

Mixed animal practice synergy

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Abstract

Mountainview Veterinary Services (MVS) is a nine-doctor, mixed animal veterinary practice. Originating in 2003 as a food animal practice, MVS has grown into a diverse, full-service practice with 3 locations serving the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia and Maryland. The growth and development of MVS is a journey with humble beginnings that will never be forgotten because of the perspective it gives as we practice today. We genuinely strive to serve our clients with whatever means they have, presenting a challenge in the spectrum of care offered. We encourage our doctors and staff to seek areas of emphasis and professional development opportunities to broaden their scope and fulfillment in practice. We want the best for them, and this often involves hard conversations. Veterinary practices are like organisms, requiring all systems to work in concert. The leadership continues to encourage a high level of care, communication, and honesty in defining success at MVS. Success in veterinary medicine is often a moving target that's hard to define and certainly is not for the faint of heart, but with consistent leadership, fierce dedication, and a guiding hand from above, veterinary medicine provides a calling second to none. The warm, indescribable, lifelong trust and calling developed through relationships at MVS is the most cherished part of the mixed animal synergy. We hope that our practice encourages others to reach for their goals using a unique collaborative approach. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Key words: veterinary practice management

Introduction and warning

One of the key things that I want the veterinary community to gather from Mountainview Veterinary Services' (MVS) journey is that we didn't have a formula when we started, nor have we developed one over the years. We don't have it proverbially "figured out". We've tried hard and failed, but we've never stopped trying. Dr. Cheryl has a saying, "Come or bleed". I think this statement defines MVS, and to be very honest, we've bled a lot. Secondly and possibly more importantly, I am most certainly not implying that the keys to our success will be exactly the same as others.

Veterinary practices are dynamic organisms, and my intentions are to tell you a story about one such organism. Take what you will from this story. However, I do believe that there are certain core principles that will be found in most successful businesses. For example, we did not have a long drawn out 10 step business plan. We said, "yes" a lot. We said, "I'm not sure. We've never done this before, but we will try our best," or "we'll do our best to figure that out and get back to you". We've had a lot of hard conversations through the years and often had our feelings, professional reputations, and egos hurt for some good and some bad reasons. We were stretched and have risen to the challenge presented by our clients and competition.

We've been deprived of our family, friends, and sleep. We sacrificed financially very early in our practice careers, and the first 5 years were certainly the hardest. The financial gains

have often been years in coming since we have chosen to re-invest much of the profit back into the business. This delayed gratification is an essential part of our success, strong position, and continued financial viability. We are not going to lie; it has been very hard, exhausting, and emotionally draining work. Therefore, I personally do not feel that the veterinary profession should merely be defined as work or a job. If it were that, it would not create the vast array of feelings and emotions that one experiences in veterinary medicine. I believe veterinary medicine is a calling. This has been confirmed to me through reflection on many hard conversations referenced above. Often these conversations are with coworkers and clients, getting to both the figurative and literal heart of life and death. Finally, I give credit to God, who by His providential hand has led Mountainview Veterinary Services since its humble beginnings. I thank the Lord for placing the desire in my heart to develop a team of doctors and staff in rural West Virginia to serve clients and animals to bring him the glory that He deserves through Mountainview Veterinary Services.

Origins of the practice under Dr. Darin Matlick

Mountainview Veterinary Services was originally started by Dr. Darin Matlick as a primarily beef ambulatory practice in 2003. In 2007, Dr. Matlick opened the Keyser small animal location and began offering care to the residents of Keyser and Mineral County. Until spring of 2009, Dr. Matlick and several relief veterinarians staffed this facility. In May of 2009, Dr. Cheryl Nguyen became the first full-time veterinarian in the Keyser location. Over the next year, the practice grew tremendously as the clientele appreciated seeing a consistent veterinarian. Dr. Matlick then sold the practice in June of 2010 to Dr. Cheryl Nguyen, Dr. Anna Smith and Dr. Isaiah Smith.

