

# The Cat's Meow: AVC's Open House 2002

By Catherine SWEET

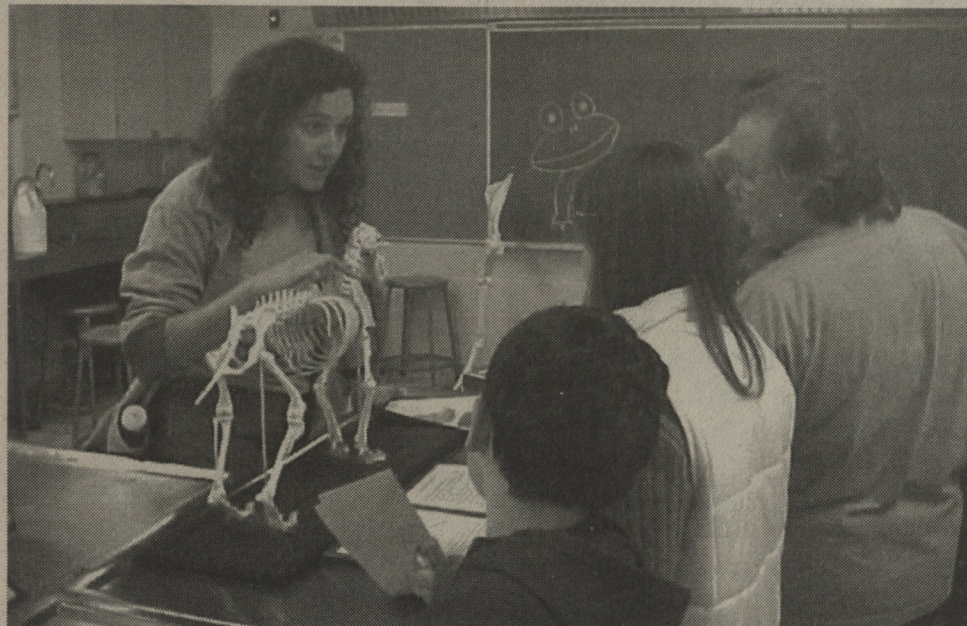
The Atlantic Veterinary College opened its doors to the public last Saturday (Nov 2) for its annual Open House. When I arrived, I was greeted by two students who welcomed me and handed me a guide. The walk was self-guided, but easy to follow with directional paw prints taped to the halls and "This Way" signs hanging from the ceilings. Knowing the labyrinth that is the AVC, these were a big help.

Downstairs, Humane Ethics was the first area on the tour. The Vet student I spoke with told me ethics were a big concern in veterinary medicine. This vast issue covers everything from where teaching cadavers come from to whether cosmetic procedures for domestic animals should be performed. In that area was a humane dog training display using clickers and rewards instead of training with force.

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Before the tour went into the large animal hospital, I visited the display in the ambulatory. This is where the large animals are received on/in trucks. There was a video set up of a calf being born, along with a lot of medical instruments. For the children (and there a lot of them!), a small ultrasound machine was set up so if the cow being born was too "gross", they could see the bones and muscles inside of their hands instead.

In the Large Animal Hospital, there was a live cow and horse with bones and major organs painted on their coats. Very visual. Along with information about milk and dairy cows, a petting zoo was set up. There were donkeys, ducks, rabbits and sheep, to name a few. This is where the kids got really hyper before they continued. Visitors were encouraged to



**"I'm sorry to tell you, but your dog is dead."**

wash their hands with provided anti-bacterial wipes to prevent infection, and I thought this was a nice responsible step for the AVC.

Taking a swing by radiology, there were displays of X-rays of many variety animals. There was fish, a turtle that was full of eggs, and a dog that swallowed a Mickey Mouse squeeze toy. Through the back of Radiology was the diagnosis centre. A student showed me how they tried to extract a bone from a small dog's esophagus non-surgically with a scope and tiny pinchers.

Next, the tour went under the sea. The Aquaculture display had what looked like a tiny fish hatchery, tanks of exotic fish, turtles and of course lobster! I loved watching the fish swim around and around in the small display tanks.

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The first-year students had organized the anatomy display. It had the classic "animals-in-formaldehyde" tubes, but the students were all very involved with explaining the respect they had for the animals. This was a common and important theme. Yes, they said, some animals had died for

the teaching displays, but there are new methods of preserving cadavers to cut down on the constant need for new specimens. Also, they stressed that the animals were not grown for the purpose of being cadavers, but were animals that had to be destroyed for different reasons.

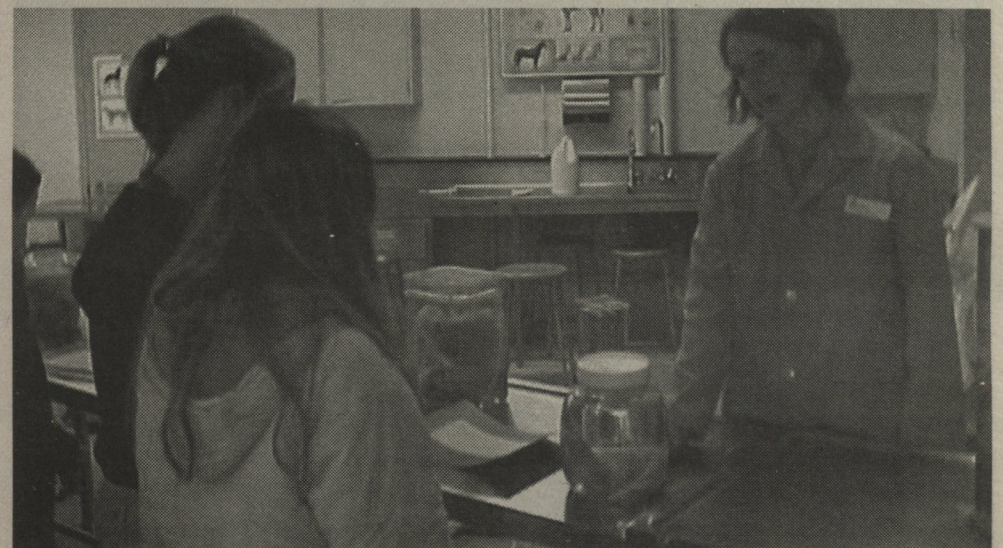
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On the way out, there were displays for the PEI Humane Society, the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, and 4H. I loved how the open

house had such a fun atmosphere. There were tons of activities for kids to occupy themselves with, including a scavenger hunt (trivia in different rooms where questions were posted on the walls; What are two things you can do to prevent your dog from being hit by a car? How long does a Loggerhead Turtle grow? What colour are bones in an X-ray?).

The students were easily identifiable with their blue lab coats and were definitely getting A+ on their bedside manners marks. It all reminded me of going to a good museum. I mean one of the great hands-on museums were kids go wild, but leave knowing something they didn't before. This goes for adults, too. Next time you see that this open house is going on, don't forget to attend. It took me about an hour to stroll through and it was well worth it.

One final note of appreciation was the art display. Works of art from AVC students were displayed in lower floor hallway. There was a variety of media used and although the theme was animalistic, there were also some stunning black-and-white form photos and an incredible shot called "Paris" that I would love to own a print of. The most whimsical was a collection of colourful paintings of horses and a dog that consisted of tiny swirls and shapes. This was a great reminder of the multi-talented students who attend the AVC.



**The jars do tend to be the most popular on the tour**