



2006 AAWV MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

REPORT

October 31, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the 2006 AAWV Membership Survey was to conduct the first-ever assessment of our membership. Surveys were distributed to 258 members as a newsletter insert in the Winter 2006 newsletter, and the survey was posted on the AAWV website. The survey period extended until October 15, 2006. A total of 87 members completed and returned survey forms, for an approximate return rate of 34%. Key findings of the survey include: many AAWV members work at academic institutions (n=22), in domestic animal private practice (n=16), and at zoos and aquaria (n=15), in addition to working at state/provincial and federal agencies (n=22). Most members engage in many different activities (i.e.. research, clinical medicine, teaching, disease surveillance, administration) in the course of their daily work. AAWV members belong to many other organizations, which reflects members' diverse interests, responsibilities, dedication to the veterinary profession, and the multidisciplinary nature of our work. The primary reasons for members joining the AAWV relate to the desire to stay current on wildlife health issues, connect with others in our field, and be educated. This organization is also important to members' identities as wildlife veterinarians. Members highly value the newsletter, our sponsorship of symposia and conference sessions, and our representation in other organizations (e.g. WDA, USAHA, and AVMA). Members would feel better served by: a membership directory, and more communication opportunities, both from the organization, as well as ways to communicate among members. More international membership and visibility for the organization are also important to members. Respondents feel that the most important avenues for growth of the organization are increasing our influence on wildlife health and wildlife veterinary medicine policy and issues at the state and federal level, and increasing opportunities for communications to and among members. Respondents were evenly divided regarding paper versus electronic newsletters. The results of this survey will be used as the basis for a Five-Year Strategic Plan for the AAWV, to be drafted and adopted in 2007.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF SURVEY

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians was formed in 1979 by a small group of veterinarians with a common interest in free-ranging wildlife. In 25+ years since its inception, the AAWV grew substantially (current membership averages just over 200). In 2004, a near-majority of our membership voted in support of a proposal to merge with the AAZV to form a new, larger organization -- an indication that many members were interested in seeing the AAWV fundamentally change from what it had always been. However, a significant portion of the membership did not support this proposal -- an indication that many members wanted the AAWV to remain intact and distinct as an organization. The 2004 election prompted all voting members of the AAWV to ask themselves some fundamental questions regarding motivations for joining the organization, how the organization benefits them professionally, and how might it grow and change to better serve its members.

The purpose of the 2006 AAWV Membership Survey was to conduct the first-ever assessment of our membership: to find out where we work, what kind of work we do, why we joined, what we value in this organization, and how we think it should change. Ultimately, the objective of the 2006 Member Survey is to obtain input on how best to evolve the organization into one that is well-tuned to the interests and needs of its members.

SURVEY RESULTS

The 2006 AAWV Membership Survey was distributed to members as a detachable insert in the Winter 2006 newsletter, which went to 258 members (members who had paid dues through at least 2005). A total of 57 surveys were completed and returned by the original deadline, May 1, 2006. Preliminary results of the survey were presented at the August 8, 2006 annual business meeting of the AAWV, where members suggested re-opening the survey period to encourage more member participation. Re-opening of the survey period was announced to AAWV members via electronic mail and the Fall newsletter, and a new/second deadline set for October 15, 2006. A total of 87 members completed and returned survey forms, for a return rate of 34%. Responses to the 11 questions posed to members are as follows:

1. What is your educational background/professional training?

<u># responders</u>	<u>Degrees</u>
1	BSc (currently enrolled in veterinary school)
20	MS
23	PhD (1 also had a Master's degree)
86	DVM/VMD (all with BSc)
0	MD

9 **MPH/MPVM**
23 **Board certification: 13 ACZM, 3 ACVP, 2 ABVP, 2ACVPM, 1 ABVT, 1 TWS, 1 ACVIM, and 1 ACLAM.**

2. Where do you work?

<u># responders</u>	<u>Employer</u>
11	State or provincial wildlife resource agency
3	State agricultural agency
2	Federal wildlife resource agency
1	Federal agricultural agency
22	Academic Institution
15	Zoological institution/aquarium
4	Wildlife rehabilitation organization
5	Non-governmental organization
16	Domestic animal private practice
0	Veterinary student