Biography of the owners

Dr. Cheryl Nguyen was born in Phillipi, W.V., and graduated from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine in 2009. She is a small animal veterinarian, but she enjoys performing surgery on almost any species. She and her husband, Tony, reside in Keyser, W.V. with their three daughters, Kayla, Ellie and Josie. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, attending various extracurricular activities with her daughters, and biking. Her professional interests include all areas of small animal surgery, ophthalmology, expanding the medical offerings of our practice, and mentoring young veterinarians and veterinary students.

Dr. Anna Smith was born in Claxton, Ga. and graduated from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine in 2010. She predominantly manages the finances and administrative side of the practice and sees small animal patients one day per week. She and Isaiah reside in Keyser, W.V. with their two children, John Carson and Anne Kathryn. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, spending time with her family, and selling skincare and health supplements. Her professional interests

include improving efficiency, business growth and management, and mentoring staff, young veterinarians and veterinary students.

Dr. Isaiah Smith was born in Circleville, W.V. and graduated from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine in 2009. He went on to pursue a Masters of Food Animal Medicine. He primarily works with beef cattle and horses. The Smith family own and operate, End-O-Way Farm, a cow-calf and commercial goat operation. He and Anna have been married for 17 years. In his free time, he enjoys farming, spending time with his family, and learning about Civil War history. His professional interests include cattle and equine reproduction, production animal medicine, systems thinking and the viability of the rural veterinary practice.

History and practice overview

At the time that we bought the practice, the three of us were either one year or four weeks post-graduation from veterinary school. We were kids that went to the bank for our first loan, and the bank wanted three years of business tax returns, which we did not have. They thankfully accepted three years of our personal returns. We saved up to have the seed money that we needed to open the practice bank account for our initial cash flow. And then, we went to work. Working as a team, saying “yes” a lot, and generally having a ton of fun doing things together. Our initial clinic had very minimal diagnostics. We could run a Chem 6 or a Chem 10 in-house chemistry, a 3DX test, a PCV, and had the ability to take film x-rays. We cut our teeth by learning to do a good physical exam and take a good history. As our clinic grew, we continued to add more staff to increase our efficiency. Hiring new people was always challenging and scary (at times) as we often asked ourselves if we could sustain the financial risk. Our very first staff consisted of only three people. Our current staff consists of over 70 individuals, and many of them are part-time or seasonal as they work around high school, college or other full-time jobs.

In 2011, we began renovation of our second small animal location in Petersburg, W.V. We negotiated a lease-to-own agreement that would allow us to lease the space initially and pay small amounts toward ultimate purchase of the property. We gutted the building and used a floor plan provided by a distributor (with our own tweaks). Our second, full-service small animal location opened at the end of May of 2011, and we hired our first associate veterinarian. This allowed for the owners to share on-call for the first time. Immediately after completing the renovation of the Petersburg location, our Keyser office renovation was started. We negotiated a long-term (10-year) lease to ensure that we could utilize the space for some time after making this type of investment. The office was set up at the time as a former OB-GYN office, and there were a million bathrooms. We sat down at Cheryl’s kitchen table, and drew our floor plan on a white sheet of computer paper. This renovation took our exam rooms from two to four. It would allow for much more usable space with a treatment area directly connected to surgery and better overall flow and efficiency. During the renovation process, we stayed open the whole time and even transported our surgeries to Petersburg during the week that the surgery room was being completed in Keyser. This renovation was completed in spring of 2012 with a grand re-opening in June of 2012. In November of 2013, we completed renovation of our Pet Resort and Spa that is located adjacent to the Petersburg

facility. We used an old weekly motel building and turned it into dog and cat boarding with 10 indoor/outdoor runs, two cat suites, and two large dog suites.

During these years, we continued to grow our support staff and associate veterinarian staff. As the size of our staff grew, managing human resources became more and more of a challenge. It was often difficult as owners and clinicians to effectively allocate time to all areas of the practice. In April of 2015, we completed the renovation of our third location and opened our large animal vaccine, mineral, feed, and supply store. We recognized that we needed a “hub” for these clients that would enable them to pick up the supplies and medications that they needed with staff that was knowledgeable. This enabled us to provide much more tailored service to our large animal producers. We offer a custom mineral line, coordinate delivery of bulk feed, bag feed for show animals, and provide custom vaccine protocols for our producers’ herds based on their labor and facilities. By providing these services, we feel that we are able to provide more nutritional input on operations and limit “firetruck medicine”.

