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Digital Radiography: Time to Make the Switch?

by Todd Henrikson DVM, DACVR

Digital radiography has become a hot topic in veterinary medicine. We at Vet-Rad are consulted on a weekly basis by veterinarians who are ready to make the leap. After a year of planning, Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital recently traded its own film/screen cassettes and automatic processor for a new digital system from Eklon Medical Systems. It has been in operation since the end of July.

If you are thinking about making the switch, here are some important points to consider – things that the hospital learned as it was making the transition.

Image quality. Do you know what a pixel looks like or what is considered an acceptable number of lines per



millimeter? Probably not, but many vendors and buyers tend to get bogged down in these details when comparing systems. The bottom line is what does the image look like to you? Is it a better image than you can currently obtain with your film/screen combination? Ask for a reference from an animal hospital nearby – to be able to look at the images obtained from that hospital, not just the demo images provided by the company. Cat extremities and thoracic and abdominal images from dogs more than 100 pounds are the types of studies that tend to challenge a system. If the system can produce a high-quality image in these situations, it is a good system.

High-quality images of a normal lateral canine thorax and lateral tarsus produced by the new digital radiography system at Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital.

CR vs. DR. Computed radiography (CR) uses an image plate/cassette and a plate reader to obtain the digital image. The plate reader takes approximately 40 to 90 seconds to create the digital image and reset the plate for the next exposure. With digital radiography (DR), the image is created at the level of the receptor and can be viewed approximately five to 10 seconds after exposure. The different types of CR and DR systems vary widely, as does price range. There are CR and DR systems that are capable of producing both high- and low-quality images. Many times it is better to have a slower CR system capable of producing a high-quality image than a DR system that is faster, but may not produce a consistent diagnostic image.

Ease of use. Most hospitals have multiple doctors and technicians that obtain images. Is the system user friendly and intuitive or will your staff stage a revolt a month after the installation? One of the advantages of going digital is having shorter study acquisition times and less retakes. This will not be achieved with a system that is difficult to use or fails to produce a quality image. Speaking to a technician who has used the system prior to your purchase can be very enlightening.

DICOM compatibility. DICOM (Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine) is a standardized image format that allows for universal sending and sharing of images. You want a system that is fully DICOM-compliant and has the ability to send images to any radiologist or specialist of your choosing.

Cost. The number of digital systems available and vendors that are targeting veterinarians is a reflection of the devices' popularity. It is important to know and trust your vendor – not only to sell a high-quality product, but also to provide service and support. It is possible to purchase a digital system and take a step backward in image quality compared with the film/screen combination you were previously using. If the system you need is not in your budget, you are better off keeping your current system and waiting for the cost to come down.

Another cost to consider is that of additional viewing stations, including high-resolution monitors that may be needed to view images while in surgery and with clients. It also is important to factor in the cost of storing and archiving images. Note that a portion of this will be offset by the money saved on film, chemicals and processor maintenance.

There is no perfect system, and the best system for a busy referral hospital that does 20 studies per day could be very different from a smaller practice that performs 20 studies per week.

Vet-Rad has been receiving and consulting with digital clients for more than a year. We see images produced by multiple vendors and systems, and we have guided several of our clients through the process of selecting a digital system. If you have any questions about this process, call us at 1.888.4.VETRAD.

Help us Update our Mailing List

You can assist in our efforts to keep pace with the changing local veterinary population. If you are receiving copies of this newsletter for someone no longer at your practice or would like to add someone, please call Kelli Riley at 330.670.2355. Thank you!



Specialist Spotlight:

Use of GnRH Agonists in Exotic Practice.

by Gary Riggs, DVM, ABVP: Avian and Kim Cook, DVM, ABVP Avian Resident

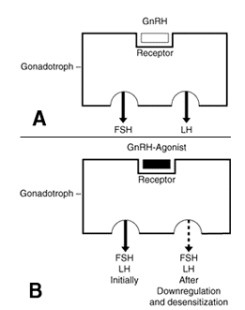
At the recent Association of Avian Veterinarians conference in Rhode Island, Dr. Cook presented results from North Coast's clinical trials of Deslorelin implants. Reproductive dysfunction and clinical syndromes resulting from excessive sex hormones are common in exotic animal practice. Over the past few years we have been researching a new, safe method to effectively block these deleterious hormonal effects.



