Joint Statement from UW and UCD Shelter Medicine Programs on Commitment to Fighting Against Systemic Oppression

BLACK LIVES MATTER. We have work to do, and we are committed to doing that work.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program and the University of California-Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program stand in solidarity in the fight against systemic oppression in our country. We share the heartbreak and anger sparked by the murder of George Floyd. We abhor the violence directed against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color that happens every single day, and the other forms of oppression that seep into everyday interactions in universities and animal shelters as they do anywhere else.

We also honor the deep commitment to caring and compassion expressed by so many in the animal welfare and veterinary professions. To be part of the solution to the violence and racism that threaten our society is a natural expression of that caring. At the same time, we recognize that inequality is embedded in our field as it is throughout our society. People of color disproportionately perform the hardest and lowest paid work in many shelters, and marginalized communities bear the brunt of animal management practices that perpetuate systemic inequalities.

As individuals, many of us have protested policies and practices we don't agree with and advocated for a more just and kind society. The size and passion of the protests that have erupted in the wake of George Floyd's murder may be a once-in-a-generation moment to affect change collectively.

We have work to do, and we are committed to doing that work.

1. Our programs commit to err on the side of speaking out and taking action in support of justice and equity and in opposition to racism and violence against people of color in our society. We will risk being awkward and opening ourselves to criticism; knowing that others are facing far greater risks in this cause; and that only by speaking and acting and making mistakes will we have an opportunity to learn and do better.
2. We commit to receiving feedback and criticism with openness and

appreciation.

3. We will not assume we have answers, or that it's our role to provide them. Instead, we commit to engaging in anti-racist learning and providing resources to our teams that have been recommended by Black leaders.
4. We will continue to promote equal access to veterinary care and work to remove the barriers that invite discrimination and oppression into our field.
5. We commit to seeking, learning from, and elevating the voices of people of color within our industry, so that everyone can benefit from the wisdom that comes from examining diverse perspectives.
6. We are auditing our teaching materials to search out opportunities to start genuine conversations about our biases and to include anti-racism resources in our offerings. Equally as important, we are searching for places that we may be perpetuating racism.
7. We won't forget. We will continue to critically examine and then improve our policies. We welcome any feedback that would allow us to become stronger allies.

Please email your feedback to uwsheltermed@vetmed.wisc.edu and sheltermedicine@ucdavis.edu.