Since our growth happened very rapidly, we lacked the infrastructure needed to provide continuity to our staff, consistent on the job training, and good management of our human resources. We began the search for a practice administrator. After digging through many resumes, we hired our first administrator in the fall of 2017. He only lasted for three months. After a second round of resumes, we found our current practice administrator, Tronnie L. Miller, who spent 28 years in the human medical field managing multiple medical practices. She brought needed structure, protocol, communication and consistency to our practice. She connects to our employees and gives them a sounding board for their ideas and concerns.

The current scope of our practice is typically two or three large animal doctors on the road on any given day covering a 60-mile radius from our Keyser location. We see all large animal species including cows, horses, goats, sheep, pigs, llamas and alpacas. We have two full-service small animal locations, one in Keyser, W.V. and the second in Petersburg, W.V. Our large animal doctors see large animal emergencies after hours and on weekends. Our small animal doctors do not come in to see after hours emergencies on evenings and weekends. Since 2019, our Keyser location has offered regular office hours seven days a week and many holidays. This allows us to offer urgent care hours to our clients with a full staff in place to provide the appropriate level of care to our clients and patients. Our doctors are available after hours for phone consult as a courtesy to our clients and to refer them to a 24-hour facility as indicated by the call.

Right now, we have a 20,000-square-foot facility under construction that will soon house our Keyser small animal location, and phase II of the project is to have full service large animal haul-in facilities available in the back of this building with a cattle chute, horse stocks, large animal surgery suite, large animal lab, stock room and a few stalls. The small animal portion of the building will dramatically expand our capacity, with 13 exam rooms, large treatment area, dental suite, two surgery suites, office space, large conference room, dedicated pharmacy and lab, and kennel/grooming area. We anticipate having this facility open by Spring of 2025.

Food animal, production medicine, geography and practice location

Within a five-county area, there are roughly 45,000 beef cows. All of these counties follow the South Branch of the Potomac River. The elevation at Moorefield, W.V. is approximately 800 feet. The South Branch of the Potomac flows from south to north starting at an elevation of approximately 4,400 feet. The headwaters of the Potomac provide cool season grazing in the summer months, and the fertile river valleys provide crop ground necessary for winter feed. Middle elevations provide a mix of both productive grazing ground and meadow hay.

The beef practice predominantly consists of cow-calf, stocker-backgrounder and small feedlot producers. Often as the size of the operation increases in our area, producers cross over into these different classes of cattle. There is a large poultry integrator in our area, providing another farming enterprise and source of cash flow for our producers. Approximately 80% of the commercial herds in our area calve in the spring (February/March/April). The other 20% calve in the fall (September/October). We work closely with our purebred herds in developing seed stock to provide genetics for these commercial herds.

For these beef producers, we provide bull breeding soundness exams, palpation and ultrasound for pregnancy diagnosis, reproductive tract scoring and pelvic measurement for yearling heifers, processing, and consultation for cow-calf and stocker clients in our local area using knowledge of where they source cattle, their operations, and nutritional capabilities. In addition, we also provide emergency and sick cow work.

Sheep and goat medicine continues to be a growing emphasis at Mountainview Veterinary Services. We have seen a rise in the small ruminant population in our area. We provide routine medicine and surgery as well as sick and emergency work. More specialized services including pregnancy diagnosis, breeding soundness exams and laparoscopic A.I. are offered.

Moorefield store

In April of 2015, our large animal feed and supply store opened to provide our beef and ruminant clients with a hub to purchase their minerals, tags, supplies and feed. We feel that this has been a valuable addition to our business portfolio from several different aspects. First of all, it enabled us to stock the products that we were recommending to our clients. It was frustrating when we made a product recommendation, and the producer was unable to find the product locally. If the product that we recommended was unavailable, we found that inappropriate product substitutions were then made, which had impacts on the health of the cattle. Second, we wanted to have a larger influence over the nutrition and mineral programs on these operations. By offering bulk feed delivery, bagged feed and a custom mineral line, we now had direct knowledge of the nutritional products that were being offered to the cattle. In addition, we worked directly with the feed companies to develop a custom mineral line that addressed specific mineral needs based on the soils and deficiencies in our area. Further tweaks to the formula were implemented after we did liver biopsies to confirm that our selenium levels were still too low. Third, this offered a hub for these producers to ask questions and obtain health care information for their herds. We provide a tailored vaccine protocol for each farm, which is based on the facilities, labor and end-goal for the product that they are marketing. Because facilities and labor vary widely from farm-to-farm, we do not take

