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Information:**  
www.svbt.org

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #110  
Wooster, OH

“Empowering the Veterinary Behavior Team Through Education”

Volume 5, Issue 1

Autumn 2005

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

As I consider writing this I am returning from vacation and gearing up for another Michigan State University Mobile Animal Trip.

My involvement in these annual trips goes beyond simple LVT skills. Planning starts at the end of each trip, and becomes more frenzied as the next trip approaches. I help plan, coordinate, inventory, order equipment and supplies as well as account for each detail. With 22 veterinary students, two veterinarians, two LVT’s, one vet assistant, three vans and a 15-foot moving truck, this will be our largest trip. With a two-week countdown, I have spent approximately 12 hours of my vacation working on the final, critical details. (And this doesn’t include about 4-6 hours of my vacation allocated to SVBT!)

Driving about 30 hours to our destination, we’ll unload our equipment and gear upon arrival, and set up the clinic to be ready to start 7:30 the following morning. During each 14-16 hour workday, we anticipate spaying and neutering approximately 75-90 dogs and cats, and vaccinating an additional 100-150. All services are free to the community. The end of each day is spent cleaning and setting up for the next workday, followed by a deconstruction meeting. Every 2-3 days we completely pack up our equipment and gear, caravan to the next location, unload and set up just as before. I average anywhere from 2 to 5 hours of sleep each night on these trips, drop about 10 pounds, and frequently rely on a big bottle of ibuprofen to keep my stiff muscles going for the long day ahead.

Why do I do this? Because, although it is mentally and physically exhausting, it has its rewards. I enjoy being able to give so much back, to help the pets that enrich peoples lives, to help those who cannot afford to help their cherished pets, to teach vet students, and to keep my LVT skills sharp. It is something I believe in and am passionate about.

Why am I sharing this with you? Why is this significant to SVBT? Well...have you ever had something you believed in? Ever worked really hard toward a seemingly unattainable,

almost painful, goal-and reached it? Ever been truly passionate about a cause?

The definition of passion per Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary:

*Synonym: PASSION. FERVOR. ENTHUSIASM. ZEAL.*

*Mean intense emotion compelling action.*

PASSION applies to an emotion that is deeply stirring or ungovernable. FERVOR implies a warm and steady emotion. ENTHUSIASM applies to lively or eager interest in or admiration for a proposal, cause or activity. ZEAL implies energetic and unflagging pursuit of an aim or devotion to a cause.

This is what SVBT is about—PASSION. It’s what started SVBT: three people passionate about behavior. This is what keeps SVBT going, progressing, metamorphosing, improving—the dedicated, passionate SVBT members who sacrifice their time and energies to keep SVBT an unequalled force in the field of veterinary behavior. I hope this is why you have become an SVBT member, or are interested in becoming a member—you are passionate about behavior, about learning about behavior, about teaching behavior, and about contributing to the field of veterinary behavior.

The SVBT needs more passionate people involved. It’s really not about how much or how little behavioral experience or knowledge you have, how many puppy or kitten classes you’ve taught, or whether your clinic sees behavior cases or refers them. All these factors are EXTRA. Believe it or not, what really is crucial are the non-behavior related attributes: are you organized? Focused? Detail oriented? Are you a visionary? Can you keep commitments, set targets and reach them? Are you good with the written word? A financial whiz? Or a social sophisticate? Are you picky (also known as a perfectionist)?

If any of this describes you, or you are up for a challenge, then contact a board member to discover how you can be a part of the SVBT passion. Drop me an email; give me a call. Act on your passion.

Regards,

*Cassandra Vong, LVT*

## Welcome New SVBT Members!

\*\*If your name or a friend’s is listed in italics below, please contact Linda at [Linda.Campbell@hsmo.org](mailto:Linda.Campbell@hsmo.org) as we need mailing information missing on your application in order to send you your new member information!

