(February 15, 2011 Stillwater, OK) – Oklahoma State University veterinary students Taylor Tillery ('12) and Sarah Ward ('13) participated in the 3rd Annual Veterinary Student Legislative Fly In held recently in Washington, D.C. Approximately 60 students, representing veterinary student chapters of the American Veterinary Medical Association from across the country, flew in to attend the two-day meeting.

The purpose of the program is to initiate veterinary student participation in the legislative process and to educate students and Members of Congress on the public policy issues facing the veterinary profession.

Tillery and Ward learned how the American Veterinary Medical Association's Government Relations Department works to advocate the AVMA's policies and positions on federal issues that influence animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession.

"We spent time visiting with staff from Senators Coburn's and Inhofe's offices as well as Representatives Cole's and Lucas' offices," reports Ward. "I was lucky enough to have the chance to sit down and talk with Rep. Tom Cole about the issues the AVMA Government Relations Department is working towards. We discussed the Veterinary Services Investment Act and the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Act."

Now back in Stillwater, the students are planning a lunch meeting where they can share information they learned with their fellow veterinary students and discuss the importance of being active in government policy making on behalf of their profession.

"I believe as constituents it is very important that we, as a veterinary community, bind together in lobbying for the betterment of our profession," adds Tillery. "The veterinary family's lack of involvement was brought to light recently when we failed to protect our profession at the state level. I encourage all to take a more active role in the future to hopefully preserve our role as professionals in the animal caretaker and public health arenas."

Taylor is the son of Ed and Kathy Tillery of Pauls Valley, Okla. He attended Norman North High School and earned a B.S. degree in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma.

Sarah is the daughter of Robert and Sandra Ward of Oklahoma City, Okla. A native of Tulsa, Okla., she attended Union High School and also earned a B.S. degree in Zoology from the University of Oklahoma.

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 Medial 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.

###