Dr. Tom Bettenhausen Named NDVMA Veterinarian of the Year

Dr. Thomas J. Bettenhausen was honored as the North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association's (NDVMA) Veterinarian of the Year during the association's annual meeting in Fargo on Aug. 10.

The award recognizes Dr. Bettenhausen's decades of leadership, service and commitment to veterinary medicine in North Dakota. Throughout his career, he has served the NDVMA in numerous leadership roles, including as president in 2002. He has also provided service to the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and the Reserve Veterinary Corps.

A strong advocate for the future of the profession, Bettenhausen has worked to increase access to veterinary school opportunities for North Dakota students, expand loan repayment opportunities and increase scholarship availability. His mentorship has also had a lasting impact on veterinary students and veterinarians throughout the state.

A native of North Dakota, Bettenhausen grew up on a farm, where he developed the strong work ethic and traditional values that have characterized his career. He attended North Dakota State University and earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Kansas State University in 1981.

After beginning his career in Jamestown, Bettenhausen became an owner of Missouri Valley Veterinary Clinic. Through his leadership and dedication, the practice grew into one of the area's largest veterinary practices, providing high-quality care for both large and small animals. Beginning as a mixed-animal practitioner, he pursued advanced surgical training and developed a reputation as a highly skilled orthopedic surgeon, receiving referrals from veterinarians throughout the region.

After leaving Missouri Valley Veterinary Clinic, Bettenhausen established Outreach Veterinary Services, a mobile surgical practice that allowed smaller veterinary clinics to offer advanced soft-tissue and orthopedic procedures to their clients on site. His commitment to veterinary medicine continued even during retirement, when he obtained an Arizona veterinary license so he could continue providing surgical services while spending time with family in Arizona.

Bettenhausen's service to the profession has been matched by his commitment to family and community. He and his wife, Ruth, raised four children, balancing family life with the demands of veterinary practice, emergency calls and community involvement. Two of their children followed in their father's footsteps and became practicing veterinarians in Bismarck.

Outside of veterinary medicine, Bettenhausen has pursued a variety of interests, including woodworking, bowhunting, roping, community band, tree care and farm work. His woodworking projects have also supported the NDVMA through contributions to the association's annual auction.

Among his many contributions is the Tom and Ruth Bettenhausen Scholarship, established in 2016 to support North Dakota veterinary students. The scholarship reflects the couple's ongoing commitment to encouraging and supporting the next generation of veterinary professionals.

Colleagues describe Bettenhausen as someone whose dedication and compassion are evident not only in his professional accomplishments, but also in the quiet, behind-the-scenes ways he supports others. His service has included providing relief work for fellow veterinarians during times of personal hardship, as well as mentoring students and colleagues throughout his career.

The NDVMA Veterinarian of the Year award recognizes Bettenhausen's lasting contributions to his patients, clients, colleagues, students and the veterinary profession.