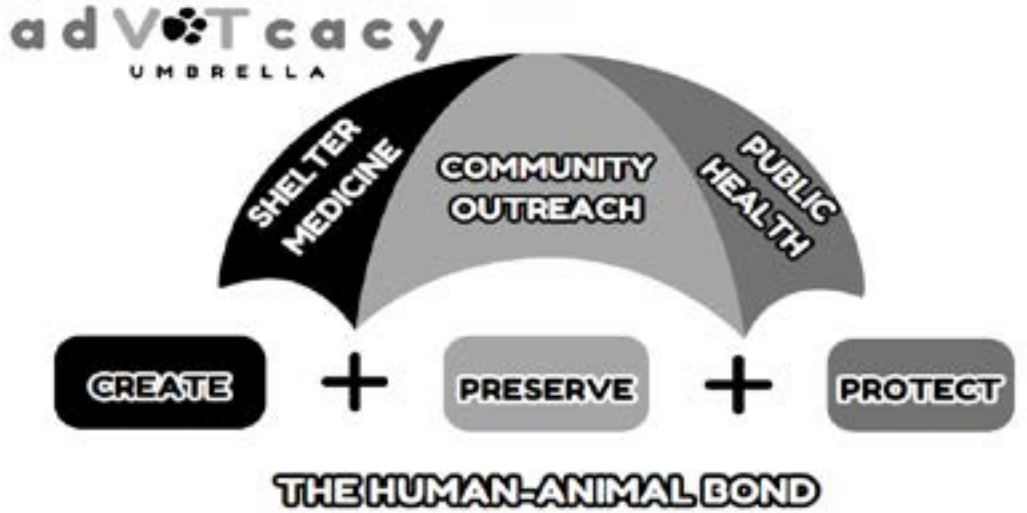
The AdVETcacy Umbrella: A One Welfare Framework

Elizabeth Scarbrough
and Ronald J. Orchard

Abstract

The AdVETcacy Umbrella utilizes three unique but complementary disciplines—shelter medicine, community outreach, and public health—to address and promote the human–animal bond by embracing diversity, intersectionality, and a spectrum of care approach. Expanding veterinary practice to advocate for the greatest good for all parties in the human–animal bond and to recognize the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health makes access to veterinary care more achievable. Each discipline under the AdVETcacy Umbrella intervenes at a different stage of the human–animal bond life cycle. Shelter medicine focuses on the creation of the human–animal bond. Community outreach preserves the human–animal bond. Finally, public health protects the human, animal, and environment, therefore protecting the human–animal bond and the space in which it exists. An opportunity to build a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration emerges among shelter medicine, community outreach, and public health professionals due to the unique expertise within these fields of providing welfare to humans and animals alike who operate outside of traditional circumstances. The Diversity Bonus by Scott E. Page argues that integrating diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking can bring something extra to the table that would not have existed otherwise. The integration of experts in each field offers the opportunity for a "diversity bonus" in veterinary medicine where humans, animals, and their bonds are served, fostered and advocated for.

Figure 1. The AdVETcacy Umbrella



Section 1: Shelter Medicine and Creation of the Human–Animal Bond

Contemporary animal shelters are a relatively recent development, having emerged only within the last few hundred years. In 1866, Henry Bergh established the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and played a pivotal role in advancing animal welfare and underscoring the importance of professional care (Favre, 2002). However, expectations of shelter medicine practice today vary extensively because different models of animal shelters require different styles of intervention. Shelters can be categorized according to their funding sources, physical setup, and mission. The most common funding models include public municipal, private nonprofit, private nonprofit with municipal contracts, and volunteer rescue groups. Physical setup can vary greatly, too,

ranging from mobile transport groups, to foster home rescues, to brick-and-mortar buildings, to combinations of these. The mission, or the goal of the organization, can range from extremely broad, encompassing any animal that walks through the door, to extremely specific, only serving animals of one breed or disease status. Although this diversity of funding models, setups, and missions inherently inhibits a one-size-fits-all guide to animal sheltering, all animal shelters share two common understandings: Shelters save lives and provide humane care. For the purposes of this article, we define animal shelters as those with a "throughput" model where the mission is to adopt animals out to lifelong homes with the shortest length of stay in the shelter possible.