Gena Aubrey C.V.T.	Sand Point	ID	Kathy Zaske R.V.T.	Athens	GA
Candida Lynn Lower C.V.T.	Bay Village	OH	Nicole Hawkins C.V.T.	Morris	IL
Janice Parrow C.V.T.	Minneapolis	MN	Carol Slauson	St.Petersburg	FL
Suzanne Hainer L.V.T.	Richmond	VA	Julie Urban R.V.T.	LaConner	WA
Audra Burmeister C.V.T.	Buffalo City	WI	<i>*Heather L Al-Far</i>		
Stephanie Hart	Ormond Beach	FL	Jessica Crowder L.V.T.	Bend	OR
<i>*Jodelle Rhodes</i>			Tanya Kindermann-Forbes	Modbury North, Australia	
<i>*Sarah Gallagher</i>			Lisa LaMothe L.V.T.	Bolton Landing	NY
Tracie Rexer	Denver	CO	<i>*Teleah Bergen</i>		
Barbara Schwartz C.V.T.	Kissimmee	FL	<i>*Danielle Simmons</i>		
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Kari Griffith	Everett	WA	<i>*Emily Kennedy</i>		
Tammy Herbert R.V.T.	St. Louis	MO	<i>*Janet Mason</i>		
Lori Chesser R.V.T.	Pataskala	OH	Sheirley Prado	Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico	Mexico
Candace Eck	Poolesville	MA	Gina Lane L.V.T.	Roanoke	VA
Danette Johnston L.V.T.	Seattle	WA	Kristen Kemper R.V.T.	Dagsboro	DE
Susan Miller C.V.T.	Northampton	MA	Rosemary Frieborn R.V.T.	Newcastle	CA
Carrie Long R.V.T.	Edinburgh	IN	Karen Chapman-John C.V.T.	Canon City	CO
Teresa Bilancio R.V.T.	Niles	MI	Charlu Kent	Richmond	TX
Cara Leyshon R.V.T.	Poulsvo	WA	Christine Glasheen R.V.T.	W. Lafayette	IN
Pamela Bettcher	Brighton	MA	Amber Thompson	Olive Branch	MS
MariGrace Baur	Yucca Valley	CA	Christine Thomas C.V.T.	Glendale	AZ
Beth Malligan R.V.T.	Wamego	KS	Kathy Christman C.V.T.	Clermont	FL
Brooke Griffith	Aurora	CO	Jodi Klein C.V.T.	Waite Park	MN
Pam Holt	Woodland Hills	CA			

## Rats; *Rattus norvegicus*

By: Lisa Bach, RVT, BS

Rats are extremely social and intelligent animals and make fantastic pets. The purpose of this article is to illustrate how environmental enrichment along with training and knowledge of a rat's ethology can prevent and treat common behavior and health problems seen in pet rats as well as strengthen the human-animal bond.

As early as the 1800s, rats were kept for breeding, showing and fighting. Rats have always been human commensals which have made them very easy to domesticate over time. All of our domesticated rats are descendants of *Rattus norvegicus*; though there are a large number of strains and varieties available. Rats are a large rodent, males growing to 300-500 grams and females 200-400 grams in bodyweight. A rat's lifespan ranges from 3-5 years if well cared for. Rats are omnivorous and their incisors grow throughout their lives.

The rat's size, number of rats living in the enclosure, amount of time the rat will be spending in the enclosure, and what activities will be offered to the rat should all be weighed when putting together a rat enclosure.

Rats should be offered an enclosure with multiple levels since they are agile climbers and enjoy the activity. If denied exercise rats can cause self-mutilation out of boredom and anxiety. They also tend to enjoy their food so without consistent activity can be prone to obesity leading to health, joint and skin problems.

Within an enclosure there should be hiding boxes, hammocks or tunnels for them to cuddle into for privacy and to hide their 'treasures'. Rats are naturally nocturnal so though they enjoy company during the daytime they will also want to have comfortable sleeping areas to rest during the daytime. Rats are horders and truly enjoy collecting items such as food treats, bedding and toys. It is beneficial to give them a private area to store their goods until cleaning day. I recommend giving your rats new items at cleaning day

to stash; it lessens the anxiety of losing their "treasures". Always offer your rat some hard items to chew in order to keep their teeth under control. Small rawhides and wooden blocks work well for this.

Caution should be used in choosing bedding for your rat or any small mammal. Wood bedding can contain aromatic hydrocarbons and phenols that can cause liver damage and upper respiratory problems in mammals. Aspen bedding is not as dangerous as cedar or pine, but it is safest to stick to non-wood bedding such as recycled newspaper, straw, cob, or cloth bedding.

Rats are highly social animals, so great thought should be given to keeping a singleton. In general they do well in group housing. Unlike mice, male rats rarely fight with one another even after adulthood. It is becoming more common to spay and neuter rats so you can have mixed sexes living together, not to mention the benefit of preventing health issues such as mammary tumors and prostate. If you choose to only get one rat be prepared to spend extra time providing social and environmental enrichment. If you take the time to slowly introduce

yourself to your new rat, you will find they will anticipate the time you spend together. By handling your rat gently and frequently you can prevent fear and fear related biting.