Other:

1	Tribal nation
2	State public health agency
1	County animal control
2	Consulting business
1	Dept of Defense
3	Retired
1	Corporate
1	Federal regulatory agency (EPA)

3. In your position, how is your time allocated? Describe the time you spend on the following activities, expressed as a percentage of work time (your percentages should add up to 100)

Responses (Listed in descending order by number of responders who stated that a portion of their time was allocated to an activity):

Activity (# of responders)	< or = 10%	> 10%	< 25%	25-50%	>50%
Research (53)			40	9	4
Wildlife/zoo med/sx (43)			19	9	15
Teaching (43)	32	11			
Administration (37)			21	14	2
Service work (35)	29	6			

Staff supervision (32)	23	9			
Dom. animal med/sx (23)			3	5	15
Disease Surveillance (31)			19	11	1
Training (29)			25	4	0
Wildlife capture (22)			18	3	1
Regulatory (17)			15	2	0
Fundraising (14)	10	4			
Media outreach (14)	14	0			
Wildlife mgmnt (10)	6	4			

4. What species do you work on?

Responses (Reported as number of responders who cited work on these taxa):

Taxon	Free-ranging	Captive
Birds:		
Waterfowl/aquatic	29	6
Raptors	21	6
Passerines	14	6
Others avian spp	11	6
Carnivores	24	10
Small Mammals	28	19
Marine mammals	11	3
Cervids	27	11
Other hoofstock	12	7
Feral species	15	0
Non-human primates	2	8
Reptiles/amphibians	19	10
Fish	5	6
Zoological Collections	n/a	29

5. If you do not work with animals or conduct research or disease surveillance in particular taxa, what do you do? (Responses n=10):

# responders	Type of work
0	Attend veterinary school
6	Direct an organization or institution
8	Administer program(s)
1	Media relations
4	Implement/write policy
1	Other: Run a business

6. What other professional organizations do you belong to?

<u># responders</u>	<u>Organization</u>
62	Wildlife Disease Association
50	American Association of Zoo Veterinarians
15	International Association of Aquatic Animal Medicine
17	The Wildlife Society
76	American Veterinary Medical Association
37	Your state's Veterinary Medical Association
5	Alliance of Veterinarians for the Environment

Other(s):

AAV (8), ARAV (9), NWRA and/or IWRC (4), USAHA (4), AFWA (1), Canadian VMAs (2), ACVP (3), AZA (5), APV (1), AAVLD (3), AAEP and AABP (1), STVM (1), AAHA (1), SETAC (1), AEMV (1), Society of Conservation Biology (2), Ecological Society of America (1), Association of Shelter Veterinarians (1), American Society of Mammalogists (1), Society for Risk Analysis (1), Polar Bears Alive (1), IUCN Specialist Groups (2),

7. Why did you join the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians?

Important to very important: scored 4 or 5

Moderately important: scored 3

Not very important to unimportant: scored 1 or 2

	Important to very important	Moderately important	Not very to unimportant
To stay current on wildlife health issues	68	13	3
To connect with others in my field	68	11	6
To learn more about wildlife medicine as a field	47	23	14
Because I am a wildlife veterinarian	42	15	21
To influence policy	22	30	31
To help my credentials	20	24	40

Friends are members	19	10	53
To find out about job opportunities	18	11	55
Affordable	16	18	50
I was told to join	4	5	72

Other reasons: Because it was an opportunity to support and build our profession (n=4)

8. The importance and value of the following activities of the AAWV for me are as follows, with "5" being of most importance/value, and "1" being of least importance/value:

Important to very important: scored 4 or 5

Moderately important: scored 3

Not very important to unimportant: scored 1 or 2

	Important to very important	Moderately important	Not very to unimportant
Newsletter	66	8	4
Symposia/session sponsorship	57	14	13
USAHA Board of Directors seat	54	20	10
WDA Wildlife Veterinary Section	49	16	19
AVMA Board of Governors seat	47	20	16
Website	43	20	20
Email messaging	41	15	25
Position statements	40	18	24
CCWH Committee (with AAZV)	37	17	27
JZWM editorship	31	20	30
Reduced registration fees at conferences	24	17	42
Business meeting	20	21	42

