Veterinary Editors Meeting
Synopsis
by Theresa Entrikin and Mary Christopher

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Sunday 8/8/04: Challenges Facing Veterinary Editors

I. **Impact and visibility**
(Mary Christopher and Bruce Madewell, moderators) Also see:

A. **Journal Impact Factor definition**: The impact factor is one quantitative method for comparing journals. Impact factor is a number that identifies how often articles from a particular journal were cited in a particular year.

- A journal with a large author base usually has a higher impact factor. A journal with high impact and visibility will in turn increase its author
base, and the quantity and quality of the submissions it receives will in 
increase.
• Visibility affects a journal’s impact factor—a journal needs to be seen 
to be cited.
B. Impact factor examples: Impact factors range from 0 to 50. *J Vet Intern Med* 
impact factor = 2.011, the highest among veterinary journals. 77% of 255 
Veterinary journals indexed have an impact factor of less than 1.0.
C. Medical journal citation indexer examples: PubMed/MEDLINE (National 
Library of Medicine); Biosis (Thomson); ISI Web of Knowledge (Thomson); 
Zoological Record (Thomson); CAB International; Agricola (National 
Agricultural Library).
D. The Euro-Factor: similar to the impact factor in the U.S. but pertains to 
biomedical journals published in European countries.
E. Inappropriate use of journal impact factors includes: allowing impact factors to 
affect research departmental funding or an institution’s tenure decisions. 
Where the next grants are coming from may be driving the emphasis on 
impact factors. Journal impact factors shouldn’t be used as a blanket 
assessment of journal quality.
• Open promotion of the impact factor has been seen (e.g., journals 
requesting citation of their own articles in their instructions to authors in 
acceptance letters).
• Some veterinary science papers are being published in human 
biomedical journals because those journals have higher impact factors.
• An article’s clinical applicability serves the readers but may not get 
many citations.
F. Appropriate use of impact factors includes: allowing editors to monitor change 
over the years and providing a general idea of how articles are being used.
G. How veterinary editors can help:
• Build visibility within the biomedical community.
• Maintain high standards of peer review.
• Exploit economies of scale in publication and online access.
• Provide input to NLM regarding journal selection.
• Help define terminology and disciplinary fields.
• Promote appropriate use of the impact factor.

II. **Authors and authorship**
(Cynthia Otto, moderator) Also see:
Otto, C.M.: Writing for publication in veterinary critical care literature: What does 
authorship mean? *Journal of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care* 14 (2) 
2004; 81-83.

Discussion:
In *JAVMA*, 10% of original studies are contributed by multicenter investigators. 
All authors must sign copyright transfer forms. The editors do not intervene with 
respect to determining author order. In the past, *JAVMA* had a policy of 
veternarain-only authors, but students can now submit case reports.
The *Journal of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care* plans to identify senior authors by placing an asterisk next to their name. The *J Am Med Assoc* has individual forms for authors to state their specific contributions. *N Engl J Med* also does this, but without using specific forms or checklists. Both journals publish this information with the articles.

Regarding timing of sending the copyright transfer form for authors to sign: some journals send it with the galleys, others send it before an article is accepted, others send it immediately after they’ve received the manuscript submission (it’s OK to send it before acceptance since the copyright transfer doesn’t occur until the paper is published—therefore if the paper is rejected, transfer hasn’t occurred and the author can submit elsewhere if desired).

Regarding conflict of interest: some journals request that this be stated at the time of submission so that the reviewers are aware of it. Most journals do not specifically ask reviewers if they have conflicts of interest. *JAVMA* is also asking for more author information in their Letters department to help avoid conflict of interest or at least alert readers to the writers’ affiliations.

Groups (or acronyms) listed as authors are challenging because the individuals may not be the same among all the articles published that relate to their study or studies.

The veterinary editors should consider writing rules or guidelines to provide to group authors so that the veterinary journals have uniform methods to acknowledge them.

Regarding authors not signing copyright transfer forms because they work for a corporation: copyright may not belong to the authors if they’re writing or working for a corporation; therefore, it’s appropriate that the corporation sign the transfer.

**IV. Online publication**

(Antonia Seymour and Alison Denby, moderators)

Also see handout.

