

Computer System Planned to Improve Kennel Health and Business Management

A joint program has been announced between the Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (VHUP) and the ALPO Pet Center to develop a computer-linked, nationwide Veterinary Health Maintenance Organization (VHMO) for dogs.

According to Lawrence T. Glickman, VMD, DPH, Chief—Epidemiology Section, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, a microcomputer-based software package and health care system has been designed that will enhance kennel health care and business management and also help to identify patterns of disease among kennel dogs. The software package is suitable for kennels housing up to 500 dogs. In the future, the software could be easily adapted for use by cat breeders.

"The ultimate VHMO goal is the creation of a network of concerned kennel owners and veterinarians who are electronically linked with staff specialists here at VHUP," said Dr. Glickman. To simplify health care, an individual dog's history—including medical, nutritional, reproduction, and show performance information, as well as a four generation pedigree—will be stored for easy retrieval.

The minimum hardware necessary to support this system consists of a desk-top microcomputer, a monitor or videoseen, a printer, and a telephone modem to permit communication with the main computer at the Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. The Veterinary Health Maintenance Organization staff will assist with purchase and installation of the hardware/software, instruct kennel owners in its use, and provide ongoing technical support for participants in the program.

Future expansion of this computer system will establish an electronic network for canine health care and information exchange between VHUP, the ALPO Pet Center, participating kennels, and small animal veterinary clinics.

In addition, the system architects are designing an electronic veterinary bulletin board which will generate abstracts of professional journal articles, information on new biologicals and drugs, medical alerts, schedules of upcoming meetings and shows, as well as practical advice on kennel health care for immediate and future reference. This information will be transmitted from VHUP to the kennel's own computer on a regular basis and be printed on demand by the kennel owner.

Veterinary scientists designing this computer system believe it will serve as a nationwide canine health research resource to reveal patterns of diet and disease among different breeds of dogs. Supporters say it will aid breeders in scientifically evaluating and promoting desirable traits and characteristics in dogs.

Beginning in the summer of 1985, the system will undergo further field testing and refinement. University officials will then announce how other kennels and veterinarians can join the Veterinary Health Maintenance Organization program.

