT’D

There will be at least five group sessions in which all mentees will come together and cover the following topics: regulations, drug dosages/calculations, ALAT and LAT review and a final LATG review session and mock exam.

If you are interested in being a mentor or want to know more about this program, please contact Claudine Bobb directly at bobbc@mail.nih.gov or 240-669-5781 by May 18, 2017.

NCB TECHNICAL BRANCH LUNCH AND LEARN EVENTS

Date: May 26th 2017
Time: 11:30-12:30
Location: NIH Bethesda Campus
Bldg 50 Room 1227/1233
9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda MD, 20892
Activities: Light Refreshments, Door Prizes, AALAS Trivia
Keynote Speakers:
Kelly Lucas, LVT, LATG - “From Stages to Cages: My Journey from Theater to

Date: June 23rd 2017
Time: 11:30-12:30
Location: Albert R. Behnke Auditorium
Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
503 Robert Grant Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Activities: Free Lunch, Door Prizes, AALAS Trivia,
Keynote Speakers:
Kelly Prevost LATG - “The Journey of a
US ARMY Animal Care Specialist”
Registration Deadline: June 22nd 2017
AALAS Foundation Announces

"Guitar Animal Hero" Contest

Sound Check...One, Two, Three!

Tune up your guitars and gather up your paint brushes - registration into the "Guitar Animal Hero" contest - to benefit the AALAS Foundation and its mission - is NOW OPEN!

Austin, Texas is known for its live music scene - country, blues and rock. We know all the people and animals working in laboratory animal science are ROCK STARS - strumming to a fast beat to achieve medical discoveries!

That's why, this year, the AALAS Foundation has designed a "Guitar Animal Hero" contest to be held at the 2017 AALAS National Meeting in Austin, Texas!

We're challenging contestants to creatively paint/decorate a wooden 10" guitar! An official wooden guitar will be shipped to contestants upon payment of contest entry fee and completion of registration form.

Don't worry - you don't have to know how to play a guitar to enter the contest! Simply show off your imagination and talent by creatively painting/decorating an official contest guitar!

Click here for contest details/rules and to register for entry into the contest!

Deadline to enter the contest is September 8, 2017 - so, don't delay!

Questions? Contact us at foundation@aalas.org.
2017 NCAB AWARD GUIDELINES

The National Capitol Area Branch of AALAS (NCAB) offers five awards during the annual seminar meeting. The deadline for nominations is **July 28, 2017**. Nominees must be an NCAB member.

**Charles D. Durbin Award (Animal Caretaker)**

The **NCAB Durbin Award** recognizes an individual for their outstanding performance in providing animal husbandry care to enrich, enhance or improve the lives of laboratory animals. An honorarium of $200 and a plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:

1. Daily contact with animals of one or more species in the form of handling, feeding, watering, and changing bedding, etc.
2. Demonstrated positive attitude toward the welfare of animals
3. Has reduced or eliminated distress or created other benefits for the animals in their care
4. Demonstration of outstanding individual work performance, positive attitude, and team work
5. Number of years as a member of NCAB
6. Number of years of experience in the lab animal field
7. AALAS certification level
8. Individual accomplishment  
   - i.e.: Projects, presentations, posters, volunteer activities, memberships, etc.

**Curtis A. Black Award (Veterinary/Animal Health Technicians)**

The **NCAB Black Award** recognizes an individual for their outstanding accomplishments in the delivery of veterinary and technical services to enhance the health and well-being of laboratory animals. An honorarium of $300 and a plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:

1. Daily contact with animals of one or more species in the form of veterinary care and technical services.
2. Contribution to the laboratory animal field at the institutional level through identification and implementation of new or improved techniques in the care of animals
3. Demonstration of outstanding individual work performance, positive attitude, and team work
4. Ability to provide innovative approaches to animal care problems
5. Number of years as a member of NCAB
6. Number of years of experience in the lab animal field
7. AALAS certification level
8. Individual accomplishments  
   - i.e.: Projects, presentations, posters, volunteer activities, memberships, etc.
Richard L. Pierson Award (Manager or Supervisor)