One wonderful way for you to spend quality time with your rat is to begin training it. You will want to choose some

basic "commands" to begin with and can grow your rat's repertoire from there. Starting commands I'd begin with are: Come, Try It, Stand and Follow. To teach your rat 'come' use the same method you would with your puppy. You lure your rat to come by placing an outstretched index finger or offer a tasty tidbit towards your rat. Rats are naturally curious and will want to investigate such an offering (much like bending at the knees and slapping your thighs to encourage a puppy to approach you). When your rat is rewarded for approaching you



**Bio:** Lisa Bach is a 1994 graduate of Madison Area Technical College, Veterinary Technician Program. She also obtained a Bachelor's degree emphasizing animal behavior from the UW-Madison. Lisa currently works at a local veterinary clinic where she has implemented a progressive behavioral consultation program. She is an instructional assistant in the Veterinary Technician/ Laboratory Animal Technician Department at Madison Area Technical College. She owns and operates an in-home pet sitting, exercising and training business, Wag-N-Wheel Inc. Lisa is a proud member of the WVTA, serving as the Dane County District Representative. She is also a member of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce. Lisa spends her free time with her husband and two children. She shares her home with four cats, a Giant Schnauzer mix and four fish.



several times, begin attaching the word "come" to the action. Same as training puppies don't use the word "come" if you are going to do something the rat won't enjoy, (like his first bath). Use the command only when you know your rat will get something desirable when they do come. You can teach your rat to take offerings from your hand with "Try It". This is very useful when needing to give your rat medications or if you'd like to work on "Fetch" later. To teach your rat "stand" again you use the same method of "lure training" as you would to teach your puppy sit or down. Place a delectable tidbit just in front of your rat's nose and slowly move it upward until your rat is standing, then reward. After several completed trials, begin attaching the word "stand" to the action. "Follow" is done in the same manner. Lure your rat to follow your hand by using a fun toy or food item.

With all of these I recommend clicker training your rat so you can really mark the behavior and reinforce with treats/toys just due to the small size of the animal. However, traditional reinforcement training is adequate and will work just fine.

As your rat learns the basic "commands" you can build on them until you and your rat are sharing wonderful

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## SVBT Scholarship Contest for DOGS! 2006

The Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians is co-sponsoring a scholarship contest for the **Purdue University DOGS! Course: Principles and Techniques of Behavior Modification June, 2006.**

The winning applicant will be awarded full tuition which includes a complementary tuition for a veterinarian from their veterinary practice (does not include travel, room, and board) to the acclaimed DOGS! Course. This scholarship is offered to any Professional SVBT member in good standing. For scholarship consideration, please submit by mail a completed application, at least one letter of reference and a (1500 word or less) essay addressing the following question:

*Is there any one experience that sparked your interest in behavior medicine and how will you use the education you receive from the DOGS course?*

Visit the SVBT website at [www.SVBT.org](http://www.SVBT.org) to print your application. Essays must be submitted in both hard copy and computerized form (disk or CD-Rom). You may get ahead of the crowd and email us your essay at [pjmrvt@comcast.net](mailto:pjmrvt@comcast.net), but we must also receive a duplicate in the mail. Submit application, reference letter and essay to:

SVBT Scholarship Contest  
Pam Mahlie  
50667 Haven Hill Court  
Granger, IN 46530

Submissions must be postmarked no later than December 15th, 2005  
No late submissions or partial applications will be accepted!



The SVBT Scholarship winner will be announced in the April edition of *The Behavior Perspective*, along with their published essay. If you have any questions please contact the Scholarship Committee chair, Pam Mahlie, by e-mail [pjmrvt@comcast.net](mailto:pjmrvt@comcast.net).

ALL submitted essays become the property of SVBT. Submitting an essay for this scholarship indicates your agreement to allow SVBT to publish your essay or any portion of your essay in *The Behavior Perspective*, on the SVBT website, or in any other SVBT publication.

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amounts of time learning new and more complex behaviors. For example, many rat clubs across the country now have rat agility competitions.

You can also litter train your rat! You should use a substrate that is different than the other bedding in his/her enclosure and place it in a small litterpan inside the enclosure. I recommend the corner litterpans used for ferrets. Place some of your rat's fecal pellets in the litterpan to help them associate urinating and defecating in that area. When you observe your rat using the litterpan reward it. You can gently place your rat in the litterpan and have a treat ready if they urinate or defecate appropriately. Litter training your rat will make keeping their enclosure clean and odor free much easier. It will also make you feel much better about giving your rat time outside of their enclosure.

Rats are very social and enjoy getting out with you. Consider purchasing a ferret harness and taking your rat on walks, playtime in the back yard and even an occasional swim. Exercise and stimulation go a long way in preventing common behavioral and health related problems seen in pet rats.

Overgrown incisors, obesity, self-mutilation, house damage, fear, fear/

biting are all commonly seen problems. Almost all of these can be prevented and treated with quality husbandry and environmental enrichment and training. Add interest to your rat's life by providing a variety of activities, toys, and chew sticks to your rat's enclosure and you'll prevent over half of these problems. By training your rat you can enrich your bond and enjoy your rat all the more.