Animal shelters initially existed solely as a public health necessity to keep people safe from free-roaming animals. They have transitioned to facilitate the creation of new human–animal bonds by adopting out homeless animals. This transition catalyzed the prioritization of the human–animal bond and a shift in the perception of animals from property to family. Shelter medicine professionals' advocacy for homeless animals bridges the gap of health care and wellness for animals who do not have a voice. While this article focuses on the creation of a bond that may not have existed before, animal shelters also preserve and protect human–animal bonds by offering animal control services and reconnecting lost pets with their owners through social media posts, microchips, and more.

Section 2: Community Outreach and Preservation of the Human–Animal Bond

While there has been a broad societal shift toward improved standards of care for animals, this progress has not been evenly distributed. Communities that have traditionally been marginalized often find themselves without support systems to meet these elevated standards. This discrepancy not only places undue pressure on pet owners in these communities but also threatens the human–animal bond that is vital to the well-being of both the animals and their owners. Community outreach programs must be designed with an appreciation for the diverse backgrounds of the populations they aim to serve, including differences in socioeconomic status, cultural practices, access to resources, and experiences with animals. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing outreach strategies that resonate with communities and address their specific needs (Stull et al., 2018).

Successful preservation of the human–animal bond requires understanding and acknowledgment of the unique identities and cultures of the communities being served. "Identity" in this context refers to the cultural, social, and economic factors that define a community. Embracing these factors allows outreach programs to operate more efficiently and effectively, ensuring that the interventions provided are relevant and respectful of the community's values and needs. No two communities are the same, and this fundamental truth underpins the need for tailored approaches in community outreach. Thus, the process of community outreach encourages a spectrum of care approach. Each partnership and event are shaped by the specific needs and characteristics of the community involved. For instance, what works in one neighborhood may not be suitable in another due to differences in cultural practices, economic challenges, or levels of trust between the community and external organizations. By recognizing and integrating these differences into outreach strategies, veterinary professionals can foster stronger, more meaningful connections with the communities they serve, leading to better outcomes for both animals and their owners.

One of the primary objectives of community outreach in the context of veterinary care is the preservation of the human–animal bond. By intervening before issues escalate to the point where pet owners feel compelled to relinquish their animals, outreach programs can prevent the dissolution of these bonds. This proactive approach not only enhances the quality of life for the animals involved but also contributes to the overall health and well-being of the community. Additionally, preventing relinquishment has both individual and communal benefits. On an individual level, keeping a pet in a loving home where it receives consistent care and attention leads to a healthier, longer life for the animal. For the pet owner, this continuity strengthens the emotional and psychological benefits derived from pet ownership, contributing to their overall well-being. On a communal level, successful preservation efforts reduce the strain on local animal shelters and rescue organizations, allowing these resources to be allocated more effectively (Salman et al., 1998). Furthermore, maintaining the human–animal bond within a community can foster a sense of shared responsibility and enhance the collective commitment to animal welfare. By tailoring outreach efforts and utilizing a spectrum of care approach to accommodate individual and

community differences, veterinary professionals can build trust and encourage greater participation in preventive care programs. This approach not only preserves the human–animal bond but also empowers communities to take an active role in the well-being of their animals and, subsequently, in their own well-being.

Section 3: Public Health and Protection of the Human-Animal Bond

One Health Framework

Public health plays a critical role in the life cycle of the human–animal bond, particularly in the areas of disease control, population management, and the promotion of benefits for individual pet owners. By acknowledging the linkages between human health, animal health, and environmental conditions, the One Health model provides an essential basis for efforts to maintain and protect the human–animal bond (Destoumieux-Garzón et al., 2018; Kerman et al., 2020). By addressing health issues at the intersection of these domains, One Health initiatives ensure the well-being of both animals and their human companions, ultimately strengthening the bond that ties them together (Blackwell et al., 2023).