a “one-size fits all” approach. In conjunction with the Moorefield store, we offer two to three community-wide educational meetings every year. This allows us to provide information to the producers on a variety of subjects that can further improve their herds. Fourth, our motto for the store is, “Together we can build better herd health.” This is the underlying reason for the Moorefield store. As a result of offering better mineral and nutritional options, we see a difference in the number of “firetruck emergency” calls that come in on the veterinary side. They are fewer than they were in the early days, even though the size and scope of our practice has continued to grow. As veterinary professionals, we are more efficient, productive, and financially sustainable when we are applying our knowledge and skills on a herd level versus running the road and treating individual sick animals.

Equine ambulatory business

The equine arm of our business was started in 2011 in response to the need of our existing beef and small animal clientele who also owned horses. Our equine clients are mostly pleasure, trail and leisure, sport, and performance horses. We provide basic care including spring and fall vaccines, dental care, digital radiographs, lameness, emergency, and sick visits. We provide care for 4 equine boarding facilities.

Small animal locations

We have two full-service small animal locations, one in Keyser, W.V. and the second in Petersburg, W.V. The Keyser location typically has one doctor doing surgery and a second doctor seeing appointments on a daily basis. In Keyser, there is typically also a drop-off schedule and a technician-only schedule that is running concurrently as well. This requires staff to be assigned to specific roles each day so that all aspects of the practice are covered. In general, there is a surgical team, an appointment team, and a kennel tech team. The kennel tech team performs basic patient care, medical treatments, cleaning, stocking and laundry. Our Keyser location serves as our primary location. It is staffed seven days a week and holidays. Given that the staff and doctor team is larger, we often route urgent patients to this location, and our surgery schedule is structured to accommodate urgent surgical work-ins.

Our second small animal location is in Petersburg, W.V. It is also full service, but it operates with a smaller staff and doctor team. On most days, this location is staffed with one doctor. Given that our facility is smaller in this location, more urgent or critical cases may have an initial work-up in this facility and then be transferred to the Keyser office for emergency surgery or hospitalization.

In conjunction with our Petersburg facility, there is a full-service boarding and grooming facility, Mountainview Veterinary Pet Resort and Spa. This facility is just next-door to the clinic. There is a large fenced in kennel yard that is located between the two facilities. It is comprised of 10 indoor-outdoor runs, four indoor-outdoor kennel suites that are larger and easily house giant breed or multiple dogs, cat boarding, and two cat suites that have multiple levels for cat enrichment. Grooming is offered on an appointment basis. We decided to offer this service so that our facility in Petersburg is a “one-stop shop” for our clients. It is nice that clients can come to the same location for all of their boarding, grooming and medical needs. The negative of this arm of our business is that it is very labor intensive and requires staff year-round on nights, holidays and weekends.

Large animal ambulatory routing & scheduling

On any given day, we typically have two or three ambulatory veterinarians on the road. Our large animal veterinarians are scheduled by our large animal coordinator, and the appointments with directions and basic history are placed on a shared Google calendar. Each doctor is color-coded in the calendar to show his or her schedule. We try to assign one doctor to scheduled or routine work (which is often scheduled well in advance), and one doctor to sick or emergency appointments. When possible, we try to group appointments geographically to minimize our road time. As sick or emergent calls come in, they are either handled by the veterinarian who is covering that schedule for the day, or they may be added to the other doctor's schedule when geographically indicated. This requires flexibility and a team approach. Other appointments may be handled on a haul-in basis by one of our veterinarians in the clinic if there is no availability on the ambulatory schedule.