The NCAB Pierson Award recognizes an individual for their outstanding accomplishments in administration, management, or the support of programs relating to the care, quality, or humane treatment of animals used in biomedical research. An honorarium of $400 and a plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:

1. Demonstrated managerial or administrative leadership that contributed to the improvement of animal welfare
2. Demonstrated managerial or administrative leadership that inspires employees to improve job performance
3. Demonstrated specific achievements that have benefited the workplace, NCAB or AALAS
4. Demonstrated positive attitude toward the welfare of animals
5. Ability to provide innovative approaches to animal care problems
6. Number of years as a member of NCAB
7. Number of years of experience in the lab animal field
8. AALAS certification level
9. Individual accomplishment
   - i.e.: Projects, presentations, posters, volunteer activities, memberships, etc.

Dr. William I. Gay Award (Trainer)

The NCAB Gay Award recognizes an individual for their outstanding contributions to the field of laboratory animal training and education. At least one letter of support must come from a person who has received training from the nominee. An honorarium of $300 and a plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:

1. Dedicated to promote and advance the field of laboratory animal science through training and education
2. Demonstrated participation in developing, improving, implementing or providing training and education programs
3. Ability to provide effective up to date training information and techniques
4. Ability to train diversified groups of people
5. Involvement in the generation and/or training of standard operating procedures
6. Demonstrated promotion of technician and management certifications
7. Participation in other organizations such as LAWTE, AALAS, or ATD
8. Number of years as a member of NCAB
9. Years of experience as a trainer
10. Years of experience in the lab animal field
11. AALAS certification level
12. Ability to provide innovative approaches to animal care problems
13. Recognition by peers and co-workers
14. Individual accomplishment
   - i.e.: Projects, presentations, posters, volunteer activities, memberships, etc.
NCAB Volunteer Service Award (Council or Committee member) Award Name TBD

The NCAB Volunteer Service Award (name TBD) recognizes an individual who has shown dedication and service to the National Capital Area Branch by volunteer efforts, commitment of time and community impact. A plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:
1. Have been engaged in NCAB volunteer activities for a minimum of five years
2. Individual participation
   - i.e.: Council member, committee chair, committee member, trustee, speaker, facilitator, etc.
3. Degree to which their services/actions have made a meaningful contribution
4. Current member of NCAB
5. Number of years as a member of NCAB
6. Volunteer efforts with AALAS and/or AALAS Foundation
7. Volunteer efforts with other AALAS affiliate organizations
8. Previous NCAB Volunteer Service Award recipients from within the past 7 years are ineligible

Dr. Joseph R. Held Award (Veterinarian)

The NCAB Held Award is intended for Clinical or Facility Laboratory Animal Veterinarians. The award specifically excludes director of animal programs. The nominee will have sustained superior clinical performance, achieved recognition for a single accomplishment or contribution, or provided exemplary service to the NCAB branch. An honorarium of $400 and a plaque will be presented to the recipient of this award.

The following award qualifications will be considered in the final selection:
1. Daily contact with laboratory animals of one or more species in the performance of clinical veterinary medicine
2. Participation in organized laboratory animal medicine science, such as AALAS, ACLAM, etc.
3. Participation in additional training/teaching for animal care and/or technical staff as well as public education or outreach groups or programs
4. Accomplishments, contributions and innovations in the field of laboratory animal care and medicine
5. Educational background such as internship, residency, post graduate degree, board certification, etc.
6. Number of years as a member of NCAB
7. Years of experience working as a Clinical veterinarian
8. Years of experience in the lab animal field
9. Demonstrated positive attitude toward the welfare of animals
10. AALAS certification level
11. Ability to provide innovative approaches to animal care problems
12. Recognition by peers and co-workers
13. Individual accomplishment
   - i.e.: Projects, presentations, posters, volunteer activities, memberships, etc.
# 2017 NCAB Council Contact List

<table>
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Revised 4-12-17

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