Discussion: Online publishing advantages and disadvantages

**A. Online publication strengths identified:**

- Earlier access; improved speed and efficiency
- Cross referencing; improved accessibility (see [www.crossref.org](http://www.crossref.org), a cross-referencing initiative between publishers)
- Enhanced visibility, especially globally
- Enhanced content (e.g., include video images)
- Branding and merchandising
- Searchability
- Environmentally friendly as well as cost savings (paper)

**B. Online publication weaknesses identified:**

- Loss of advertising
- Cost to implement and maintain
- Archiving issues
- Less control (online provider may make errors when transferring information)
- Decreased readability
- Limited to readers with access to the technology
- Loss of identity

C. Online publication opportunities identified:
- Value-added content
- New ways to package content
- Marketing
- Unlimited availability
- Internet surfers—if your journal can be found on the Web, awareness of your journal increases
- Linking

D. Online publication threats identified:
- Plagiarism
- Loss of control or less quality control and erosion of reputation
- Competition
- Vulnerability of technology
- Traditional publishing/paper/printers

Discussion: Open access and open archiving advantages and disadvantages.

III. Online peer review and manuscript tracking
(Kurt Matushek and Steve DiBartola, moderators)

JAVMA switched to online manuscript submission and peer review in June 2003 and uses Manuscript Central (ScholarOne Inc.). JAVMA receives about 80% of its submissions online. It takes 30 to 60 minutes to upload a manuscript. Manuscript Central services about 1,000 journals and many major printing companies are familiar with it. The system is maintained on ScholarOne’s servers in Virginia. Similar options are AllenTrack (Allen Press, Inc.) and Editorial Manager (Science Direct). The cost is about $5,000 per journal for set-up and $14,000/year/journal to maintain the service (cost may vary and is based on the number of manuscripts anticipated to be handled per year).

Authors upload a .doc, which is then converted to a .pdf. Large image files are reduced. Greek and math symbols do not always convert accurately. The authors also add keywords (not related to annual indexing; the keywords cross-reference to reviewer keywords). Authors may also suggest preferred and nonpreferred reviewers.

The system tracks the number of manuscripts a reviewer has evaluated or is currently evaluating. Once reviewers are assigned by the editors, the system automatically sends e-mail letter requests (various letter templates are input to the system by the editors). Editors can set up e-mail reminders to be generated if
a reviewer hasn’t responded to an invitation to review a paper, or generate e-mail responses to reviewers responding late (after the paper has been sent for review to someone else).

**JAVMA** gives reviewers 14 days to review a manuscript. The system can generate e-mail reminders to reviewers, e.g., two days before their comments are due; seven days after their comments are due; and 14 days after their comments are due—along with a blind carbon copy to the editor to signal the need to call the reviewer or select a different reviewer. The reminder notices are generated automatically—they’ll still go out even if a reviewer has requested an extra week to complete a review. Thus editors have to let reviewers know they’ll still receive these notices based on the original due date.

The system can’t mask the author information in order to blind reviewers. *Journal of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care*, *Vet Surg*, and *Vet Anaesth Analg* blind authors to reviewers and reviewers to authors. This typically requires a line-by-line review to remove any potentially identifying author information. It’s not a foolproof system, especially if authors refer to their own work. Smaller journals with a smaller reviewer base may benefit from this type of total blinding.

Within the system, reviewers have access to a general overview letter about the review process from the editor, a review checklist, a section to complete with comments to authors, and a section to complete with comments to the editors. Reviewers can also attach files to authors, editors, or both. However the system doesn’t allow attachments to be sent to the authors, so the editors have to cut and paste the attached text and send it in a separate e-mail. Editors can also rate the reviewers with respect to their response timeliness and turnaround times.

**JAVMA** allows authors 21 days to make minor revisions and 30 days for major revisions. Authors respond better when specific date deadlines are stated for revisions (e.g., due 9/30/04) than when a time period is stated (e.g., due in three weeks).

The system automatically generates thank you letters and the editor’s decision about the paper (e.g., returned to author for major revision) to the reviewers. The drawbacks of the system are that it doesn’t send reminders to authors when their revisions are due, it’s difficult to get reviewers to provide keywords and keep their own contact information updated, and it only sends e-mails to addresses the author has provided.

Monday 8/9/04: Resources for Veterinary Editors

I. **Resources for veterinary editors**
   (Mary Christopher) Also see see handout.
World Association of Medical Editors: Can read discussions on their Web site http://www.wame.org even if you’re not on the listserv (e.g., read discussions about a bill allowing free access to NIH studies; author-suggested reviewers; and the recent U.S. trade embargo that affected medical editors, copyeditors, and publishers working on papers originating from certain countries). There is also an ethics committee that can help with such issues. Alert: The listserv generates a lot of e-mail.