There are typically one to two staff members who work in the large animal office area. Their roles are to answer the large animal calls coming into the office, schedule appointments, route doctors on the road, provide refills and drop-shipping to established clients, process laboratory testing that is performed in-house or sent-out to various laboratories, maintain inventory for re-stocking the veterinary trucks, and assist with billing out the services performed by the doctors in the field. With two or three veterinarians on the road, this is a very busy position within our practice.

Each doctor has an assigned technician on the truck with them for their regular work shifts. In some cases, technicians are shared among doctors given that some doctors only work two large animal days per week. The technicians assist the doctors with their appointments (holding horses, processing cattle, taking radiographs, etc.). They also record the time that they are "on farm", services administered, medications given, and a basic synopsis of the case in the shared Google calendar. As soon as the charges are uploaded into the calendar, the large animal coordinator can begin entering the charges into the practice software. The technicians may also field phone calls or update clients as to their arrival time while they are on the road.

As a general rule, each doctor in our practice has their own veterinary truck that they predominantly operate. This enables them to organize and maintain the truck in a manner that makes it easy for them to handle emergency calls on evenings and weekends. None of our trucks are new. We have taken the approach that these trucks are work-horses and need to be practical and functional. They need to be reliable and do the work in all kinds of weather. If we see a good deal on a truck or veterinary box, we purchase it as a back-up or for future doctors. For the most part, all of our trucks are of the same year range and series, which makes almost all of the parts interchangeable. Keeping our fleet on the road requires management and a good local mechanic. When service is needed on the trucks, we try to schedule it on the doctor's day off or provide an alternate truck for their use for the short-term.

Flex scheduling and offering associates the mixed animal experience

As a practice, we offer a way of life that is attractive to many graduates. We offer flex scheduling that varies throughout the year for our associates based on the needs and seasonal demands of our practice. So, what does this look like? Associates can join our practice, and work a variety of schedules. Some associates work two days large and two days small with one scheduled day off during the week. Others work three days small and one day large. Or three days large and one day small animal. Our associates are offered time in the clinic and time in the field. As the needs of the practice change, we ask them, "What does your ideal schedule look like?". This often changes over time as the associate evolves.

Seasonally, there is a higher demand for large animal services in spring and fall. We will often shift an associate to three days large animal and one day small during these peaks in the field. Then as we move into summer and the small animal clinic needs additional help, the associate may work two days small and two days large. Because we seek to attract graduates and veterinarians who desire this lifestyle, we have built a team of diversified individuals who can often work in either arena. This affords much flexibility in our scheduling. On the routine, there are doctors who primarily work mostly large or mostly small. The culture of our practice is very team-oriented. When the need arises, we all jump in. The goal is to provide service to our clients and patients. Remaining flexible when emergencies arise and working toward a common goal is the key to our success. If a doctor is not fully booked in the field on a particular day, he or she may be asked to help in small animal after large animal appointments are completed to allow us to fit in an emergency small animal surgery or small ruminant C-section.

We have always worked to plug our doctors into our schedule in alignment with their strengths. You may ask "Why?" Our experience is that doctors often are more fulfilled when they are doing things about which they are passionate. It may take them time to develop these passions and strengths. Our goal is to guide them in this process and support them in obtaining the continuing education and experience that they need. This often results in each doctor developing a "niche" within our practice that becomes their area of expertise. Overall, this allows us to provide more diversified care and promotes collaboration on cases among our doctor team. The benefits are that we can offer more options for treatment to our clients within our practice. In addition, it provides more avenues for revenue for the practice overall as we offer new services to our clients. Thirdly, it keeps our doctors challenged and engaged.

This type of model creates ultimate scheduling flexibility as I have already stated. Most importantly, it creates a better work-life balance for all of our veterinarians. Our practice model allows for distribution of the never-ending workload across many different veterinarians that all have different skill sets. There is enough duplication of a core set of skills that we can plug and play veterinarians into different roles and even locations within the practice to prevent disruption of patient care.

