

Editorial

## A New Age of Open Access for the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery

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It is hard to believe that we have concluded the first quarter of the 21st century. It seems like just yesterday we were talking about all the issues that would come with this new century? Fortunately, the growth of both the veterinary profession and our specialty field in avian medicine have been tremendous! How we approached cases 25 years ago versus today using the evidence produced from different resources, such as the annual conferences from the Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) and the *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery* (JAMS), has enabled us to improve avian welfare and longevity. However, it is just as important now that we continue this positive trajectory as we prepare to encounter more challenges in the future, especially with our changing climate. In North America alone, it has been estimated that a staggering 64% (389/604) of North American bird species are vulnerable or threatened because of climate change.<sup>1</sup> If we look beyond these borders, the losses are expected to be even greater. Because of these challenges, it is imperative that we continue to expand our knowledge base and increase our understanding of the best practices for managing the health and welfare of birds in both *in situ* (in the wild) and *ex situ* (in captivity) environments. Creating new knowledge on how best to treat infectious diseases, develop diets, or design new methods to improve reproductive success will be vital when caring for birds that have the capacity to potentially remain in the wild as well as for those being managed under human care.

So who can contribute to this new knowledge? Fortunately, every member of the AAV has the capacity to contribute to the long-term success of the many different bird species encountering these challenges. Whether you are seeing cases in a clinical setting or working with wildlife in the field, you are gaining unique insight into the health and management of the birds that serve as your patients. Sharing this

knowledge with others is key! From the basics of case reports, case series, and “What Is Your Diagnosis?” articles to review articles and experimental and nonexperimental study articles, these forms of evidence can serve as a conduit for sharing new knowledge with others in the field that might not have seen that challenging case, novel case report, or new research finding. To ensure that we are prepared for a future in which we expect the challenges to be even greater than today, it is essential that we all work together to ensure our success.

You may have noticed that the 2024–2025 issues were smaller than in the past. We have identified several potential factors for this, such as the effects of the COVID pandemic on delays in completing or starting new research, to competition with open access peer-reviewed journals. One of the major challenges associated with publishing a professional organizational journal such as JAMS is that, whereas it is intended as a benefit of membership dues, it is also primarily created from that same membership. While there are ways to expand the reach of the journal, which we address later in this editorial (see BioOne commentary), the primary expectations for our growth will come from our membership. So who are we as a membership, and what value do we place on JAMS? Fortunately, we conducted a survey as part of a strategic plan to determine how we can grow and extend the reach of JAMS and share the responses so we can gain a better understanding of both our organization and the value of our journal.

We submitted the survey electronically via email to our membership, and we received 226 responses, which equates to a 12.6% (total 1784 members) response rate based on the size of our membership. Whereas this is a lower response rate than we had hoped for, we still gained some strong insight into your thoughts and opinions about the journal. Most of the respondents held a veterinary membership

(79.6%, 180/226). The remaining responses came from our members designated as new graduates/intern/resident/graduate students (4%, 9/226), retired veterinarians (2.7%, 6/226), developing country memberships (4.9%, 11/226), student memberships (3.1%, 7/226), technician memberships (3.1%, 7/226), allied professional memberships (2.2%, 5/226), and a single honorary membership (0.4%, 1/226). Whereas most of the responses were from veterinarians, it was exciting to see responses from our technicians, students, and allied professional members too! These responses should reinforce the breadth of our AAV membership and the importance of welcoming all our members to the table to help generate new evidence to share with the profession.

When we further evaluate the ages and length of time our respondents have been practicing veterinary medicine, it was helpful to see that we are an experienced group with nearly half (49.1%, 111/226) of our respondents having practiced more than 20 years. The next highest number of respondents, 22.1%, (50/226), have been practicing for 11–20 years. The remaining 25.2% (57/226) of respondents have been practicing <10 years, and 8 (3.5%) individuals did not answer this question. The age distributions within our membership appears more balanced except for our youngest cohort: >59 years old (29.5%, 66/224), 43–58 years old (33.9%, 76/224), 27–42 years old (33%, 74/224), and 18–26 years old (3.6%, 8/224). We assume that the youngest cohort primarily comprises students (veterinary students and veterinary technician students) and young professionals from each of those groups. The smaller response rates in our younger, less experienced groups could be a sign that we should consider a larger investment in recruitment or that this type of survey is less likely to receive their attention, so as an organization, this is something we should pursue in the future.