Some rat clubs available online are:

- *The Rat Fan Club*  
[www.ratfanclub.org/](http://www.ratfanclub.org/)
- *American Fancy Rat & Mouse Association*  
[www.afma.org](http://www.afma.org)
- *Rat & Mouse Club of America*  
[www.rmca.org/](http://www.rmca.org/)

### Resources:

Assistant Laboratory Animal Technician Training Manual, by American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, Edited by Lawson, P. Timothy, DVM. Pg. 111-113. 2002

Rat Care Guide: Introducing Rats  
<http://ratguide.com/care/>

Biology of Laboratory Rodents David G. Besselsen, D.V.M., Ph.D. <http://www.ahsc.arizona.edu/uac/notes/classes/rodentbio/rodentbio.html>

The Annual Skinner Box Rat Training Competition, Bannister-Marx, John. [http://www.accessexcellence.org/AE/AEC/AEF/1996/banister-marx\\_rat.html](http://www.accessexcellence.org/AE/AEC/AEF/1996/banister-marx_rat.html)

Rats: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual. Carol Himsel Daly, D.V. M. 2002.

MONKEY, continued from pg. 7

out of trees so their babies could be taken for the pet trade. It's also interesting to note, both the Woolly Monkey and the Potto, animals we held as pets, are now on the endangered species list.

I will be gearing up for my 30-year high school reunion this summer. There

will be people there that have gained weight, lost hair, and look better than they did in high school. I don't have to worry about any of that as I will be forever looked at as "the girl with the monkey."

## Editor's Bark

You may be looking at *The Behavior Perspective* today and noticing some NEW things...let me just say that there are many more to come! In this issue we have added biographies of our authors and also their photos. Please also notice that we have some excellent articles written by fellow veterinary technicians! This is a trend we should really continue.

In attending the IVBM and AVMA meetings in Minneapolis I personally was very inspired by our fellow technicians that were attending as speakers. Jenny O'Connor and Jenny Lane were amazing and they represented us in fine style at the IVBM. Tara Lang, Donna Dyer, Linda Campbell and Ginny Price rocked out in the AVMA technician sessions! All these people show the rest of us that as professionals, veterinary technicians have a lot to offer.

So if you have considered putting something together for the newsletter – go for it! If you are interested in speaking or doing research we have members in our ranks that can help you prepare to do just that. Post your questions on the ListServe or email one of our board members directly.

I'm now accepting articles for Winter...

Amanda Eick-Miller, RVT



## SVBT Annual Meeting Update

The annual business meeting of the SVBT was attended by 17 members including the board of directors. New officers were installed and a year end summary of each officer's projects during the year was given. Many strides were made by the SVBT this past year: the *Getting Started in Behavior* booklet was created and is now ready for printing, the budget was balanced and in the green, company sponsorship of the newsletter was very instrumental in being able to provide articles useful to members, two veterinary technicians spoke at the IVBM – both were SVBT members, the SVBT was able to sponsor a VT to speak at IVBM, and Julie Shaw is working to create the academy of veterinary behavior technicians. Currently under discussion is where to have next year's annual meeting as AVMA will be in Hawaii and VT attendance may be much lower.

There are many new projects the SVBT will be undertaking in the upcoming year, such as printing the *Getting Started* booklet, updating and making the SVBT website more user friendly, expanding the state representative network, continu-

ing to offer the DOGS! course scholarship, increasing membership, and many other projects! If you are interested in working with a dedicated group of people who enjoy behavior, email us – we always reward good behavior!

The SVBT also held its annual reception after the annual meeting. All SVBT members are invited to attend and mix with the ASVAB diplomats and manufacturers of behavior related products. Attendance was excellent and all enjoyed the evening of good conversations and networking. During the evening Aggie Keefer also revealed the cover of VT magazine which featured Julie Shaw. SVBT was able to host the reception alone this year without donations from other companies as it has done in the past. The reception has been a wonderful way to expose both product distributors and veterinary behaviorists to veterinary technicians working or interested in behavior. One distributor commented during the evening that he was "very impressed with the SVBT and the caliber of veterinary technicians it attracted".

## Call for Papers

The AVSAB/ACVB joint scientific veterinary behavior meeting will be held on July 16-17th, 2006 in conjunction with the AVMA in Honolulu, HI. Scientists and practitioners from all related disciplines are encouraged to submit abstracts for consideration. These may be in the form of original (unpublished) research results, case studies or scientific reviews. Submissions are due December 1, 2005 and authors of all submissions will be notified of the outcome of the review process by January 30<sup>th</sup> 2006. All submissions should be completed on the official submission form available at: [www.avsab.us](http://www.avsab.us). **The committee is not responsible for papers submitted incorrectly and therefore not reviewed.**

The SVBT will be sponsoring the second annual SVBT award for the highest scoring technician paper submitted. The award is open to professional members of the SVBT.