9. I think the AAWV would better serve me as a member, and serve our profession, if it had or did the following:

Responses:

Very to highly valuable: scored 4 or 5

Moderately valuable: scored 3

Not very valuable or not valuable: scored 1 or 2

	Very to highly valuable	Moderately valuable	Not very valuable or not valuable at all
Membership directory	67	12	5
More opportunities for members to communicate	53	22	9
More international members	41	22	18
Branding, visibility	36	25	21
Volunteer opportunities for members	27	35	21
More revenue for organization	21	34	32
Business Manager	15	33	33

Other ideas: Increase representation of wildlife veterinary medicine in the professional and regulatory arenas; more policy/advocacy on selected priority issues.

10. If over the next 3-4 years, the AAWV were to focus on two or three major areas of expansion in pursuit of its objectives, or make significant changes in the way the organization is structured or functions, they should be the following:

Responses:

Very to highly valuable: scored 4 or 5

Moderately valuable: scored 3

Not very valuable or not valuable: scored 1 or 2

	Very to highly valuable	Moderately valuable	Not very valuable or not valuable at all
More influence on policy at state and federal level	76	5	4
Increased communications to and among members	70	9	4
Increased membership	45	26	12
More opportunities to come together as members	47	23	11
More student outreach and training	44	16	21
Paid staff	21	28	32

11. I would prefer receiving the AAWV Newsletter electronically (as a pdf file):

Responses:

41 - Yes

40 - No

General Comments from AAWV members on 2006 Survey

- PDFs on email are all well and good, but I like good old-fashioned paper.
- AAWV needs to stay nimble and creative, develop and mature as an organization and promote wildlife veterinary medicine as a career choice.
- Is there any plan for wildlife board certification?
- I am an older vet that has enjoyed doing local not-for-profit wildlife work for various organizations. I will never make a living in this field. This organization helps me stay informed and educated. I need basic, multispecies continuing education and the ability to contact people about problems I receive.

- I am computer illiterate: this form of communication does not help me.
- There is a great need for AAWV to advance wildlife health from the population perspective as society and vet medicine increase their focus on individual animals, feral animals (cats) and other issues that are not consistent with the North American model of wildlife conservation.
- More visibility at schools so students are more aware of the organization and what it does.
- I would greatly benefit from access to a membership list. If you are not closely tied into the wildlife world, it is difficult to know who the "players" are and their affiliations. The AAWV organization, as far as members go, is similar to wildlife itself: free-ranging and difficult to get one's hands on it!:-)
- I joined the AAWV because my small business goals rely upon one of AAWV's objectives: "To promote and encourage the utilization of veterinarians in the field of wildlife resource management and research."
- Vet students entering a wildlife-related area or zoological diplomat certification need increased support.
- Colleagues are members and have been editors; bosses have provided their old newsletters *gratis* for my edification - I was impressed with what I read and wanted to join as a professional.
- We wear many hats [*respondent with time allocated 5-35% to almost every category in question 3*].
- I still believe merging with AAZV is a mistake!
- I think it is critical to maintain wildlife population medicine as the predominant focus of the association; to maintain the important distinction from clinical medicine and rehabilitation.
- I believe I became a member when this organization began. I did so to become more aware of wildlife issues, as I have been "treating" wildlife since the early 60s. This was not the magnificent research and work many of you do but it filled a void. Learning is always a pleasure but helping others to do so is a great gift. Sharing information is very important!
- Aim to recruit every state wildlife vet and professor of wildlife medicine - this would open the channels of disease surveillance info, of which AAWV would find itself as a major source for veterinarians internationally.