Council of Science Editors: Offers beginning and advanced workshops for journal editors, including e-publishing workshops, at their annual meeting. The meetings tend to have a similar collection of topics each year (e.g., working with editorial boards and increasing submissions, archiving, keywords, peer review). The exhibit hall is good. http://www.councilscienceeditors.org

European Association of Science Editors: Meets every three years to discuss topics such as whether editors should publish in their own journals (yes), standards in nomenclature in terminology, peer review (to compensate or not?), impact factor, open access, small journals, and expanding international reach. http://www.ease.org.uk

European Association of Veterinary Editors: Primarily a support network; an informal group that meets annually.

Society of National Association Publications (SNAP): Primary focus is journal management and topics such as dealing with printers (no editing issues covered). Membership dues correlate with the publication’s advertising revenue. http://www.snaponline.org


The Board of Editors in Life Sciences offers certification and diplomate examinations. http://www.bels.org


II. Elements of Style: The AVMA initiative.
(Janis Audin and the JAVMA and AJVR group)

Dr. Audin provided a history of the development of the AVMA Style Guide and an overview of it.

Discussions ensued regarding the differences between science editor and copyeditor duties; what is considered proper English vs. common usage (e.g., euthanize vs. euthanatize; distal limb vs. distal aspect of the limb); manual editing vs. electronic editing using “track changes”; reference formatting (can we
have a unified format?); and statistical review (e.g., *JVIM* at times utilizes an associate editor for statistical review).

When needed, AVMA utilizes specific reviewers for humane review. AVMA uses Dorland’s and Webster’s Medical Dictionary (Webster’s defines terms by noun and adjective).

Blackwell Scientific uses a software program that decreases workload for copyeditors by formatting references, checking reference order and their order of citation, and formatting subheads.

### III. Goals and scope of a veterinary editors organization

**Discussion**

**Scope:** The group felt we should reach out to the European editors group and more editors on other continents to determine interest in forming an international organization. We are few in number, publishing boundaries are often international, and we share the same issues and profession. For now, we will loosely affiliate as the Veterinary Editors Group.

One goal could be to serve as a resource for other organizations such as the National Library of Medicine.

Discussion regarding future locations and funding for attendance as well as speakers’ fees.

- Consideration was given to meeting in conjunction with another larger meeting such as the AVMA meeting, the CSE meeting, or the International Congress of Peer Review and Biomedical Publication.
- We will aim to meet in 2005 in conjunction with the AVMA meeting and World Veterinary Congress in Minneapolis, in hopes the number of international participants would be high. The meeting dates will be July 20th (a.m. and p.m.) and 21st (a.m. only).
- Veterinary editors attending the Peer Review Congress in Chicago in September of 2005 (15th-17th) could meet informally for dinner.

### IV. Tips on working with digital images

(Mark Witowski and Paul Bozuwa; Dartmouth Journal Services)

For this presentation in PowerPoint, please see: [http://dx.sheridan.com/avma](http://dx.sheridan.com/avma).

For digital art guidelines, see the AVMA Web site or [http://dx.sheridan.com](http://dx.sheridan.com). Digital Expert is an online service from The Sheridan Group that evaluates digital art to correct author-supplied files early in the publishing process. See [http://dx.sheridan.com](http://dx.sheridan.com).
Summary of Evaluation Results

N=16

Best features of the meeting:
Open discussion: sharing common challenges, experiences, ideas, solutions (16)
Making contacts, networking, camaraderie and collegial interactions (7)
Digital image presentation was excellent! (3)
Good choice of topics for discussion (2)
 Variety of journals represented
Expertise of the participants
Online publication session

Suggestions for making the meeting better:
In-depth topics, outside speakers/perspectives, topics for non-research journals (3)
Retain the small size and informality of the meeting (2)
More on peer review issues (2)
Increase the number of participants/journals, including from outside the US (2)
Have more of them! Continue on same path (2)
Slightly more detailed outline of agenda
Shorter breaks and lunch period

Topics for future meetings:
Peer review (8)
Editing styles, levels of editing, style and terminology (5)
Managing workflow, efficiency and turnaround times (4)
Online publishing (4)
Working with authors (foreign, compliance, deadlines, soliciting reviews, writing skills) (4)
Online manuscript tracking systems (2)
Figure quality issues (2)
Copyright (2)
Prior publication
Compounding issues
Care standards
Statistics
Humane treatment of animals; how to report and police
Access to online veterinary journals in impoverished countries

Areas unique to veterinary medical journals:
Small circulation/small unique and focused audience (8)
Multiple species (3)
Small pool of reviewers and authors (2)
Lower budget
Unique language/terminology
Lack of recognition in the general medical field
Working with compassionate animal-lovers
Legal issues