The One Health approach is uniquely positioned to serve the needs of both humans and animals, often referred to as "both ends of the leash." This holistic framework recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the welfare of animals and the environment. Events and initiatives grounded in the One Health philosophy typically focus on areas such as zoonotic disease prevention, vaccination campaigns, and population management strategies that benefit entire communities, including their animal populations.

One example of this approach in action is community-based vaccination clinics that serve both humans and their pets. These clinics not only provide essential vaccines to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases but also offer education on proper pet care, nutrition, and the importance of regular veterinary visits. By addressing pets' health needs, these initiatives contribute to the overall welfare of the community, reduce the risk of disease transmission, and promote a healthier environment for all.

In addition to disease prevention, One Health events often include population management services such as spaying and neutering. These services help control animal populations and reduce the number of stray animals and the associated public welfare risks. For individual pet owners, such services are invaluable in ensuring their pets live healthier, longer lives free from the risks associated with overpopulation and unmanaged breeding.

One Welfare Framework

While the One Health approach provides a valuable framework for addressing the intersections of human, animal, and environmental health, the One Welfare concept broadens this perspective by explicitly incorporating animal welfare, human well-being, and environmental sustainability into a unified framework. The preference for One Welfare over One Health in this context is driven by several key reasons that are relevant to the arguments presented in this article:

Holistic integration of welfare and well-being: One Welfare goes beyond the traditional health-focused paradigm by integrating animal welfare directly into human and environmental health considerations. This holistic approach ensures that the well-being of all stakeholders, including animals, is given equal importance (García Pinillos et al., 2016). In communities where the human–animal bond is a critical aspect of daily life, ensuring the welfare of animals directly contributes to the overall well-being of human residents. This approach is particularly relevant in underserved communities where animals often play vital roles as companions, protectors, and even as emotional support.

1. Ethical considerations and moral responsibility: One Welfare places a strong emphasis on the ethical obligations we have toward animals and recognizes their intrinsic value beyond their utility to humans. This ethical standpoint aligns with the arguments in this article, which advocate for the preservation of the human–animal bond not only as a public health measure but also as a moral imperative. The One Welfare framework supports the notion that animals should be treated with dignity and respect and that their welfare should be a central consideration in any public health initiative.
2. Addressing social determinants of health: One Welfare recognizes the importance of social determinants of health, including the socioeconomic and cultural factors that affect both human and animal welfare. This approach acknowledges that improving animal welfare can have significant positive impacts on human health, particularly

in marginalized communities where the human–animal bond is often a critical source of emotional and social support. By focusing on welfare, rather than just health, this approach better addresses the complex realities faced by these communities.

3. Environmental sustainability: The One Welfare framework also integrates environmental sustainability into its core principles, recognizing that the health of ecosystems is deeply intertwined with the welfare of both humans and animals. This perspective aligns with the broader goals of preserving the human–animal bond by ensuring that the environments in which these bonds are formed and maintained are protected and nurtured. For example, effective population management and disease control strategies that prioritize welfare can lead to more sustainable outcomes for both the community and the environment (Rabinowitz & Conti, 2013).

The One Welfare approach also brings tangible benefits to individual pet owners. By integrating veterinary care with broader public welfare initiatives, One Welfare programs provide accessible and comprehensive care for pets, which in turn supports the well-being of their owners. For many people, particularly those in underserved communities, access to veterinary care can be limited. One Welfare initiatives help bridge this gap by offering services that are both affordable and accessible, ensuring that pet owners can keep their animals healthy without facing financial hardship.

These benefits extend beyond physical welfare. The physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of pet owners is also enhanced when their animals receive proper care (Hodgson et al., 2015). The human–animal bond is strengthened when pet owners feel confident in their ability to provide for their pets' welfare needs. This bond, in turn, contributes to the overall mental and emotional welfare of the owners, as the companionship and support provided by pets are well-documented contributors to human well-being (Sung & Han, 2023).