- I enjoy the newsletters and occasional emails but other than that I see very little of the AAWV in the media/veterinary media (i.e. journals). I have experience in wildlife medicine and surgery but mostly self-taught - more classes at CE meetings would be beneficial. I teach rehabilitators how to do their jobs better. Perhaps more exposure [for AAWV] at NWRA and NWRC.
- [Would like to see] opportunities to volunteer on each other's projects advertised so that members can learn from each other in the field and gain diverse experiences that aren't part of their regular job duties. I would happily take a few days off from my own job to help someone else out on a wildlife project I would not normally experience in my own job. I think an organized system for arranging these opportunities would benefit everyone in this organization because we could all become more aware of what is being accomplished in our field.
- This is an excellent time for growth in the contributions of wildlife veterinarians due to emerging disease and conservation concerns. AAWV has always been a leader but we are all busy and finding dedicated volunteers who can devote the necessary energy is difficult. The comradeship and mentorship values are invaluable to all of us.
- *From a respondent whose % time allocations added up to 124%: "Who works only 100%?"*
- I and perhaps other members that are time and resource restricted still want to help and become more involved in AAWV. Perhaps if there is a published to-do list of projects ranging from a few hours to a few days worth of time, we could pick one or more that fit into our capabilities and relieve the workload of the officers.
- It would be hard to increase dues without more services - JZWM and WDA journals already cover publications - so helpful, real-time information is one possibility for AAWV - this might require a hired position, but it seems it would be more of an editor/lobbyist position rather than a business manager....
- If we make more policy decisions perhaps we would have more "corporate" or non-vet members interested in what we have to say.
- This survey helps, but we need to figure out our niche. We do not need to replicate AAZV or WDA. What makes us special? What makes AAWV valuable to members, but also to the community in general? i.e. what is our expertise and what should AAWV do with it? We are a small group so need to focus on the biggest impacts for our investment.
- A business manager only if absolutely needed. Publications and major organizational duties now through AAZV and WDA.

- Pooling expertise to have a nationally respected voice regarding wildlife policy. Merging with AAZV allows AAWV the membership base to now have more influence. Wildlife vets need to step forward in our areas of expertise to bring forth comments, such as on the leg hold trap policy.
- The greatest disappointment I have was the failure of the AAWV to get an independent board certification for qualified members.
- Other than sponsoring speakers at wildlife-related conferences, are there ways to increase training of wildlife vets?
- Can we educate the veterinary "masses" about wildlife vets by offering courses at large vet conferences? (i.e. on emerging wildlife issues?)
- [The newsletter] keeps me informed with wildlife issues. I also appreciate the employment opportunities. Keep it up!
- Credibility of the AAWV will remain paramount. Sometimes taking positions and advocating may detract from basic position-taking and participating in organizations where the well-deserved respect for the AAWV and its members' institutional knowledge! AAWV is a well-respected group!
- A paid executive secretary or business manager could increase revenues for the organization without necessarily requiring an increase in dues.
- If we increase international membership, should we still be called the AMERICAN Association of Wildlife Veterinarians?
- I have thoroughly enjoyed and been proud of my membership in AAWV for >25 years. The best part has been the many great people I've met over the years!
- We need to develop a voice in AVMA: without political or policy clout, we cannot change a thing.
- [The AAWV would better serve me as a member by] joining with AAZV.
- We really need an Association of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine or Association of Zoological Medicine. Drop the "American" and become more international.
- [I joined because] I was looking for validation that wildlife medicine was part of the veterinary profession (this was in the early 1980s).
- Dues should not float the boat for new initiatives.
- Even though I haven't been able to attend meetings in recent years, I still think of AAWV as my professional family.

- One way to educate and promote the value of vets in wildlife medicine is to get wildlife vets to biologist meetings to present.
- [The AAWV should consider] advanced training opportunities [as a priority area for expansion of program].
- As a follow-up to question 10, what should the AAWV do less of in the next 3-4 years? Answer: merging with the AAZV.
- As a way of getting members to interact more, could we schedule an activity (like hiking or bird watching or something similar) the next time we meet at a conference?
- Although I recognize that wildlife vets have unique needs and perspectives, and I'm overjoyed that the AAWV exists to meet those needs and present that perspective, I'm wary of the divisiveness of having a separate organization (especially it seems in this field); hence, I think the AAWV needs to actively seek out collaborative efforts and be an actively inclusive organization.