See official form and directions at: [www.avsab.us](http://www.avsab.us) or contact Tara Lang at [taraklang@sbcglobal.net](mailto:taraklang@sbcglobal.net) for more information.

## Using Behavior with Ferrets in a Clinic Setting

By: Anastasia Lynn Baima AS, BS BS

### Introduction

The ferret, known scientifically as *Mustela putorius furo*, is an obligate carnivore descended from a long line of hunter helpers. They are related to other such endearing animals as the skunks, badgers, minks, and weasels. Ferrets were used throughout Europe to "ferret out" other animals, especially rabbits. To this end they have a specific build for the task at hand. Their necks are the same width as their head and they have an elongated body with a flexible spine and very short legs. They have non-retractable claws and thirty-four permanent teeth. Most people are unaware that ferrets are nearsighted, but have an extraordinary sense of smell and hearing. They are intensely curious and are exceptional climbers. They can get into any space their head can fit into. Veterinarians and veterinary technicians need to be aware of more than the usual medical and historical background of these popular pets. They also need to educate themselves in the legal restrictions that are in place across the country pertaining to the ownership of ferrets. Increasing your knowledge of ferret behavior is an excellent way to minimize stress and injury to the ferret, and staff in the clinic setting.

### Housing and Other Animals

Two important aspects of ferret behavior to consider are housing and exercise. Ferrets are incredibly curious and very high-energy animals that need to burrow. Ferrets can be housed in a veterinary clinic with a few bits of information kept in mind. They can be housed in cages, but need exercise just like dogs. A lot of ferrets are trained to walk in harnesses making it easier to give them a good workout. The cage diameters should be 24x24x18 inches in order to comfortably accommodate two ferrets. The bar spacing should not be more than one inch to make it escape proof. A solid or wire floor is fine, but an aquarium is not appropriate since they need good ventilation. Some clinics use rabbit housing if the bar spacing is close enough. Ferrets can be litter box trained and there are ferret style boxes available. They have a low opening for their short

legs and a high corner so they can back up into the tray.

Because of their habit of licking and chewing on caging, consideration of the cage material and cleaning products is important. Reports show zinc toxicity can occur in ferrets housed in cages with galvanized bars that were steam cleaned. Cleaning them with steam allowed the zinc to leach out of the cage material.

In order to reduce stress two factors need to be considered. First, is curiosity which will require ferret safe toys. PVC piping can be fun and safe at the same time. Cat and dog toys, as well as cloth material, must be considered carefully. Obstructions are very common because of the ferret's tendency to chew material and burrow. The other factor for reducing stress is their need for a dark place to sleep. An enclosed area for sleeping such as pre-made housing or cardboard boxes can be used. Remember to change the food dish and water bottle and disinfect the cage daily for these active creatures. The smell of ferrets in the clinic can be disturbing to other prey animals like mice and rabbits. The clinic may want to house them with the cats and dogs and away from the small exotics.

### Restraint and Handling

Once inside the clinic a safe and quiet setting is always helpful to prevent injuries. Luckily ferrets are more docile than their wild counterparts and can be conditioned to handle restraint. Simple distraction using products like Nutrical (Tomylin) or meat based canned food can divert attention enough for exams and often subcutaneous injections. To do the more invasive procedures such as cephalic or saphenous venipunctures, and administration of medication, some restraint may be necessary. Young and unhandled animals may nip so be cautious until you inquire about what handling has been done by the owner.

There are two basic ways to restrain ferrets. The simplest way to hold a ferret is to scruff it at the nape of its neck and elongate its body. Pulling on their rear legs can frustrate ferrets so instead hold them by their hips. Once they are scruffed, they tend to relax and some yawn, which

Bio: Anastasia graduated from Newberry College in South Carolina with dual Bachelors of Science degrees in Veterinary Technology and Biology. She also has a



AS in Liberal Studies from Middlesex Community College. She currently works as a veterinary technologist at Woodbridge Animal Hospital and Emergency Clinic in Woodbridge, VA. Currently she lives with seven animals including two dogs, Honeybear and Smokeybear, and five cats.

is a good opportunity for an oral examination. The second method of restraint is similar to a cat restraint. Use a towel and wrap them snugly, but not too tight. This is very helpful for jugular venipuncture. When performing venipuncture of the vena cava, you may prefer that the animal is under anesthesia. Always use caution and pay attention to the patient's behavior during the exam to see if they are losing patience or becoming stressed.

