

**Bond Centered Veterinary Care**  
**Daniel Estep, Ph.D. and Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D.**  
**www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com**  
**Copyright ABA, Inc.**

The annual conference of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) was held March 21-24, 1999 at the Convention Center in Denver. We were privileged to speak at the conference as well as to hear about advances in veterinary medicine from speakers who are leaders in their field.

One over-riding theme that was expressed by several speakers was the importance of having the staff at a veterinary clinic work as a team to provide not only medical care for the patient, but to also support the bond that exists between owners and their pets and to recognize the effects this bond has on the physical and emotional well-being of both person and pet. This acknowledgment of the human animal bond in the delivery of medical care to the pet is being called “Bond-Centered Care” by the proposed Argus Center For the Human Animal Bond at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) at Colorado State University.\*

According to a study by AAHA, 70% of pet owners view their pets as children. This means that veterinarians are treating the most vulnerable and dependent members of people’s families. When pets develop behavior problems, serious or terminal illnesses or owners must make decisions about euthanasia, owners need emotional support and understanding.

Veterinarians who know how to use basic helping and communication skills in these situations and who have a network for referring clients to other professionals such as behavior specialists or pet loss counselors are practicing the principles of bond-centered care. Many veterinarians are already practicing “bond-centered-care” and the Argus Center’s goal is to help veterinarians learn these skills more easily and quickly.

We are proud to be part of the development of the concept of bond-centered care as it relates to animal behavior. Programs, services and referrals for helping owners prevent behavior problems, promote behavioral wellness of pets, and assist with problem resolution are all part of a “Bond-Centered Care” approach to animal behavior.

The Argus Center will be designing training programs for veterinarians, and also for human health care professionals to enable them to use bond-centered programs, protocols and tools in their practices that will benefit their clients, patients, and themselves.

\*Since this article was published, the Argus Center has become a reality. Contact the Center at 970-491-4143

**Edited version first published in the Rocky Mountain News, Denver, CO.**  
**Any use of this article must cite the authors and the Rocky Mountain News**