DEFINING VETERINARY TRAUMA CENTERS
Kelly Hall, DVM, DACVECC
University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN

Key Points:

- The benefits of Veterinary Trauma Centers could include enhanced patient care, opportunities for research collaborations and increased visibility of veterinary specialty colleges involved in trauma patient management.
- There is a multi-center initiative to develop and define Veterinary Trauma Centers.
- Definitions of specific Veterinary Trauma Center levels will include details regarding necessary site specific resources (equipment, personnel, infrastructure, training).

The potential benefits related to veterinary trauma center designations include enhanced patient care (improved survival, reduction of co-morbidities), the opportunity for research collaborations (development of evidence based medicine protocols; evaluation of minimally invasive, cost-effective interventions; translational medicine) and increased visibility of specialty colleges. Additionally, there may be local marketing advantages to designated Veterinary Trauma Centers in regards to the surrounding veterinary and general public populations.

Vision

To create a network of lead hospitals that seed development of trauma systems. These hospitals will work collaboratively to define high standards of care and disseminate information that improves trauma patient management efficiency and outcome. There is strong consideration for development of a trauma registry in the future.

Definition

A Veterinary Trauma Center can provide team-based, definitive care for any trauma patient. It provides the injured patient with access to comprehensive resources for their treatment. An emergency veterinarian is immediately available to the trauma patient while other veterinarians with specific specialist qualifications may be on call for emergency consultation and/or available during standard business hours, depending on the level designation of the trauma center. Veterinary trauma centers are available to receive transfers of severely injured patients referred from other emergency hospitals and primary clinics. All Veterinary Trauma Centers are hospitals that are also able to receive and medically address any urgent or emergent veterinary patient (i.e., not just those having experienced trauma). Additionally, Veterinary Trauma Centers offer the most up to date care for trauma patients by meeting standards of continuing education, remaining up to date with advances in human and veterinary trauma care, and a process of continued performance assessment and improvement. Veterinary Trauma Centers will contribute to the veterinary knowledge-base by training veterinarians in trauma care (staff doctors, interns and/or residents) and conducting trauma-related research or maintaining medical record systems amenable to the creation of a trauma data base that can be used for multi-center veterinary trauma research.