Transdisciplinary Collaboration Involvement

The success of One Welfare initiatives relies on the collaboration of multisector and transdisciplinary practitioners. Veterinarians, public health officials, environmental scientists, social workers, and community leaders all play essential roles in designing and implementing programs that address the complex interplay between human, animal, and environmental welfare. These diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise allow for a comprehensive approach to protecting the human–animal bond. For instance, veterinarians bring specialized knowledge of animal health, while public health officials provide insights into disease prevention and control at the community level. Environmental scientists contribute an understanding of the ecosystems in which humans and animals coexist, and social workers ensure that the social determinants of health are considered in the design of outreach programs. This collaborative effort not only enhances the effectiveness of One Welfare initiatives but also ensures that they are culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of the communities they serve. By working together, these practitioners can create programs that are more than the sum of their parts, effectively safeguarding the health and well-being of both humans and animals.

Section 4: Intersectionality Within the AdVETcacy Umbrella

The AdVETcacy Umbrella acknowledges the additive effect of diverse experiences and expertise when advocating for people and animals in need. It also emphasizes the interconnectedness of the human–animal bond as an intervention tool for improving the physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being of humans, animals, and the environment. Societally, the limitations of this model lie in the stigmatization and lack of multidimensional consideration of animals and people with low socioeconomic status, disabilities, and differences. Intersectionality is a sociological analytical framework that describes the multidimensionality of issues faced by minority groups who exist within more than one minority (Crenshaw, 1991). While this framework often sits within the concepts of identity politics regarding race and gender, it can be applied to the AdVETcacy Umbrella as well. Through acknowledging the diversity and intersectionality of shelter animals, homeless or low socioeconomic status individuals, and environmental sustainability issues, the intervention strategies for each field become clearer and more effective in the long term.

Shelter animals and human beneficiaries of community outreach services often share discriminatory and prejudicial experiences. These experiences often surface due to differences in breed or race, age, gender, behavior, health status, and more. When veterinarians acknowledge the

intersectionality of the people and animals and the environment in which they serve, they become better adVETcates. The human–animal bond is a unique tool which bridges the gaps to achieving successful interventions and a holistic One Welfare approach.

Conclusion

The AdVETcacy model embraces a One Welfare framework through acknowledging the interconnectedness of three unique but complementary disciplines: shelter medicine, community outreach, and public health. Throughout the various stages of the human–animal bond, the humans, animals, and environment in which this bond exists require unique and tailored intervention strategies based on personalized identifying factors. Individual and community experiences inform these factors. For effective interventions and AdVETcacy, veterinary and nonveterinary professionals, animal welfare enthusiasts, and community members must communicate with a transdisciplinary approach.

The key to this includes future collaborations, evaluation of the role of animals within society, and education dissemination. Research opportunities include a community-based study of the implementation of each component of the umbrella. Thus, multi- and mixed-methods studies with transdisciplinary collaboration between a local animal shelter, community outreach events, and public health organizations would inform the impacts of this model and may illuminate previously unidentified spaces for initiating One Welfare interventions. Another research opportunity concerns reevaluating and redefining the societal roles that animals play and subsequently how they are labeled, which could shift their categorization from private property to a legal acknowledgment of their agency (Rock & Degeling, 2013). Educational institutions, including but not limited to veterinary schools, should also prioritize these concepts in their programs for further progress toward achieving successful individual and community-based interventions.

Very few veterinary schools offer both shelter medicine and community outreach preclinical and clinical opportunities for students. Courses that emphasize community-based learning, such as community outreach, are necessary to bring about the "deep and pervasive" change to educational institutions to bring about the "deep and pervasive" change needed for society to truly leverage the AdVETcacy framework (Saltmarsh et al., 2015). While these opportunities are new and up-and-coming, the AdVETcacy Umbrella model argues that veterinary students with opportunities for community-based learning will be more equipped for adaptation and appreciation of diversity within medicine and communities than students who have not had such opportunities (Jordan, 2014; Kim et al., 2022; McDavid & San Miguel, 2021). Thus, the integration of community-based learning and the AdVETcacy Umbrella will contribute to community-centered, practice-ready veterinarians and, most importantly, well-rounded people.

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About the Authors

Elizabeth Scarbrough is a student at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Class of 2026. Ronald J. Orchard, DVM, MPH, CAWA is an Assistant Professor of Community Outreach and Shelter Medicine at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine.