

Dr. Mike Paul, DVM

Mike has more than 35 years of experience in companion animal veterinary practice and is a valued member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team since 2013.

Many pet owners may not realize that graduating from veterinary school and entering practice is not the end of their veterinarian's education but rather a new beginning and the next chapter of training. Being a veterinarian requires a lifelong commitment to learning and staying up to date on new medical developments that impact pets. Medical journals and books represent a large part of this work but attending meetings, seminars and symposia are also important. While some people refer to major meetings as conventions they are more appropriately called symposia or conferences.

A conference is a large official meeting, usually lasting for a few days, at which people with the same work or interests come together to discuss their views. A conference involves hours and sometimes days of discussions and presentations around new and emerging information.

Recently The [Western Veterinary Conference \(WVC\)](#) was held in Las Vegas, NV. It is one of the largest gatherings of veterinarians in the country attended by thousands of veterinarians and veterinary health care providers. Also in attendance are representatives of veterinary focused companies who present and demonstrate new and innovative products to enhance your veterinarian's ability to provide the latest and best care for your pets.

This year's conference was exceptional. Educators from across the country and indeed around the world presented new knowledge about disease and health alike. It's clear that a major role of veterinarians is preventive health care. New vaccines, new nutritional products, new parasite preventives and more were rolled out during WVC — sometimes bringing to fruition years of research.

Some of the most important developments will likely have a direct impact on your pets:

- Availability of **new diagnostic tests** will make testing and monitoring sick pets much more timely and effective.
- **"Telemedicine"** will give your veterinarian access to expert consultations in your own community.
- **New products** will battle parasites and hold great promise.
- **Allergies** that cause discomfort and itching have long been the curse of dogs and cats. It was apparent at Western Veterinary Conference that testing for the specific agent a pet is allergic to has become available and newly developed drugs and allergens that help block negative reactions are very exciting.
- **Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease**, a common problem in cats, causes significant inflammation in the urinary bladder and affected cats are frequently affected by calculi or stones that form in the bladder. This condition has recently been associated with stress in a significant way. While nutrition has long played a role in the control of this syndrome, recently, anti anxiety products have proven helpful and some prescription diets contain products that reduce the stress response of cats.
- **New antibiotic formulations** are becoming available for pets and in particular for cats. These drugs are very safe and effective and increasingly easy to administer.

Your veterinarian is the best source of knowledge and information about these and other new products. When you next take your pet to the veterinarian, it is likely that you will be introduced to some of these new products. You and your pet benefit any time your veterinarian attends a conference.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.