

(November 23, 2010 Stillwater, OK) – The American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine recently named Dianne McFarlane, DVM, Ph.D., as one of the ACVIM "Heroes in Medicine." McFarlane, an ACVIM Board-certified Large Animal Internist and an associate professor of physiological sciences at Oklahoma State University's [Center for Veterinary Health Sciences](#), is researching the similarities between Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID) in horses and Parkinson's disease in humans.

"PPID is a naturally occurring disease of aging horses which results from neurodegeneration of dopamine-producing neurons," says McFarlane. "Degeneration of dopamine-producing neurons also causes Parkinson's disease in aged people."

In people, the damaged neurons cause tremors or difficulty moving. In horses, the injured neurons regulate hormone production resulting in abnormal hair coats, muscle loss and immune deficiencies.

Even though the clinical signs are different, McFarlane says similar events may start and fuel the degenerative process in both diseases.

"If we can understand the factors that trigger degeneration of the dopamine-producing neurons

in the horse, it may serve to better understand the events that precede Parkinson's disease," she adds. "Our goal is gain valuable insights to improve quality of life for both animals and humans."

Dr. McFarlane is the second member of the OSU veterinary center team to be recognized for her work by the ACVIM as a "Hero in Medicine." Michael Davis, DMV, Ph.D., Dipl. ACVIM-Large Animal, professor in physiological sciences, director of the Comparative Exercise Physiology Laboratory and Oxley Chair in Equine Sports Medicine, was the very first "Hero in Medicine" selected by the ACVIM. Dr. Davis was recognized for his work in helping athletes perform to their optimum ability by studying what strenuous exercise does to multiple organ systems in horses and dogs.

McFarlane earned a B.S. degree in Animal Science from Clemson University and a M.S. degree in Molecular Genetics from the University of Georgia. She earned her DVM degree at the University of California and her Ph.D. in Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology from the Atlantic Veterinary College.

The Oklahoma State University [Center for Veterinary Health Sciences](#) is one of 28 veterinary colleges in the United States and is fully accredited by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The center's [Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital](#) is open to the public and provides routine and specialized care for small and large animals. It also offers 24 hour emergency care and is certified by the American Animal Hospital Association. For more information, visit www.cvhs.okstate.edu or call (405) 744-7000.

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