Emergency services

Historically in our practice, we saw all of our own emergencies (small and large). As the size and scope of our practice grew, this became unsustainable on the small animal side of the business. We also felt the need to elevate the level of care that we were offering to our small animal clients and patients. In 2019, we stopped offering after hours emergency care for our small animal clients. We continue to offer phone consult to our clients after hours through our answering service. For truly urgent cases, the client is referred to a 24-hour facility, which is approximately a one-hour drive for our clients. In addition, we now have scheduled urgent care hours seven days a week and some holidays to provide service to our small animal clients. This enables our doctors to provide assistance with full staff in place to patients that are less critical and that we were often seeing after hours with minimal to no staffing before. It also allows for on-call and weekend duty to be rotated amongst our salaried doctors, giving everyone a better overall work-life balance.

Given the limited availability of large animal emergency services, our doctors continue to see our large animal emergencies for our clients.

Financial and administrative management

As in other areas of our practice, we take a team approach to the administrative management of the practice. Dr. Anna serves as the chief financial officer and manages accounts payable, accounts receivable, insurance, retirement plan, payroll, inventory, equipment purchases and contract negotiations. She is also the doctor in charge of the Petersburg location. The majority of her time is spent doing administrative work and management for the practice (approximately 75%). She is scheduled to see patients one day per week, but she is also available as a back-up doctor when we are trying to fit in an urgent patient or emergency surgery. Tronnie, our practice administrator, oversees direct deposit and other aspects of human resources, such as pay increases, hiring, doctor schedules, staff conflict resolution, mentoring our leadership team, policies and procedures, and overall communication to the whole organization. Dr. Cheryl is the doctor in charge of the Keyser small animal location and chief executive officer. She is also the chief medical officer, overseeing the care of small animal patients in both the Petersburg and Keyser facilities. Dr. Isaiah is the chief operational officer and also the doctor in charge of our Moorefield store and large animal departments. He has spearheaded the new building project and helped with regulatory and planning for this new facility.

We are building a team of middle level managers that help to manage each of these departments. Our goal as owners is to pour into these individuals and mentor them to take on additional responsibility within our organization.

Overall practice philosophy

Our overall practice philosophy is very simple. We say “yes” as often as we can. In our rural area, clients are given the option to refer, but if referral is not an option for them, we do our best to offer a treatment option within our practice. The client is advised of our limitations, and they decide how they would like to proceed. We take a team approach to cases and practice in general. If any doctor is stuck on a case, there are multiple other

doctors that can provide consult over the phone within our practice. We ask our associates to put forth the effort and try. If you are stuck after trying, we will come to you and provide help and guidance. Our staff is also a critical part of our team. We are committed to training and finding the strengths within our staff. We often ask how staff members may be more effectively leveraged for our business. This requires recognizing their gifts and helping them to develop and refine those gifts. We seek to drive the efficiency of our doctors. Staff is trained to work to their highest capacity so that the doctor can focus on diagnosing and treating patients. This has manifested itself in our practice hiring a medical transcriptionist part-time and developing a system whereby she completes medical records remotely. Good customer service is one of the keys to any successful business. Our practice administrator reminds our staff that we ask everyone to work with love, grace, and compassion in mind – toward each other, toward our clients, and toward our patients. In addition, everyone is asked to tell the truth. Our doctors and staff are family. Even if you made a mistake, honesty is expected so that we can provide training and correction to prevent future mistakes. This helps to drive improvement and a culture where people feel safe to discuss things of concern so that Mountainview can continue to grow and learn.

Our overall approach to business expansion is that we start small, grow the business, and provide better and better care as the business dictates. Sometimes this looks a little country and backwards. Maybe our stuff is not new or shiny or pretty. Our goal is functionality and elevating patient care. If a used x-ray unit provides us with the ability to improve our patient care, then this may be our starting point. As the demand for this service increases, then we can upgrade the equipment. Do we need to own the real estate for this location? Or can we negotiate a lease-to-own agreement and generate cash from the location before we purchase the real estate? Our primary small animal location is currently housed in a leased facility, and we have worked with the landlords through the years to renovate to meet our needs until the right long-term facility was identified and purchased. We try to take a step-wise and measured approach as we invest into the business.

