

GVTA Fall Conference 2026 Speaker Bio's and Abstracts

Speaker: Kathryn Carman, MSc, LVT, VTS Clinical Practice (canine/feline)

Bio: Kathryn graduated from San Juan College with her AAS in Veterinary Technology in 2015 and her Master's Degree in Advanced Practice in Veterinary Nursing from the University of Glasgow in 2021. She obtained her VTS in Clinical Practice (canine/feline) in 2024.

Kat currently organizes and manages the surgery department at VCA Braelinn Village in Peachtree City, Georgia and supports the technician and assistant supervisors for Atlanta area VCA Hospitals. These jobs combine her love of veterinary medicine and her love of teaching and allow her to nerd out with a wide variety of technicians and assistants, especially on the topics of pain management, anesthesia, wound care, and the growing education and career opportunities for technicians and assistants.

In addition to her role as President for the GVTA, Kat serves on the Advisory Council for San Juan College, multiple committees for the Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice, several Task Forces, and helps to facilitate a Journal Club at her home hospital. Her husband encourages her to have some hobbies outside of veterinary medicine, so she also enjoys traveling, crafting, hiking, reading and writing. She has 2 dogs (Browning and Cricket, 1 cat (Winchester), and 1 chinchilla (Mr Mesqueaks).

Lecture: Vet Med Doesn't Have to Hurt: Pain Management

Time: 9AM

Abstract: Pain is the fifth vital sign but often is ignored when developing treatment plans. This lecture will discuss multiple avenues of pain management available to the general practitioner hospital including surgical, inpatient, and outpatient care. We will discuss how pain works and why pain management is so crucial to helping our patients heal.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the anatomy and physiology of nociception in dogs and cats.
- Discuss the function of pain and its effect on patients during illness and healing.
- Review pain management options, both acute and chronic, available to most GP practices including peri-anesthetic drugs, local anesthetics, injectable and oral medications.

Speaker: Sarah Meyer, CVT, FVTE

Bio: As a veterinary professional of 30 years, Sarah's career began shortly after graduation, from Lincoln Memorial University, at the University of Tennessee Veterinary Teaching Hospital where her nursing practice included farm animal medicine, equine surgery, small animal ICU and small animal anesthesia.

Lecture: Respecting Our Patients

Time: 10AM

Abstract: In veterinary educational lecture halls, instructors teach veterinary and veterinary technician students professionalism and the soft skill of effective, respectful client communication. However, we are not taught how to respectfully speak to, in front of, and about our patients. Is laughing at a fearful patient acceptable when compared to our human counterparts laughing at their patients? Does posting photos or videos of our patients on social media cross the line of privacy and civility? Is it exploitation and does that compromise the human animal bond? We frequently parallel our profession with human medicine when referring to medical and surgical advancements, but our unethical and discourteous behavior negates any comparison. This presentation discusses the importance of self-awareness in veterinary professionals and how we can be mindful of our patients' emotional wellbeing.

Lecture: Advocating for Ourselves and the Profession

Time: 11AM

Abstract: Credentialed veterinary technicians as educators are essential to patient care and workforce sustainability, yet inconsistent recognition of credentialing and scope of practice continues to weaken the profession. This presentation examines the educator's role in teaching self-advocacy as a foundational professional skill, preparing students to navigate legislative variability, workforce shortages, and role ambiguity. The session connects educational standards and technician retention, highlighting how lack of clarity and enforcement contributes to burnout and underutilization. Practical strategies are shared for embedding advocacy into curricula, empowering students to articulate their credentials, understand scope-of-practice protections, and engage confidently in professional and societal discussions. Advocacy is reframed as ethical, patient-centered, and essential to a resilient veterinary workforce.

Speaker: Ashley Smith, LVT

Bio: Ashley Smith, LVT, is the Veterinary Nursing Trainer at VEG in Alpharetta, Georgia. With more than 15 years of experience spanning general practice, specialty medicine, emergency care, management, and education, Ashley is passionate about advancing veterinary medicine through collaboration and learning. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Georgia Southern University and is a graduate of the Veterinary Technology program at Gwinnett Technical College. Ashley loves helping veterinary professionals grow in their careers and believes everyone has something valuable to teach one another. At home, she enjoys spending time with her two beloved pitties, Marvin and Rizzo.

