

Meet Our Staff

They prepare the administration of medications; take and process X-rays; and under direct supervision, they may be responsible for anesthesia during surgeries. They collect blood, urine and cytology samples; they can apply a splint or cast, dress wounds and perform dental work. They are your Registered Veterinary Technicians or RVTs.

Because they work behind the scenes and seldom meet pet owners, the depth and scope of what an RVT does is little known or appreciated by clients and their furry friends. An RVT is the equivalent of a nurse in human medicine and just as indispensable; they are an integral part of a veterinary hospital.

According to the California Department of Consumer Affairs, RVTs "are skilled animal nursing professionals who have completed a Board-approved education and training program and have passed a State-administered licensing exam."

Amy Nichols, PVPC Practice Manager and lead RVT, stated that "We are really fortunate to have four RVTs; the newest one on our team is **Birgit Nelson** who just passed her State Board certification exam."

Birgit and her husband, Christian, live in Pollock Pines with their two dogs and two cats. How did they end up in El Dorado County? It was a move that Birgit described as "round-about." She grew up in Yorba Linda in Southern California, and said, "My move to El Dorado County was by way of Japan." Puzzled, I asked her to explain.

She continued: "I learned to speak Japanese and so after graduation from college, I went to live in Japan for a year and a half. It was there that I met my husband who was stationed at an Air Force base. Since he

was from El Dorado County, after he was done with his military duties, we decided to settle here."

It was a move that brought many changes, cultural as well as professional. After doing some research on various professions, Birgit felt the veterinary field was the right match for her. In 2019, she applied to an RVT program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), a two-year endeavor that includes academic instruction with hands-on practical training. She described the program as rigorous, and added that "some students have to work while they take classes, and that's a hard road."

An RVT is the equivalent of a nurse in human medicine and just as indispensable.



Birgit Nelson is our newest RVT

Jessica Varozza, an RVT since 2015, agreed. She received her training through a two-year program at Consumnes River College and described the process as "intense and challenging." The work was worth it as Jessica loves being able to help furry friends to live a healthy life.

However, completion of the program and graduation is but the beginning of the process. Candidates

for certification must pass the California Registered Technicians exam. Asked about the certification exam, Birgit said, "It was tough. It took 3 hours with 170 questions. It's all encompassing; questions covered issues about goats, sheep, cows, horses and even pocket pets."

Pocket pets? With an infectious laugh, she responded: "Yes, there were questions about mice, hamsters, and guinea pigs. There were questions about various diseases and how to treat them."

And the learning is not over. In order to maintain certification, Birgit (like the

continued on back

Amy's Corner

Hello to our clinic family!

We wanted to start a newsletter for our clients for a few reasons. We have some new staff members that some of you haven't had the pleasure of meeting. We will be showcasing our newest employees first but will have an update on a different employee each month!

We feel the loss of connection with our human clients very deeply. We miss the interaction! The bond that we build between human, animal and clinic staff is the reason we love what we do.

The past year has hit us all very hard. As hard as it has been on us, we understand how much more difficult it has been for you and your pets. We realize that some of you have new dogs and we are the first human interaction they have besides the family. We take this very seriously and try to make their visit the least stressful as possible.

Our new clients haven't even been in the building; they have no experience to fall back on once we take your pet from you in the parking lot. This trust that you place in us means the world to us and we cannot thank you enough.

We will soon be posting a video on our website (pleasantvalleypetclinic.com) and our Facebook page ([facebook.com/pleasantvalleypetclinic1991](https://www.facebook.com/pleasantvalleypetclinic1991)) that will give you a virtual tour of what happens when and where we take your pet once they leave you.

We very much look forward to getting back to "normal" one day soon and until that time we would like to utilize this newsletter as a way to connect.

Please always feel free to reach out to us via email or phone call; we are happy to answer any questions you might have.

Amy Nichols
PVPC Practice Manager

Warm Weather Brings

RISK

What animal never closes its eyes because it has no eyelids? Is deaf but can detect vibrations, and has a good sense of smell and vision? Here's the giveaway clue: they have forked tongues. If you answered "snakes," go to the head of the class.

As the days warm up, it's important for pet owners to be aware that there is a greater period of activity in spring when snakes come out of hibernation. Active months can vary and may be as much as five months in higher elevations.

Approximately 150,000 dogs and cats in the U.S. are bitten by venomous snakes each year.

Approximately 150,000 dogs and cats in the U.S. are bitten by venomous snakes each year. With prompt care, 80% of pets survive. Some factors that influence survival include: the size of the pet; duration of time between the bite and treatment as well as the location of the bite. Rattlesnake bites are extremely painful and can result in severe swelling, impaired blood clotting and sometimes death. Treatment must be prompt and may include antivenom (also known as antivenin), IV fluids and antibiotics.