### Conclusion

It is always useful to research any small animal's history and uses before treating them in a clinic setting. This background information can give you clues on the best ways to handle, house, and entertain the patient while they spend time in your hospital. Ferrets are inquisitive, high energy, but loving creatures that can be handled safely if you keep in mind their natural behaviors.

### References:

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Quesenberry, Katherine E. and Carpenter, James W. *Ferrets, Rabbits, and Rodents Clinical Medicine and Surgery*. Saunders. St. Louis, MO. 2004. pgs. 2 - 121.

Pye, Geoffrey W. BVSc, MSc Dipl. ACZM. (2003) Ferret Basics. In Eastern States Veterinary Assoc. *Proceedings of the North American Veterinary Conference, Small Animal and Exotics edition* (1257-1258). Orlando, FL: Veterinary Software Publishing Inc.

## Book Review

### *The Guinea Pig Handbook*

By: Maureen Yiesla RVT BS MT (ASCP)

There are many delights I remember from my childhood: a friend and I sliding the cover off of a cistern to find two little salamander eyes staring at us; walking to the Ohio State Fair from our house, where I stood in the cattle barn and watched a calf being born; finding a huge (well to a child it was huge) turtle going through our yard, which I named "Sam" and put in a large enamel wash-tub where it laid eggs; and a chameleon from the Shrine Circus. My brother and I decided at some point that we NEEDED a white mouse. Our mom said no but we knew once she saw it she would agree with us on how cute it was. We placed it in a shoe box and hid it the first evening home. The next morning we awakened to a scream as "Wilbur" stuck his head out of our toaster. My mom has now been replaced by my husband as the gatekeeper to our home and I find myself using the kids as an excuse to bring home living things. My newest "delight" is a Guinea pig. How could I have been deprived of this pleasure up to this point in my life?

I frequently visit an old-fashioned-type pet shop. They do grooming and have all kinds of "little friends."

It smells of leather and rawhide. The owners help rescue Guinea pigs. My husband had emphatically said no to our children about getting one but that childhood logic came back to me...once he sees how cute she is....(see picture). She is a wonderful companion animal. She is a cross between an Abyssinian and a Peruvian (so she resembles a favorite scrub brush which has some interspersed smashed bristles). We named her Squealer and we aren't sure of her age. Not having owned a Guinea pig



before, I was scared to death initially because I realized that I could harm her with my ignorance.

These are all the reasons why I would highly recommend a book written by Sharon L. Vanderlip, D.V.M. entitled *The Guinea Pig Handbook* (ISBN 0764122886). The publisher is Barron's Educational Series copyright 2003. The 160 pages are easy reading interspersed with wonderful pictures. First of all, Dr. Vanderlip has a self-administered "quiz" to take if you are considering a cavy. The book then leads you through finding the perfect cavy for your family (considering children and other pets). It cautions you against being tempted in purchasing one as a holiday gift. The book helps inform you about qualities of a healthy cavy, about their needed and proper nutrition (to prevent obesity), the best bedding, toys, exercise and hideaways. I really appreciated some

quick reference charts on different foods (alfalfa, pelleted food, fruits, vegetables) that told you amount to feed and advantages as well as disadvantages (it also addressed "picky eaters"). Included was a list of foods to avoid.

The book cautions you to select a veterinarian ahead of a problem occurring since not

all vets deal with cavies. It advises you how best to hold your cavy and discusses cavy communication and body language. This same chapter deals with cavy behaviors including aggression, play, fear, and mating as well as their tendency toward curiosity and exploration. Maintenance health care, health care problems, whether to spay or neuter, and grooming are also addressed in the text. The last chapter is on raising cavies, and includes information on their estrus cycle, age to breed, lactation, labor, hand rearing,

**Bio:** Maureen has been an RVT for 25 years. She worked general practice for ten years before going back to school to get a BS in medical technology. Her job recently has been to home school her three boys during the day and then work evening shifts doing strictly lab work. Maureen enjoys VSPN courses and any consultations for training issues in her spare time. An issue close to her heart is education of the client PRIOR to adopting a new pet.



and weaning. At the very back there is a resource section for related books and literature as well as web addresses to aid you.

These little rodents require so little and seem to enjoy our companionship, too. I have enjoyed seeing operant conditioning of our cavy. We started storing timothy hay for her in a plastic grocery bag. When she hears plastic crinkle, she stands up on her hind legs and becomes very animated. We bought her a hanging caged ball with a bell on it to put greens in and I've noticed her "ringing" the bell if we aren't serving the greens to her at the usual time. She seems to love our cat (a fellow fur ball) although the book cautions you to keep them separate for safety's sake. My youngest son said the other day that not only does he like Squealer because she can "popcorn" jump, but she can do the "wave" while she is jumping! It has been a pleasure to me to have this new experience and I have even found my husband playing with her!



