

ECM Board Certification On The Horizon

A new specialty, Exotic Companion Mammal, will soon be available to veterinarians.

By Jennifer Mons McLaughlin

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The American Veterinary Medical Association has granted provisional recognition to the first completely new veterinary specialty since 1993. The new specialty will focus on small mammals including rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs and mice, commonly known as "pocket pets."

"The public and the profession will see these specialists as providing that next level of care of small exotic pets," said Dr. Beth Sabin, assistant director of the AVMA's Education and Research Division.

"This will be a great benefit to both veterinarians and pet owners," said Natalie Antinoff, DVM, Diplomate ABVP (Avian). "It challenges veterinarians to learn even more, and ensures that veterinarians are current on diseases and treatments."

The new provisional recognition granted the Exotic Companion Mammal specialty by the AVMA is temporary. The specialty has between four and 10 years to petition for full recognition from the AVMA. The first group of ECM diplomates is expected to receive certification in December of 2009.

"The ECM covers more species than ferrets — ferrets will be approximately one-third of the examination," said Michael Dutton, DVM, Diplomate ABVP (CF). "A client can expect that an ECM specialist has met high requirements that demonstrate his/her expertise in dealing with ferrets, rabbits, rats, mice and so forth."

Antinoff said the new specialty enables an even higher standard of treatment for pets. "It also gives ferret owners the ability to find a 'board certified' veterinarian," she added.

The ECM specialty is one more avenue veterinarians can pursue in ferret care. However, even some of the best care providers may choose not to become certified. "There will still be numerous great ferret vets who are not specialists," Dutton said.

Jennifer Mons McLaughlin lives in Minnesota and has been writing about the pet industry for more than 10 years.