



American Veterinary Medical History Society

HERITAGE VETERINARY PRACTICES FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

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1. What is a Heritage Veterinary Practice?

A Heritage Veterinary Practice is any veterinary practice that has been in continuous operation for 50 years or more. Practices may be single or multiple partner businesses, have changed names one or more times, have split into several practices, or moved to different geographic locations during the period of continuous operation. Practices are not limited by species and thus may include small animals, horses, dairy and beef cattle, poultry, exotic and zoo animals, or mixed.

2. What is the "Registry of Heritage Veterinary Practices"?

Compiled and maintained by AVMHS, the Registry was established in 2008 to honor, recognize longevity and achievements, and share information about long-standing veterinary practices in the United States.

3. What role does the American Veterinary Medical History Society play?

In keeping with its educational mission, AVMHS encourages research, preservation and promotion of heritage veterinary practices and the history they represent. The Society will:

- Host a national Registry list on AVMHS's Website.
- Maintain an internal file of applications for referral and searching purposes.
- Provide consultation and advice in gathering evidence and doing historical research.
- Encourage practices to post history pages on their own Web sites and adequately preserve their materials.

4. How do I know if my hospital is a Heritage Veterinary Practice?

Some owners already have in hand considerable historical information, artifacts, documents, and other items related to their practice over the years.

Other veterinarians may suspect that their practice was established some time ago, but may not have a lot of details about its age and background. Further investigation will be needed.

For remaining practices, it is a matter of doing some detective work and assembling relevant documentation and items to piece together a framework or sequential timeline.

5. Why should I register my Heritage Veterinary Practice?

A number of benefits can be derived from doing research and subsequent Registry listing. Among them are:

- The prestige and honor of knowing that your practice has survived the test of time as a valuable asset to the community it serves.
- Joining other practices with similar longevity and historical significance.
- Increasing overall knowledge of the heritage of the veterinary profession in America.
- Leaving a legacy for future owners and generations of veterinarians in your city and state.
- Enhancing the availability of historical veterinary information on the Internet, if posted on Web sites.

6. How can my practice be added to the Registry?

Owners who know their practices qualify should assemble appropriate background information and submit a Registry application.

The application process can involve writing a cover letter and/or completing a form. The form is basically a worksheet to help you organize and describe your practice's history. Submitting copies of significant materials and photos is optional.

Applicants are responsible for the content and accuracy of their information.

There is **no cost or fee** for registering a Heritage Veterinary Practice.

AVMHS will maintain a file of applications for non-public referral and searching purposes.

7. Who can help investigate sources and assemble historical information?

Historical research or detective work can take many unexpected twists and turns. It can be illuminating, addictive and sometimes time consuming. Unfortunately, AVMHS is unable to do research for individual practices as we would not have access to the range of resources available locally across the country.

If you are short on free time, consider:

- Involving others on the hospital staff (office managers, associates, technicians, etc.)
- Recruiting family members (spouses, children, etc.)
- Asking local and regional historical societies and libraries for help finding sources.
- Contacting high schools and community colleges about using your practice as part of a history class or independent study project.

8. How can relevant background be found?

Tracing the roots of a veterinary practice may be a straightforward activity or might evolve into a more complex investigation not unlike doing family genealogical research or compiling a detailed patient medical history.

We offer some suggestion to get started:

- Begin with whatever is already known, fit the pieces together, follow leads and sources, and fill in gaps as possible.
- Organize and assemble the accumulated material to show a continuum or pattern of development with changes over time.
- Keep detailed records to build the trail and avoid unnecessary repetition of steps and sources checked.

Don't be discouraged if you can't find all pieces of the puzzle now or later as long as a sufficient amount of reliable information is found to extrapolate the overall pattern or structure. Potentially useful materials may have been lost through discarding or disasters over the years.

9. What sources can be utilized for finding historical information?

---Consult existing records in the practice.

In many instances, general information about the past heritage of a practice is passed down by word-of-mouth from senior owners to new colleagues. Older practitioners may remember past experiences and can give details concerning earlier years that can be traced further.

Some offices may have kept varying amounts of records over the years. Any older items might be boxed and stored in attics, basements, or other places.

---Contact previous owners, if known, who may be retired or be practicing elsewhere and can provide valuable insights and sources of information or referral.

