

Report of the Task Force on Renaming the American Association of Avian Pathologists

John Smith, Chair

"What's in a name?

That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet."

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (II, ii, 1-2)

During his presidency of the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP), Dr. Robert Owen commissioned a membership satisfaction survey. Some respondents suggested that the current name does not reflect who we are and what we do, and that a change is indicated. Dr. Owen requested that Dr. John Smith chair a task force to consider the question of changing the name of the organization.

Dr. Smith invited the following members to participate in the task force, all of whom accepted: Dr. Patty Dunn, Dr. John R. Glisson, Dr. Eric Gonder, Dr. Erica Spackman, and Dr. Richard Witter. The task force reviewed the results of the survey, including the specific comments regarding the name, as well as comments regarding the membership structure, inclusiveness, the role and position of non-DVM professionals in the organization, international members, and the varied and changing roles of our members in the industry and society. These issues were considered by the task force because, while they are out of the purview of the task force, they have critical bearing on the name of the organization.

The objections to the current name are straightforward. "American" may be too restrictive in view of our considerable international membership, following, and influence. Conversely, "Avian" may be too broad, as our focus is clearly on domestic poultry. Finally, "Pathologists" raises concerns because, while many members are boarded veterinary pathologists, many are not and are therefore not entitled to use that designation. Additionally, our membership and constituency includes a wide variety of specialists and disciplines beyond pathology, including many who are not veterinarians, and the concerns of our members are now extending far beyond disease alone.

Dr. Witter submitted some background on the history of the name, which is attached. Dr. Witter indicates that use of the words "Avian" and "Pathologists" was discussed at the very outset, and was resolved to the satisfaction of the founding members at that time. However, some now feel that the name clearly fails to accurately reflect who we are and what we do.

There are also good arguments for retaining the current name. It was difficult to gauge from the survey responses how much concern actually exists among the membership at large about the name, but our perception is that it is not overwhelming. There should be a clear consensus that a change is needed and desired before undertaking such a major alteration. Tradition should also be acknowledged; the current name has served well for 50 years, and changing it creates a permanent disconnect in the history of the organization. Dr. Gonder observed that the name is just now becoming established in

federal governmental and other venues, and the specificity of the name is probably less important than name recognition, creating a disinclination to change it now. There would be significant logistical issues to deal with, and resources will be consumed, especially if the acronym and logo were changed. If the new name were fairly soon deemed to be less suitable, changing it again in a short time frame would be difficult and would surely create confusion. While this eventuality seems unlikely, it has bearing on our final conclusion presented below, considering the current discussions around membership structure and mission. A new name for an organization should be considered a truly long-term commitment. With this in mind, it may be difficult to link the name too closely with the mission, because missions may change with time. The benefits of a name change may be difficult to quantify. It is arguable whether the current name is actually off-putting to potential members, and whether a name change would attract more membership or interest. Ours is a highly specialized group. Those who would have an interest in membership or participation will encounter the organization via mentors and association with the industry, and while the name might initially seem a bit curious to some, these mentors and business contacts will explain the nature of the organization and encourage participation. Finally, as Dr. Witter observed, the importance of a name is probably overrated. AT&T has moved far beyond the telegraph, but the name sticks and everyone knows who they are and what they do, and in fact the sense of tradition and permanence gives the name an added aura. Most of us think of our organization as "Triple-A-P", and know immediately what that connotes, with little or no thought to the actual words.

In the survey responses, there is obviously concern among the membership about issues of inclusiveness, including both international and associate members, the two-tiered membership structure (which is at least partially tied to the membership requirements for remaining a constituent organization of AVMA), the missions of the organization (beyond being a forum for the study of the diseases of poultry), and the increasingly varied jobs, skills, disciplines, specialties, and needs of the members. These issues have been brewing for some time, and seem to be coming to the forefront. We understand that there is to be a meeting of a task force on the future of the AAAP at the meeting in Washington, DC.

It was the clear consensus of this task force that these membership and identity issues need to be resolved before any further consideration is given to changing the name of the organization. If action is contemplated on changing the membership structure and developing a more far-reaching mission statement, it seems wise to await the resolution of these issues before an appropriate name can be selected that truly reflects the characteristics of the new organization. The task force therefore recommends no change in the name at the present time, and further recommends that the issue be revisited at a future date when membership structure and mission issues are resolved.

Historical perspective on the issue of NAME, submitted by Dr. Richard Witter

- The name, American Association of Avian Pathologists, has been discussed from the very beginning.
 - Invented by Grumbles and Delaplane at Texas A&M during the fall of 1956.
 - Used in the original drafts of the constitution and by-laws in 1957.
 - Confirmed by acceptance of first constitution in 1958. It is notable that the name was not changed during the 18 months between circulation of the original drafts and final acceptance.
 - Immediately reexamined by a membership survey 1958-59 and again reaffirmed by voice vote of membership in 1959. (This implies that there must have been some at the time who questioned whether the name was appropriate.)
- Bob Eckroade has knowledge of an early letter apparently from ACVP to AVMA, objecting to our use of the word "pathologist" in our name. There is no record that this actually reached AAAP or received any official attention by AAAP.
- At the time the Association of Avian Veterinarians was formed, about 1981, their first choice for a name was "American Association of Avian Practitioners." When Charlie Hall noticed an official announcement to this effect, he immediately complained and the name was changed to prevent confusion with our acronym.

Historical perspective on "pathologist" as applied to poultry diseases. I know of no document to describe this, but I do have a clear recollection based on discussions from the 1950s and 1960s about the meaning of the term "poultry pathologist." It was described to me that a poultry pathologist was a veterinarian who was concerned with the diseases of poultry and employed all the available tools to understand the diseases and contribute to the health of flocks. This was unlike the situation with other food animals, where there would be specialists in pathology, microbiology and other disciplines working together. **The poultry pathologist was a jack-of-all-trades, a problem solver who was not linked to a specific discipline.** Thus, there never seemed to be a difficulty in considering myself a poultry pathologist. In fact, this appellation seemed to be used with a degree of pride, celebrating that poultry pathologists were something special and operated differently than others.

The use of the term avian, instead of poultry, entered the literature early without fanfare. I remember no discussions on this point. In fact, both names seemed to carry much the same information, with avian being somewhat more inclusive. The article by Bill Hinshaw from 1955 uses the term "Avian Pathology" in the title, although he refers to the earliest workers in the field as "practitioners" or as "scientists." Let us not forget that a major journal in our field is called "Avian Pathology." This journal presents a wide range of research topics to the industry, only slightly different in content than our own "Avian Diseases."