## Member Spotlight

### Marcia Ritchie – 2005 Member at Large, SVBT founding member

Marcia Rafter Ritchie graduated from SUNY Delhi with an AAS in Veterinary Science in 1977. She worked in private veterinary practices for 20 years where her passion for animal behavior was cultivated by the veterinarians she worked with. Marcia has been an obedience and conformation dog show competitor since 1979 and is an occasional breeder of Pembroke Welsh Corgis.

A professional pet obedience instructor since 1984, Marcia was in the first group of 120 instructors to receive national certification through the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), of which she is a charter member. An active member of the Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians, she is currently serving on several committees, including co-authoring the "Getting Started in Behavior" manual. Her behavior articles have been published in both the SVBT's Behavior Perspective and Veterinary Technician magazine as well as local publications.

Marcia has been the Training Director of Eagle Ridge Kennels since 1991 which is also the year she started teaching her Puppy Pre-School program. She now supervises a training staff of 6 instructors who teach pet obedience classes in four different locations in the Buffalo, New York, area. Marcia teaches group classes, private instruction, assists veterinarians with behavior modification and does pet selection counseling. She is a consultant for the Erie County SPCA and a volunteer 4-H leader in the dog program. In addition to her passion for dogs, Marcia is an avid gardener who custom grows heirloom vegetables, herbs and edible blossoms for area restaurants.

Marcia always has great stories due to some exceptional experiences – so by popular demand here is one of her monkey tales!



## Growing up Monkey

By: Marcia Ritchie, LVT, CPDT



It happened again recently, a client of mine called me. "Marcia, I can't believe this," she said. "I just found out you were part of the family I've heard about for years, the one that had the pet monkey!" Even though our family moved away from this neighborhood 30 years ago, we were still notorious.

My Uncle Gordon fascinated me, adorned in a cowboy hat, boots and turquoise rings. He was a professor of Psychology at Adelphi University and an officer in the Peace Corps. It was the 1960s; I anxiously awaited his arrival each summer, usually in a VW bus, to drop off his array of exotics he'd leave in our care while he traveled. Among the assorted animals were a Squirrel Monkey, Kinkajou, Bush Baby, Potto and our most treasured, Mona, a Woolly Monkey.

From the moment she arrived, Mona became the sixth child, behaviorally healthy or not. After a winter of living caged, Mona had the liberties of eating at the table, sleeping in a doll bed and being carried around for endless hours, her large prehensile tail wrapped

around our waists. It was a common sight to see her sitting in a cart at the local grocery store while my mother did the weekly shopping.

When we went visiting (and she went most everywhere), Mona donned the earliest version of Pampers diapers, prepped by my sister and I, carefully cutting out the tail holes. At home she was house trained. Our bent screen door allowed Mona easy access to the outdoors, where you would often find her basking in the sunshine alongside our Malamute, German Shepherd, and Boxer. Although we lived high on a hill surrounded by 12 acres, there was no concern she'd run away as she was absolutely terrified of the woods, most likely attributed to her early capture.

Pajama parties were common among my friends, and I was invited to lots. Not so much due to my popularity, but it was well known my mother would make me bring the monkey as a condition. Mona also attended many a horse show at which one, a child told his mother "that was the ugliest kid he'd ever seen." Mark McMurray also gave me a ring in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. As he put it, "you're cool cuz you

have a monkey."

When Mona wasn't feeling well, there were no area veterinarians that would see her. Instead, we would sit on the steps of our local doctor's office until all patients had left, and then our own Dr. Martin would examine her. I am also convinced she suffered from a full blown case of separation anxiety as she had a classic history, confirmed by periodic episodes of homecomings of monkey urine and powdered Jell-O and a Vista Cruiser station wagon decorated with the contents of a diaper when we had the audacity of eating in a non-monkey friendly restaurant.

Thirty-five years later, I must admit I find myself greatly saddened by it all. I rarely think of the experience because of the pain and the guilt (unjust but I take it on anyway) I feel. Mona, although a rarity for monkeys, was the kindest and gentlest of all creatures. Both of her radius and ulna bones were severely deformed due to earlier fractures. I later found out mother monkeys were shot

*MONKEY, continued on pg. 9*

**What:** 2 Day Course  
**Topics:** *Small Animal Behavior: A Team Approach*  
**Who:** University of Georgia  
**When:** November 5-6, 2005  
**Where:** Georgia  
 More Information: <http://www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/index.html>

**What:** 2 Day Seminar hosted by Twelve Paws Canine Academy  
**Topics:** *Behavior Evaluation: Good Behavior vs. Bite Potential*  
**Who:** Sue Sternberg  
**When:** November 5-6, 2005  
**Where:** Norcross (Atlanta), GA  
 More Information: [events@petworkshops.com](mailto:events@petworkshops.com) or [www.puppyworks.com](http://www.puppyworks.com)