---It may be necessary to pursue online and printed genealogical sources, such as <http://www.ancestry.com> for information about past proprietors, including contacting family members to fill in any gaps.

---Investigate sources outside the practice for background, such as

- County court records or deed transfers
- Local newspaper archives in libraries for advertisements, obituaries, legal notices, etc.
- Local historical society records
- State licensure board records
- U.S. Census records
- Local, regional, and state veterinary medical associations
- Veterinary college and university archives
- Older individuals in the community who may have been clients of the practice.

10. What materials can be considered as historical evidence?

Examples of primary sources may include:

- Deeds or bills of sale
- Financial records
- Court records
- Photographs
- Business cards, advertisements, promotional fliers
- Letterhead
- Diaries, ledgers, and transaction logs
- AAHA "Outstanding Practice of the Year" award certificate

Secondary sources may include:

- Newspaper articles
- Obituaries

Other materials that can serve as helpful sources include:

- Oral interviews
- Written statements, letters, or memoirs of previous owners

11. Should I set up a history page on my practice's website?

Individual practice Websites can provide a modern opportunity to display, advertise, and share historical information with others. AVMHS encourages practices to set up sufficiently detailed "history" pages on their Web sites. They may include general information as well as photographs, if possible. In any case, care should be taken not to post confidential or otherwise sensitive data that would otherwise be unsuitable for public access. In addition to photos "that convey a thousand words", practices may wish to incorporate biographical sketches of previous owners.

Local Websites provide owners with the ability to quickly update and manage their own pages. AVMHS can then make hypertext links from the Registry listings to more detailed information on practice home pages. Moreover, AVMHS would not have access or rights to original materials nor have curatorial staff to maintain a large number of practice history pages.

12. What should I do with all of the historical materials gathered?

Heritage Veterinary Practice owners should make every effort to organize, protect, and preserve original documents, photographs, artifacts, and facsimiles for future generations. Consult with local historical societies and museums for preservation procedures and display techniques. High quality, acid-free photo sleeves, folders, binders, and storage

boxes are available for all types of items from archival supply companies, such as Gaylord, University Products, Demco, Brodart, Metal Edge, Highsmith, and others.

13. What additional promotional activities might be derived from being a Heritage Veterinary Practice?

In addition to the Registry listing and opportunity to communicate with other heritage practices, owners and others may be interested in ways to further promote their longevity and success. Each situation will vary, and promotions should fit the nature of the practice and community. Here are some ideas that might be considered:

- Incorporate historical notation in your logo, motto, stationery, business cards, signs, etc. (e.g., "75 years of caring for animal health" or "Established in 1924").
- Apply special printed stickers to mailings, envelopes, and other items at important milestones (e.g., 1948 to 2008 - 60th Anniversary).
- Set up a small "museum" or permanent historical display in the waiting room or office area.
- Assemble an album of new and old photographs (or professional looking scrapbook) for the waiting room.
- Continue to add current materials for building the ongoing history of the practice, including designating someone in the practice as "resident historian" or "archivist".
- Donate copies of the assembled historical documentation to your local historical society for preservation and research (exclude confidential and financial records).
- Write an article for a local newspaper or regional magazine about the practice's history and impact on the community over the years.
- Expand the timeline into a more extensive narrative written and illustrated history of the practice.
- Work with local historical societies on a display of older veterinary practices in your geographical area.
- Participate in a local biography of community leaders project involving high school students.
- Do further genealogical research on an early veterinarian and write a story about the person's life and contributions to the locality.
- Prepare a news article for *DVM Newsmagazine*, state association newsletter, or local publication.
- Give a presentation about the practice and changes in veterinary medicine over the decades at a meeting of the local chamber of commerce, historical society, veterinary association, retired citizens, school history class, or another group.
- Conduct oral or video interviews of past owners if still alive and willing to share their personal experiences and knowledge on tape.
- Set up a booth at local historical events and celebrations.
- Meet informally with other Heritage Veterinary Practice owners to share experiences at regional and national meetings.
- Hold a public reception or open house to commemorate your important "anniversary" milestones.
- Join the American Veterinary Medical History Society to collaborate with other veterinarians in preserving and promoting the history of the profession.

Nov 2008; rev. Jan 2024