Although not all snakes are poisonous, all bites should be treated, even if your pet has received the annual rattlesnake vaccine. This vaccine helps lessen the reaction a dog may have to a bite by generating protective antibodies; consider making it part of his/her annual care. But even with the vaccine, immediate veterinary care is essential.

Dogs and cats are not the only pets at risk of rattlesnake bites. Dr.

Mary Pride Clark, PVPC veterinarian, noted that horses and other grazing animals can also be bitten. She stated, "Like sheep and goats, horses get 95% of their oxygen through their noses. If they are bitten on the face, their nasal passages will swell up and they will have trouble breathing, making a

rattlesnake bite an emergency that will need to be treated with antibiotics and pain medication."

Some signs that your dog or cat has been bitten by a snake include: bleeding, bruising and swelling around the bite; weakness, lethargy, confusion, and lack of coordination. A rise in salivation and vomiting and/or diarrhea may also occur.

Always seek immediate emergency veterinarian care if your pet has been bitten by a snake. Keep him/her calm in order to slow the spread of

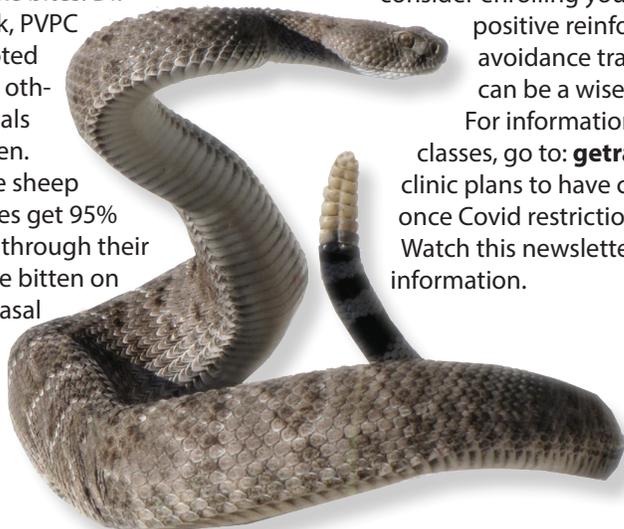
the venom. DO NOT apply ice or heat to the wound; do not attempt to cut into the wound or suck out the venom. And do not apply a tourniquet to the bite area. It is helpful, but not necessary, if you can identify the type of snake that bit your pet.

Because snakes are more active during warm weather, be proactive by taking precautions. For example, keep dogs on leash while hiking in any area with a high snake population; avoid rock formations and deep grass. Minimize hiding places on your property (such piles of leaves, wood piles, or open decks) and keep rodents under control because snakes love them. If you notice lizard activity, be on the lookout for rattlesnakes.

Even if you do not go hiking with your dog, your pet may still be at risk. The vast majority—approximately 85%—of rattlesnake bites occur in your own backyard.

In addition to the rattlesnake vaccine, consider enrolling your dog in a positive reinforcement snake avoidance training class. It can be a wise investment.

For information on the classes, go to: getrattled.org. The clinic plans to have classes on site once Covid restrictions are lifted. Watch this newsletter for more information.



MEET OUR STAFF

continued from front

other clinic RVTs) must take 20 hours of continuing classes every other year. Each of them must keep up with new techniques, medicines, and laws that govern veterinary care. **Devon Ferrel** can attest to the need for continuing ed classes. She described what she considers the best part of being an RVT: "What I love most is this field is ever-changing. No two days are the same and there are endless opportunities to learn new skills."

Devon has 11 years as an RVT while Birgit is the "newbie." As the newest member of the team, Birgit will focus on becoming proficient in the areas of surgery and dentistry. Lead RVT Amy Nichols was positive about having another RVT as part of the clinic staff. "I look forward to Birgit growing into her new life [as an RVT]. Soon she will start learning more about dentistry. We are extremely lucky to have her as part of our team."

Birgit's long-term goal is to be a "Vet Tech Specialist" and focus on physical therapy for animals who are in rehabilitation. For now, she is excited about the opportunities she will have continuing to work with furry friends and their owners. Congratulations to Birgit!



PLEASANT VALLEY PET CLINIC VETERINARIANS:

Karen Jackett, DVM / Owner
David Johnson, DVM
Kaley Ladner, DVM
Maggie MacQueen, DVM
Mary Pride Clark, DVM
Mark Wade, DVM

KEEP HANDY:

If you have an emergency and the clinic is closed, here are some numbers you can call:

VCA Loomis Basin (Loomis):
916.652.5816

MarQueen Animal Hospital (Roseville):
916.757.6600

All Creatures ER (Folsom):
916.984.8387

Insight Veterinary Wellness (EDH):
616.618.4700

PVPC News

Editor/Writer:
Designer:

Celia J. Orona
Jamie Hartshorn