The vision for Mountainview’s future

As we move into our new 20,000-square-foot facility in spring of 2025, we anticipate that it will revolutionize our efficiency and the integration of our staff. Some of the highlights of this facility are separate check-in and check-out desks, room for CT in hospital, large area for surgical pack cleaning and prep, dedicated lab and pharmacy area through which all drugs and prescriptions will be processed including a client pick-up window beside check-out and direct window access to surgery, exam room hallway, and the treatment area, and a phone room in the back to handle the incoming calls. We incorporated a “mini-treatment” area that we call “The Pod.” It will enable another doctor to see basic wellness and dermatology appointments with a small staff. It is located just off the lobby and will provide easy access to exam rooms for anyone that is mobility-impaired.

In the large animal portion of the building, there will be a large surgery/procedure room, horse stocks, chute system and trailer haul-in area that will allow the truck to pull up beside the building and then unload with a gate system. No backing up required!

When the majority of our staff is under one roof, we foresee that the efficiency of our doctors and staff will increase. Our goal is to see most individual large animals in our new facility instead of keeping our doctors on the road so much. This will enable the doctor to see more patients in a day given that there will not be as much “windshield time.” It will also ensure that our doctors are working in a safer, more controlled environment with adequate staff at their disposal. It is also our hope that this serves to attract new veterinarians to our staff that would still like to do some large animal work.

Mixed animal practice synergy

How did we create this synergy? It is the result of a mindset of saying yes. By thinking outside the box, and trying to create a win-win in every situation. A win-win for Mountainview, for our employees, for our clients and for our patients. By finding value in those individuals who spend countless hours with us on a weekly basis. By seeing that their initial position within our company may not be the best overall fit for them, but by asking, “how can we utilize them differently?”. By creating a culture that is family and team oriented that allows for each person to enjoy professional and personal fulfillment. By incorporating love, grace, and compassion in all that we do. And most importantly, by putting God first and trying to honor him with Mountainview Veterinary Services. His hand of mercy has sustained us through the most trying and difficult times.

Future of Mountainview Veterinary Services

Our very first goal is to open our new facility within the next year. As we expand from 2,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet of space, we foresee many changes and adjustments for our staff and doctors. We already have a plan in place to help familiarize the staff with the layout and flow of the new building. In preparation for the transition into the new building, we have staffed our current facility in a heavier manner than we have in the past. This has allowed us to build a seasoned team of support staff that will continue to do their current roles in a new space. We did not want to train new staff while also transitioning into a new facility.

Second, we want to continue to train new veterinarians, veterinary students, and support staff in mixed animal veterinary medicine. We will continue our partnerships with multiple veterinary schools as we seek to impact the next generation of veterinarians with practical mentorship and hands-on training. Our new facility will provide the space needed to facilitate this training.

Third, MVS will need to navigate the challenge of continuing to provide the same level of care and personalized service as we grow and expand. As owners, we value the relationships that have been built over the years with highest esteem. Although growth and expansion are needed, we do not want to lose sight of our roots.

Finally, the ownership team must continue to grow as leaders in the organization, providing oversight and guidance in the varied aspects of our business. This is much different from the days when we were all the primary care providers in different locations within the practice.

Summary

We hope that MVS’s journey encourages the veterinary community to develop a unique collaborative approach that develops a win-win type of mentality of veterinary practice. We hope that this mentality encompasses all levels of relationships within veterinary practices. This will look different in each practice—no doubt, but ultimately will create a culture that allows good communication, effective work flow, and problem solving. The use of team work to spread out the work load seasonally (small and large animal) and flexing doctors to meet the needs of the community and practice provides a change in type of work to be performed by the veterinarian, helps manage the demand, and increases the practice’s efficiency. This concept has helped to create a win-win for MVS. The addition of practice management and specification of leads in various departments has added a sounding board for effective communication and provided accountability as the practice has grown. Ownership must take time regularly to evaluate the direction of the practice and employees, its most valuable asset. This takes discipline and commitment of both time and energy. We listen to what our employees have to say and filter out the most valuable pieces, not reacting with emotional responses. We must remember there is no substitute for hard work and dedication to our profession, but we have a great opportunity in our calling to serve our clients and their animals for the glory of God. Food production and companion animals add much to the quality of life that we enjoy and working together to care for these animals provides a calling second to none.