**What:** Seminar  
**Who:** Jean Donaldson  
**When:** November 12-13, 2005  
**Where:** Chicago, IL  
 More Information: [www.chicagopaws.com](http://www.chicagopaws.com)

**What:** 2 Day Seminar  
**Topics:** *Recharging the Canine Classroom and Toolbox for Changing Unwanted Behaviors*  
**Who:** Terry Ryan  
**When:** November 12-13, 2005  
**Where:** Accord (Kingston), NY  
 More Information: [events@petworkshops.com](mailto:events@petworkshops.com) or [www.puppyworks.com](http://www.puppyworks.com)

**What:** 2 Day Seminar  
**Topics:** Saturday: *Both Ends of the Leash (Effective, humane techniques for training BOTH species to work together harmoniously)*  
 Sunday: *Multiple Dog Households, including the Prevention and Treatment of Aggression*  
**Who:** Patricia McConnell  
**When:** February 19-20, 2006  
**Where:** Tucson, AZ  
 More Information: [sitstayplay@cox.net](mailto:sitstayplay@cox.net)

**What:** AAHA Long Beach! 2006  
**Topics:** *Various including behavior (2 days of Ian Dunbar!), the Veterinary Technician Specialty Academies also meet during this meeting*  
**When:** March 18-22, 2006  
**Where:** Long Beach, CA  
 More Information: email - [aahaconference@aahanet.org](mailto:aahaconference@aahanet.org) or go to [www.aahanet.org](http://www.aahanet.org)

**What:** 2 Day Seminar  
**Topics:** *"For the Love of a Dog: The Biology of Emotion in People and Dogs," and "Both Ends of the Leash"*  
**Who:** Patricia McConnell  
**When:** July 29-30, 2006  
**Where:** West Berlin, NJ  
 More Information: Wonderdogs - [Barbara Kahn barb@wonderdogs.com](mailto:Barbara.Kahn@wonderdogs.com)



## Where will CE take you?

**What:** Mid-America Veterinary Conference/ Michigan VMA  
**When:** October 7-9, 2005  
**Where:** Louisville, KY  
 More Information: 800-552-5862

**What:** 2 Day Course  
**Topics:** *Behavior Problems in Parrots*  
**Who:** University of Georgia  
**When:** October 13-14, 2005  
**Where:** Georgia  
 More Information: <http://www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/index.html>

**What:** Great Smokies Veterinary Conference  
**When:** October 13-16, 2005  
**Where:** Asheville, NC  
 More Information: 252-747-8180

**What:** Sixth Annual Equine Adventure  
**Who:** Ron Fuller, DVM and Robert M. Miller, DVM  
**When:** October 30 - November 13, 2005  
**Where:** Spain and Portugal  
 More Information: Call Dr. Ron Fuller at 740.344.3061

**What:** 2 Day Course  
**Topics:** *Veterinary Psychopharmacology*  
**Who:** University of Georgia  
**When:** October 15-16, 2005  
**Where:** Georgia  
 More Information: <http://www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/index.html>

**What:** CanWest Veterinary Conference/Alberta and BC VMA's  
**When:** October 15-18, 2005  
**Where:** Banff, Alberta, Canada  
 More Information: 780-489-5007

**What:** Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference  
**When:** October 18-20, 2005  
**Where:** Atlantic City, NJ  
 More Information: 973-379-1100

**What:** Seminar hosted by All About Dogs, Inc. Training Center  
**Topics:** *"Twisted Twins, Adolescence and Aggression"*  
**Who:** Trish King  
**When:** October 22-23, 2005  
**Where:** Woodbridge, Virginia  
 More Information: [events@petworkshops.com](mailto:events@petworkshops.com) or [www.puppyworks.com](http://www.puppyworks.com)

**What:** 2 Day Seminar hosted by Western Waukesha County Dog Training Club  
**Topics:** *If Dogs Could Speak and The Integrated Approach to Relationship Based Training*  
**Who:** Suzanne Clothier  
**When:** October 22-23, 2005  
**Where:** Ixonia, Wisconsin  
 More Information: [www.flyingdogpress.com/seminarinfo.html](http://www.flyingdogpress.com/seminarinfo.html)

**What:** One Day Seminar  
**Topics:** *"Dogs Have Owners, Cats Have Staff!" (Feline Behavior)*  
**Who:** Dr. Patricia McConnell  
**When:** October 30, 2005  
**Where:** St. Louis, MO  
 More Information: [Behavior.desk@hsmo.org](mailto:Behavior.desk@hsmo.org)