Traditionally, syndromes such as excessive egg laying or egg binding in birds have been treated by progestins, surgery or, recently, lupron acetate. Each of these techniques, although effective in certain situations, has its

drawbacks. The serious hepatic effects of progestins, risks of surgery and required frequency (and resultant expense) of lupron usage have been problematic. Lupron or melatonin usage as a treatment for ferret adrenocortical syndrome has similar difficulties with variable effectiveness, required frequent usage and long-term costs. In addition, the inability to reliably predict the optimal dosage interval for lupron administration, which varies between individual cases, often results in unreliable resolution of signs.

Deslorelin implants are a slow-release repository GnRH agonist that we have found to be an effective and safe alternative to the use of progestins and lupronide. Where surgery is either refused or inadvisable due to health reasons, Deslorelin implants have been a valuable therapy adjunct.



In our study, we implanted various species of birds subcutaneously and intramuscularly with 4.7 mg Deslorelin implants. We were able to successfully stop egg production in all psittacines tested. Duration of suppression was generally greater than eight months, although length varied. Timing of implantation within the hormonal cycle, dosage requirements, implantation site and possible development of inhibiting antibodies all play a role in duration of action of the implants. In general, though, the results were very positive. Of 36 birds involved in the current study, most were suppressed for greater than eight months, with only four birds producing eggs post-implantation to date. Effects and safety were evaluated by examination and questionnaires. The implants proved safe in all ferrets tested. No adverse effects were noted and only one bird removed its implant throughout the course of the study.

The implants also proved safe in all ferrets tested. Although the implants have no effect on the course or progression of adrenal



lesions/tumors, clinical effects such as alopecia and pruritis were safely controlled for extended periods by the Deslorelin implants. We still feel early surgical excision is the best recommendation for control of ferret adrenocortical disease, but Deslorelin implants give us a reliable and safe clinical alternative when surgery is not advised, needs to be postponed or cannot be performed for other reasons.



We are continuing the study of Deslorelin implants in a variety of clinical case presentations, including molt stimulation in penguins.

Please call North Coast Bird & Exotic Specialties at 1.877.NC XOTIC (1.877.629.6842) if you have a case that could benefit from Deslorelin usage.

Future Notes

- Hear Metropolitan Veterinary Referral Group Members Presenting at Conferences**
- Nov. 11, 2007** – Wildlife Conference, Hiram College – Dr. Riggs' topics, "Avian Respiratory System" and "Selected Diseases of Northern Waterfowl"
 - Nov. 14-18, 2007** – Healing Oasis Wellness Center, Sturtevant, Wis. – Dr. Sivula's topic, "Basic Animal Chiropractic"
 - Jan. 9, 2008** – Eastern Ohio Veterinary Medical Association, Boardman, Ohio – Dr. Sivula's topic, "Animal Chiropractic"
 - Jan. 23-27, 2008** – Healing Oasis Wellness Center, Sturtevant, Wis. – Dr. Sivula's topic, "Basic Animal Chiropractic"
 - February 2008 (TBA)** – Ross University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dominica – Dr. Rigg's topic, "Clinical Cases in Avian/Exotic Practice"
 - Feb. 27- March 2, 2008** – Healing Oasis Wellness Center, Sturtevant, Wis. – Dr. Sivula's topic, "Basic Animal Chiropractic"
 - April 22, 2008** – Sierra Club of Akron – Dr. Riggs' topic, "Wild4Ever: Conservation Updates"

Practice Points

We have a new name! Dancing Dogs Animal Wellness Center is now **Dancing Paws Animal Wellness Center** to clarify that, despite our previous name, we love to see feline patients! Cats respond particularly well to integrative therapies, which can be used as part of the treatment plan for any internal medical disorder. Our practice regularly treats cats with allergies, respiratory disease, neurologic problems, chronic renal failure and behavior issues. Please call the office at 330.664.6504 or e-mail dancingpaws@metropolitanvet.com if you have questions about using integrative therapies with your patients.

