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## Building membership by showing ben

### AABP president sees chance to show organizati

By Greg Cima

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Dr. Mark J. Thomas wants to build on his predecessors' work in recruiting and retaining memt of Bovine Practitioners.

That will involve showing fellow veterinarians in cattle practice what advocacy and other work behalf, beyond hosting an annual meeting.

Dr. Thomas, a dairy veterinarian in Lowville, New York, is the 2016-2017 AABP president, the He is a managing partner in Dairy Health and Management Services and Countryside Veterin cattle production medicine and consulting services.

He took office during the AABP's annual conference, hosted this September in Charlotte, Nort chairman of the program committee for the 2016 meeting, which included a mix of presentatio aspects of practice such as personal well-being, suicide prevention, and human resource mai

**Aiding members**

In an interview since the meeting, Dr. Thomas said he wants to continue his predecessors' wc ethics task force and to improve member recruitment and retention.

On the former subject, he noted that ethical views can shift with societal change. In 2015, AAB the Ethics in Cattle Practice Task Force to advise the board of directors and help AABP memb and continue to practice in an ethical manner.

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That includes reviewing the AVMA Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, deciding whether a bovine practice is needed, as well as working with the AABP board to develop any necessary



As president, Dr. Mark J. Thomas plans to advance the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) work on developing an ethics task force and improving member recruitment and retention. Dr. Thomas, a veterinarian from Lowville, New York, specializes in dairy cattle production medicine, consulting services. (Photo by Joyce Sullivan)

To aid in member recruitment and retention, he wants to see wider recognition of the services provided and continuing education at the annual conference.

"I really want to highlight to our membership what else AABP does do for our members," he said.

Until he became a board member, Dr. Thomas said even he did not know about the daily activities of the president and board.

On the day he spoke with JAVMA, for example, he said the AABP was preparing a letter requesting the Administration extend the comment period on possible limitations on the duration of antimicrobial use.

"We really need to keep our membership updated on all the other aspects of what AABP is doing," he said.

He said AABP leaders can do better at telling members about work behind the scenes, such as the American Association of Cattlemen's Beef Association, the AVMA, and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians, and advocating with members of Congress; and advocating in general on issues such as antimicrobial administration and loan repayments. Improvements could range from expanding relationships with news media seen on Facebook of himself and other AABP leaders on Capitol Hill.

The AABP also is considering adding a nonvoting student representative to the AABP board to provide insight into the profession's future and increase age diversity among leaders. He noted that he was a board member when he joined around age 35, and he wants to see recent graduates become members.

He also would like to see student AABP delegates remain in leadership after graduation, where they can help with

High student debt, the need for loan repayment programs, and the need to debunk a myth of a shortage of veterinarians. On other issues for the AABP, he said. Increasing requirements for veterinarian oversight of antimicrobial use and the need for veterinarians, particularly those in dairy practice.

Antimicrobials that are in drug classes considered important for human medicine and administered under veterinary feed directives or prescriptions for use by the end of this year. FDA officials [have announced](#) that companies that own approvals for all such drugs have agreed to eliminate over-the-counter approvals for production purposes such as growth promotion.

## Leading in cattle medicine

Dr. Thomas grew up on a cow-calf farm in southeastern New York, where his family had horses. He was about 8 years old when he began dreaming of going to veterinary school.

He attended Cornell University, becoming president of Cornell's Block and Bridle Club as an undergraduate. He was also involved in the university's AABP student chapter while attending the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Today, his work focuses more on research and consulting than clinical practice, but he said the experiences he developed in veterinary college continue to serve him.

Dr. Thomas was a member of the AABP Membership Committee from 2004-2008 and then assumed the position he held until he became vice president. AABP officers serve four consecutive one-year terms: president-elect, president, and immediate past president.

Dr. Thomas said he has become president during an exciting time, as leadership transitions are underway. He, who has been executive vice president since March 2005, to Dr. K. Fred Gingrich II, who resigned to prepare for that job.

He praised Dr. Riddell for his insight and foresight and Dr. Gingrich for his ideas on opportunities. He expressed hope his own experience as an AABP board member will help during those changes.

Dr. Thomas said veterinarians should remember to use science in their decisions, a lesson learned from the loss of life in moments of emotional responses. AABP members can help people realize the value of the well-being of livestock, livestock owners, and the public, he said, noting all AABP members have a commitment to safety.

He also suggested that veterinarians watch for signs of stress among their clients, who are dealing with a fluctuating farm and livestock economy.



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