Lecture: Shh...Taboo Conversations: Advocating for Best Practices for our Patients

Time: 1PM

Abstract: How to advocate for best practices for our patients.

Emphasis on how to navigate tech to tech/DVM conversations around outdated medicine and improper patient care in a professional manner.

Topics will include communication styles/techniques and how to implement in practice, difficult client conversations around finances that may hinder our ability to practice best medicine, gatekeeping skills in the industry and how to recognize and ask the right questions on potential neglect cases.

Speaker: Jenny Cossey, LVT, VTS (ECC)

Bio: Jenny Cossey, LVT, VTS (ECC), earned her AAS degree from Pima Medical Institute in Seattle in 2013. During her externship at a local specialty hospital, she discovered a strong passion for emergency and critical care medicine.

Since 2014, Jenny has worked as an ER/ICU licensed veterinary technician at the Animal Medical Center of Seattle, where she advanced into the role of Nursing Development and Training Specialist and Blood Bank Coordinator in 2020. She achieved her Veterinary Technician Specialist (VTS) certification in Emergency and Critical Care in 2017 and became a RECOVER Certified BLS/ALS CPR Instructor in 2025.

In 2026, Jenny joined VEG ER for Pets as a Veterinary Nursing Trainer, further expanding her impact in veterinary education and clinical training. She also serves as an instructor in the veterinary technician program at Pima Medical Institute in Seattle.

Jenny has lectured at the Animal Medical Center of Seattle's Annual Symposium and has presented for the Washington State Veterinary Technician Association, Arizona Veterinary Technician Association, NAVC's HiVE conference, and the AVMA's Annual Convention. In addition to in-house continuing education, she regularly delivers CE sessions to the Seattle-area referring veterinary community.

Her professional interests include mentoring new staff, blood banking and transfusion medicine, CPR, medical math, and critical care nursing.

Lecture: Critically Thinking about Nursing Care

Time: 2PM

Abstract: This presentation will discuss how to take your nursing care to the next level. Nursing care goes so much further than just checking off the boxes. We will briefly review normal monitoring parameters in small animals, then we will look in depth at what those individual and combined abnormalities mean for the patient. Attendees will learn how to critically think about what is physiologically happening with the patient and to be proactive regarding their patient care. After identifying an abnormality, we will discuss the next steps to provide the doctor with relevant information regarding the patient's current status. And lastly, we will discuss helpful nursing care tips for providing TLC to our veterinary patients.

Learning Objectives:

- Review normal vital parameters
- Discuss abnormal vital signs individually and what those abnormalities mean for the patient
- Review different combinations of abnormal vital signs and what those can mean for the patient
- Discuss pain assessment in canine and feline patients
- Discuss tips and tricks for nursing care of the hospitalized patient including diet, environmental enrichment, and more

Speaker: Keri Riddick, DVM

Bio: Dr. Keri Riddick earned a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology from Auburn University in 1997 and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2000. Following veterinary school, she practiced mixed animal medicine in Birmingham, Alabama, for two years before spending five years in emergency medicine. In 2008, she purchased a small animal hospital in Columbus, Georgia.

An active leader in the Georgia Veterinary Medical Association (GVMA), Dr. Riddick served as GVMA President in 2018. After selling her practice, she joined the GVMA team and has served as Executive Director since 2022. She was also selected for the University of Georgia's Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine 2025–2027 Cohort. In addition, she serves on the Atlanta Humane Society Board of Directors and on the legislative committee of the Georgia Agribusiness Council. Dr. Riddick has been married to Don Riddick for more than twenty years. In her free time, she enjoys caring for their hobby farm in West Point, Georgia, where she is often found riding horses.

Lecture: LEAP, Capital to Clinic: Legislative Updates for Georgia Veterinary Technicians

Time: 3PM

Abstract: Staying current on statutory and regulatory changes can feel like one more thing to manage in an already busy day, but it is an essential part of professional licensure. This webinar will provide a practical overview of several new laws and regulations affecting veterinary technicians, including updates on teleadvice, triage, and rabies vaccinations. This presentation has been approved for 1 hour of LEAP CE by the Georgia State Board of Veterinary Medicine. Approval code: GVBM-3032