Ohio Veterinary Cardiology will be closed for extended periods twice in November. Nov. 9-13, Dr. Hitchcock will be attending the ACVIM cardiology examination preparation meeting. November 18-24, she will be on vacation. During these times, the MVH emergency service will continue to treat cardiology emergencies and will be in contact with Dr. Hitchcock for consultations. A cardiology technician will be available during normal business hours (Monday through Thursday) for prescription refills, patient updates, etc. Any cases requiring further evaluation can be transferred to one of the internal medicine services at MVRG or be sent to Ohio State or MedVet in Columbus, or AVETS in Pittsburgh. As our practice gets busier and we book out further, we understand that some cases simply cannot wait. For non-urgent cases, please advise your clients to accept a "next available" appointment. In truly urgent cases, please call 330.670.2376 and we will do our best to see the patient expeditiously.

Northeast Ohio Internal Medicine Associates reminds you that annual comprehensive wellness examinations are recommended for all middle-aged and geriatric patients. The frequency and type of diagnostics are determined by factors like species, age, breed, past medical/surgical history of the patient, littermates and parents, and types of medications routinely administered. Recommended base line data to be obtained at the onset of middle age includes a comprehensive history, physical exam, CBC, serum chemistry panel, urinalysis, urine culture, abdominal/thoracic radiographs, electrocardiogram, blood pressure, heartworm check and fecal examination (minimum data base). Also, canine patients should have leptospirosis titers and tick panels performed. Echocardiography is recommended for breeds of dogs at risk for cardiovascular disease. Biannual examinations and laboratory evaluation should be considered for patients in their late geriatric years. If you would like to refer a patient for a wellness evaluation, please contact the practice at 330.670.2355.

Thanks to your support, The **Akron Veterinary Internal Medicine/Oncology Practice (AVIMP)** continues to grow. We're announcing the addition of a fourth receptionist (Danielle Prince) and another registered technician (Dianna Butler). We are thankful for our great staff. Our receptionists are available 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday to schedule appointments, field phone calls and facilitate mutual cases, referrals and consults. The nursing staff assists with procedures, provides technical support, cares for patients, communicate with

clients and helps organize our day. To reach the practice, call 330.670.2351.

While most canine cataracts are hereditary, **Veterinary Ophthalmology Services of Northeast Ohio** sees a large number of cataracts in diabetic patients. Before these patients can be scheduled for preliminary testing and surgery, it is imperative that their diabetes be well-regulated with a glucose curve +/- fructosamine levels performed. In addition, many of these patients need treatment for accompanying dental disease, which needs to be addressed at least six to eight weeks prior to surgery to minimize chances of possible bacteremia. Attention to these details will assure timely scheduling for cataract surgery. Please contact Dr. Belknap at 330.670.2360 with any questions regarding diabetic cataracts.

Ohio Veterinary Surgery and Neurology would like to give an official welcome to some new members of the team. In addition



to Dr. Todd Axlund, our neurosurgeon/neurologist who joined the practice in August, we are happy to announce Dr. Amanda Conkling as our surgical resident. Many of you already know Dr. Conkling, as she was our surgical intern last year. She will be completing an ACVS-accredited three-year residency program with us. Drs. Jennifer Bibevski and Dana Gietzen also join us for one-year surgical internships. Both have completed internships



following veterinary school and join us to receive intensive surgical exposure, with the goal of acquiring a surgical residency in the future. We are proud that our team is growing! Our commitment to excellence allows us to continue to offer specialty expertise in the areas of orthopedics, neurosurgery, neurology and oncology/general soft tissue surgery while preparing the next generation of veterinary surgeons and neurologists. To contact the practice, call 330.670.2358.

Special Guest Lecturer Tuesday, Nov. 27
 Dr. Paul Mitchell from Pfizer's advisory board joins us to discuss dentistry.
 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. – Wet Lab (Veterinarians and Technicians Welcome)
 7 p.m. – Roundtable Lecture for Veterinarians
 For both events, meet in the conference room at Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital.

Contact Us
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