LOGAN NESER: Hello! Today we’re here with Dr. Broadhurst to discuss the integration of shelter, medical, and management teams for a collaborative healthcare program. Dr. Broadhurst served as the Director of Clay County Animal Services for several years and currently is the Medical Director of this shelter. Thank you so much for joining us!

JENNIFER BROADHURST: Thank you for having me!

LOGAN: Thanks! During your career, you have served as a shelter veterinarian and as a shelter director, so we would love to hear some of your insights into the role of each position and working together to create collaborative healthcare programs for the shelter. So, for our first question: What should veterinarians understand about the role and responsibilities of directors in carrying out the mission and goals of the shelter?

JENNIFER: Alright, well that is very important and can be hard if you haven’t been in that role to fully appreciate. I served as the Shelter Medical Director and then Operations Director of a private non-profit before serving as the director at Clay County Animal Services, so I’ve had the private and government pieces to kind of understand the differences. For directors, they have to look at everything as a whole: The budget for the entire shelter, the happiness of all their staff, the ins and outs of the animals, and also if you’re in a government position, the politics that can go along with that and red tape. In a private shelter, you have to deal with donors and unhappy customers and unhappy citizens and so when you’re at the veterinarian, you just have your veterinarian medical responsibility, but as the director, you have a lot more on your shoulders.

LOGAN: Yeah, that’s a really good point. And so, what then do you think that directors should understand about the roles and responsibilities of veterinarians in contributing to the mission and goals of the shelter that might help that relationship be more smooth?

JENNIFER: I think a couple things are really important. One is understanding that we are licensed professionals and that is super important. So, if we say that we’re uncomfortable with doing something, if that’s not something that our license enables us to do, directors need to understand and respect that because that’s our livelihood, that’s our license on the line, so we have to be comfortable with what we’re doing. And also, they need to understand that vets can do a lot more than just exams and surgery in a shelter, especially vets who’ve been trained in shelter medicine. They have a lot more to contribute to the overall picture of the health of the animals in the shelter. Not only medically, but also behaviorally, and making sure that everyone is happy and healthy in the facility.

LOGAN: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Thank you.

JENNIFER: You’re welcome.

LOGAN: Do you have a couple of pro tips for newly minted shelter veterinarians that you think would help promote a collaborative relationship with the shelter director and management team?

JENNIFER: Yeah, I do. So, one of the biggest mistakes I’ve seen at some of the shelters I’ve visited is where the shelter clinic almost feels like it’s a private clinic inside of a shelter, and so the vets are working as a veterinarian in a shelter rather than a shelter veterinarian. So they are, especially if there’s public animals being seen, and the public appointments and surgeries are prioritized over shelter. I’ve seen where the shelter’s actually trying to schedule surgeries and schedule appointments, and it’s creating a backlog with the shelter animals and that can really create an adversarial relationship between the medical department and the rest of the shelter. So going into the shelter, do medical rounds every day, talk to the animal care staff, because they’re seeing everything. They’re taking care of them, they’re feeding them, they’re going to notice changes. And if you are going into the shelter prioritizing the relationships with the rest of the staff, that can really go a long way to creating an overall united front and a good team that can help take care of all the animals rather than just kind of isolating yourself.

LOGAN: Yeah, that’s really good advice. Thank you so much for joining us for this interview and our students will be seeing you again in a later module.

JENNIFER: Alright, great!