

Experiencing VMX 2025: An Adventure Both Thrilling and Exhausting

Contributed by Dr. Laura Gaylord

The recently concluded VMX 2025 in Orlando, Florida, was nothing short of extraordinary. With nearly 30,000 attendees from 86 countries gathering at the Orange County Convention Center from January 25 to 29, this year's conference set a record-breaking milestone in veterinary medicine. Hosted by the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC), VMX 2025 emphasized innovation, education, and leadership, delivering an unparalleled experience for professionals in the field.

An Early Start and an Exciting Schedule

The conference officially kicked off on Saturday, January 25, but I arrived early on Sunday, January 26, to settle in and prepare for my scheduled talks on Monday. Speaking in front of an audience at such a prestigious event was both exhilarating and rewarding, reinforcing my passion for veterinary medicine and continuing education. After my talks, I had the opportunity to explore the vast array of continuing education sessions and the overwhelming number of vendors and sponsors in the exhibit hall.

Nutrition Education at Its Finest

One of the standout sessions for me was the Nutrition track, sponsored by the American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition (AAVN). Speakers Danielle Conway and Maria Cattai de Godoy led insightful discussions on a range of critical topics, including nutritional truths, pet food sustainability, implementing nutrition in practice, novel proteins, the role of carbohydrates and fiber in pet foods, and understanding pet food processing. This track offered a comprehensive look at emerging trends in pet nutrition and provided practical applications to help veterinary professionals better understand pet food and integrate improved dietary strategies into their practice.

A Chance to Connect with Colleagues

Beyond the lectures, one of the highlights was reconnecting with my fellow nutritionist colleagues. I was fortunate to catch up with them throughout the meeting and over lunch. These conversations always offer a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences, and strengthen the bonds within our small but dedicated specialty. I deeply appreciate these interactions, which serve as a reminder of the importance of collaboration and community in our field.

The Largest VMX Ever: A True Spectacle

This year's VMX wasn't just large—it was the biggest I've ever attended. The scale of the event was staggering, with over 1,300 hours of continuing education sessions and 735 exhibitors showcasing the latest advancements in veterinary medicine. From AI-driven diagnostics and RNA vaccine technology for companion animals to regenerative therapies for aging pets, the conference offered a glimpse into the future of veterinary care.

A notable focus this year was conservation, with sessions dedicated to protecting endangered species and managing bee health. These discussions underscored the

expanding role of veterinarians in global sustainability efforts, highlighting the interconnectedness of animal, human, and environmental health.

A Celebration of Veterinary Passion and Innovation

The theme of VMX 2025, Festival of the HeARTs, celebrated the deep emotion and artistry woven into veterinary science. The event featured a dynamic blend of education and entertainment, with Hollywood icon Kevin Costner captivating attendees and country duo Dan + Shay providing a memorable musical experience. Adding to the diversity of topics, a full-day honey bee symposium emphasized the importance of pollinator health and conservation. Beyond its professional and scientific impact, VMX 2025 also made a substantial economic contribution, with the NAVC estimating a \$70 million boost to the local economy.

A Whirlwind of Learning, Networking, and Fine Dining

With so much to absorb and explore, VMX 2025 was an exciting and fast-paced experience. Each day was packed with lectures, workshops, and networking opportunities, leaving little downtime but plenty of inspiration. Even amidst the whirlwind, I found time to enjoy excellent dinners with colleagues, making for memorable moments that balanced the intensity of the event.

Overall, while I tend to prefer smaller conferences for my continuing education needs, I can see how VMX offers something for everyone—including an experience the whole family can appreciate.

As I reflect on my time at VMX 2025, I am left with a deep appreciation for the veterinary profession and the innovations shaping its future. Continuing education events always reignite my passion for lifelong learning and professional growth. Until maybe next year, VMX!