

New Imaging Center Opens in Irving

Several prominent North Texas veterinarians have joined to open a state-of-the-art imaging center for equine and companion animals at the site of the former Las Colinas Veterinary Center in Irving.

Located at Royal Lane and Riverside Drive, adjacent to Las Colinas Equestrian Center, the new Dallas/Fort Worth Veterinary Imaging Center will be the first of its kind in the Southwest.

Dr. James L. Becht will serve as medical director. Board certified in radiology and internal medicine, he is a former faculty member at Purdue, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Georgia. Dr. Jake Hersman, who founded Las Colinas Veterinary Center in 1990, will manage the new facility. He and his partners, Dr. Wes Williams and Dr. Mark Crabill, will move their primary medical and surgical practice to Lone Star Park Equine Hospital in Grand Prairie.

The board of directors and advisory board of the new center consists of several prominent veterinarians, physicians and industry leaders from across the country, including Drs. William Hornof, Andrea Komkov, Richard Park, Charles Ho, and Andy Clark.

Founding associates include Weatherford Equine Clinic, Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery, Reata Equine Hospital, Moses Animal Hospital, Dr. Greg Rouchon, and Lone Star Park Equine Hospital. Several other veterinarians, such as Drs. Richard Smithwick, Warren Young, Brian Young, Randolph Hayes, Daryl Neans, Dean Clardy, David McCarroll, Alan Donnell, Roy Gulley, Kent Arnold, Lynn Stucky, Dick Shepherd, Sonny Seale, Gene White, Harold Putnam, and Bruce Lyle are also founding associates.

"There are over a million horses in Texas," notes Dr. Hersman. "Many are elite athletes whose owners need that next level of imaging services to maintain their optimal performance. Many others are valued companions whose owners want a definitive diagnosis."

Since 1982, the number of dogs and



Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) will be one of the diagnostic services offered at the new Dallas-Fort Worth Veterinary Imaging Center in Irving. Photo courtesy of Henry Moore Jr., College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University.

cats in the U.S. has doubled. "In the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, there are over 750,000 pet-owning households," he says. "Pet owners are increasingly demanding high-tech treatments and diagnostic protocols to provide accurate diagnoses and the best possible care for their companions."

For the large and small animal patients of referring veterinarians, the Imaging Center will offer such services as nuclear medicine, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), digital radiography and ultrasonography. The imaging instruments are so expensive—more than most individual practices can afford—that a regional cooperative arrangement made eminent sense.

Nuclear medicine can provide bone scans to detect "hot spots" or subtle areas of bone pathology that can't be found with conventional radiology, explains Dr. Hersman.

MRI is a non-invasive procedure using a magnetic field and radio waves to create accurate detailed images of internal body structures. In veterinary medicine, MRI is very useful in diagnosing disorders of the brain, spine, joints, soft tissues, abdomen and pelvis. Tumors, abscesses, ruptured discs and

changes in ligaments and tendons are some of the abnormalities that can be identified with MRI scans, all assisting the veterinarian in making an accurate diagnosis.

Digital radiography saves valuable time. Moreover, the images, which can be viewed simultaneously on a computer screen, allow a veterinarian to compare them immediately with earlier pictures to more easily review a patient's progress. If a specialist's opinion is needed, digital images can quickly be e-mailed and printed. The image quality is excellent.

Ultrasonography is another powerful diagnostic tool and is a particularly cost-effective means of assessing soft tissue composition and cardiovascular dynamics.

"It is our hope," says Dr. Hersman, "that this will become the nation's standard for veterinary-owned cooperative imaging centers. It will be rewarding to collaborate with other professionals on such projects as training veterinary technicians and sharing images through teleradiology and research." ★

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