Most of the respondents work in private practice (67.7%, 151/223). The remaining responses included individuals working in academia (13.9%, 31/223), government (3.15%, 7/223), and industry (1.3%, 3/223). A small number of respondents were retired (3.15%, 7/223), whereas others identified as working outside these categories (other, 10.8%, 24/223). There is a general stereotype that articles produced in veterinary medicine, including specialty groups such as the AAV, are published by academics, and whereas there is an expectation for those in academia to publish new knowledge, it is obvious from this initial survey that academics represent a small population of our membership. Changes in the academic

environment are important for a specialty organization such as the AAV to monitor. These relationships are key to exposing future members during their veterinary or veterinary technician training as well as recruiting those who can help pursue new knowledge as clinician scientists and researchers. These are challenges that all the specialties in veterinary medicine face, but we think we are up to the challenge.

As noted earlier, we do have some exciting news to share about how your editorial board and executive committee hope to extend our reach for both acquiring new authors for JAMS and new members for the AAV too. The AAV was approached by BioOne, the global nonprofit organization that provides a digital library for nearly 219 journals, to participate in a pilot study called “Subscribe to Open” (S20). This offer was limited to 71 journal titles from 54 members of its publishing community. The goal of this program is to offer open access for these titles during the calendar year so that this material is made available to all for up to 3 calendar years. Your editorial board and executive committee believe this will serve as a great way to reach out to colleagues working with birds who are looking to publish in open access journals, increasing our submissions, and for those who may not have the resources to access this material, including students. As a nonprofit, this is in line with our stated mission: “The Association of Avian Veterinarians is a diverse global professional organization dedicated to advancing and promoting avian health, welfare, and conservation through education, advocacy, and science.” We believe that this opportunity will provide students and colleagues with limited resources an opportunity to gain access to the amazing evidence-based material our journal provides and ultimately serve as a recruiting tool when their resources allow them to join.

A growing challenge with publishing is that academic institutions are directing their faculty toward open access titles; however, cost is a real concern with this movement. Article processing fees in not-for-profit and for-profit journals can range from more than \$1000 to \$12 690 for a single article.<sup>2,3</sup> Historically, these types of fees might be paid through grants, but the monies available in grants have not kept up with these rising fees, and some grants do not provide funds for publishing fees. In the field of avian medicine and surgery, publishing fees of this magnitude are cost-prohibitive. BioOne, as a nonprofit, recognized this challenge and looked to partnerships with organizations such as the AAV to make a real difference. As a result, the open access articles

published in JAMS will continue to be at *no cost to the authors*. We believe that this model will expand our reach in the field of avian medicine and conservation, opening new doors that might not have otherwise been identified. Moreover, if you want to make a difference in this world and pay it forward, this represents a great opportunity for us as an organization.

Of course, providing open access does increase the likelihood that some members may not renew their membership. If they perceive the value of their membership as being limited to the journal, this might occur. This was certainly a point of discussion for your leadership, but we believe that being a member is much more than just our journal. The AAV serves as a tool for members to communicate with colleagues and experts and includes access to educational portals; forums; client handouts; and much, much more. The costs savings for the annual conference alone covers the cost of membership. Moreover, in defense of this move, our previously mentioned survey found an overwhelming majority (84.4%, 189/224) of survey respondents use JAMS to seek evidence as needed to manage their cases. This suggests that our members often seek articles as a case presents. From 2026-2028, open access is conditional, annually, on subscriber support. BioOne has an annual renewal threshold that it must reach in order to turn open access on for all of the Subscribe to Open titles. Once that threshold is reached each year, all articles within that volume year will be made open access in perpetuity (Meredith Pond, BioOne, pers. comm.).

However, articles outside of this window can only be accessed by members or at a cost (\$30/article). Seeking out 6–7 historic articles per year would be similar to the cost of membership, and as there are more than 1100 published articles available to members at no cost, we believe our colleagues will continue to see the journal as one of the many benefits of membership. Further, the funds that the AAV would collect on articles purchased by nonmembers will continue to be provided to us by BioOne at the historic levels we received based on the new model. We see this as a real win-win for the AAV and avian medicine and conservation!

The success of this new course will depend on continued support of BioOne through institutions and the membership of professional organizations such as the AAV. We hope that this model will be highly successful so that it ensures we can continue to deliver our mission at the highest level. If you have any questions regarding this exciting new opportunity, please don't hesitate to contact your editor-in-chief (mmitchell@lsu.edu).

## REFERENCES

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