

## Mississippi State Veterinary Students Perform Surgeries at Local Shelters

Most veterinary students work in the teaching hospital during the fourth year of school. But, students at the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine begin nine-month rotations during junior year. In senior year, 12-month rotations follow.

“Our students spend the first two years in the classroom and are full-time in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital in their third year,” says Phil Bushby, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVS, who has served at the college for 30 years.

“We try to create the perfect balance across species and disciplines,” Dr. Bushby says. “We offer more clinical activity and more choices than other schools.”

As the Marcia Lane Endowed Professor of Humane Ethics and Animal Welfare, Dr. Bushby dedicates most of his time to the college’s shelter program. He has developed relationships with animal shelters and organizations throughout the state. His goal is to support area spay/neuter programs and to develop and educate students about pet overpopulation.

“I don’t remember ever exploring the growing population of unwanted dogs and cats when I was in school,” Dr. Bushby says. “I wanted our students to fully understand that there is an overpopulation and ways they could play a role in the solution.”

Dr. Bushby created a shelter medicine elective for seniors in January 2007, in which he takes veterinary students to local shelters, where they perform surgeries and gain hands-on experience. Two seniors go at a time and perform spay/neuters on a two-week rotation. The elective course started with eight students in 2007. There were 36 students from the class of 2008 and 48 (out of 72) students are already signed up from the class of 2009.

### At a Glance:

Location: Mississippi State, Miss.

Opening date: 1978 (established 1974)

Number of students: 342

Financial aid offered: Yes

Programs offered: DVM, MS, Ph.D., Residency

Website: [www.cvm.msstate.edu](http://www.cvm.msstate.edu) “Students get comprehensive exposure and an intense surgical experience,” Dr. Bushby says. “In one day, two seniors performed 49 surgeries.”

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, and to reduce the number of unwanted homeless dogs and cats in the state, the American Kennel Club contacted the college and offered to help fund an emergency response vehicle for animals. In February 2007, the 32-foot Mobile Veterinary Unit was created with a ward of 18 cages, CVC capabilities, digital radiography and a surgical suite. The AKC funded 50 percent of the emergency mobile unit and an emergency clinic.

The mobile unit provides services at shelters that most shelters cannot afford to provide. In the past 12 months, four shelters have been added to the shelter program. The program now responds to eight shelters in northern Mississippi, with Dr. Bushby and his students traveling an average of four days per week. They perform 25 spays/neuters surgeries per day for approximately eight hours, not including travel time to and from the shelters.

“Students get the surgical experience they’re looking for but also leave more aware of the problem,” Dr. Bushby says.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, 3 million to 4 million animals are euthanized each year.

“Students see the number of animals being brought in and the number of animals being adopted out,” Dr. Bushby says.

“It’s not uncommon for a shelter to bring in 6,000 animals per year and adopt out 1,000 animals per year.”

Additional shelters have contacted the college with the hope of being added to their shelter list. “We’ve found that spaying/neutering improves an animal’s chance for adoption,” Dr. Bushby says.

“Our curriculum has huge advantages for developing a veterinarian that will be comfortable and confident going out into the field,” he says. “We’re trying to give students an experience that mimics a veterinary practice.”

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