

Equine NEWS

COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE | WINTER 2007 | VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

WSU Veterinarian Instrumental in Development of Laparoscopic Surgery

Over the past decade, laparoscopy has emerged in veterinary medicine as a type of minimally invasive surgery that allows for a faster recovery, less scarring, and less pain.

Laparoscopes are inserted through small incisions in horses and contain viewing capabilities that allow surgeons to see structures inside the abdominal cavity, such as the large and small intestines, uterus, ovary, bladder, liver, spleen, diaphragm, inguinal rings, epiploic foramen, and stomach.

Modern laparoscopes contain a fiber-optic telescope that is connected to a video camera, light source, and TV monitor. Long narrow surgical instruments are passed through portals permitting operations to be performed.

Laparoscopes had limited uses in human surgery for decades, even without video-viewing capabilities. But since the development of video computer chips in the 1980s, which allows images to be viewed on TV screens, laparoscopes have found wide acceptance in human and veterinary medicine.

"Prior to cameras, surgeons had to look directly through an eyepiece to see," said **Dr. Claude Ragle**, a WSU associate professor and board-certified equine surgeon. Many laparoscopic techniques require surgeons to use both hands to guide the instruments, which made looking through a fixed eyepiece impractical.

"The technology aspects of minimal invasive surgery had to advance first, and then the surgical procedures came afterward," he said.

Dr. Ragle was one of the first veterinarians to adapt laparoscopy to clinical practice and helped develop useful procedures. As in human medicine, it is rapidly becoming a popular and preferred method of surgery for horses.

"Dr. Ragle is truly one of the pioneers in the development of laparoscopic surgery in horses," said

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Dr. Ragle performing a laparoscopic ovariectomy in a standing sedated horse. The surgery took approximately 30 minutes.

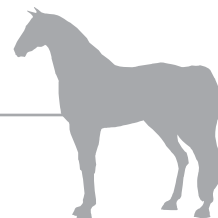
Dr. Kelly Farnsworth, a WSU clinical assistant professor and board-certified equine surgeon. "He was one of the very first people to get out there and do research on it and publish on it and perform a lot of the procedures. He flies around the country performing laparoscopy at various clinics, and people call on him to speak at national and international meetings. I do quite a bit of laparoscopy, but he is world-renowned for it."

Dr. Ragle's interest in laparoscopy was initially spawned in the late 1980s when he was looking for a better way to perform ovariectomies in horses and mules. It continued as he sought ways to reduce specific complications of advanced surgical procedures, such as a cryptorchidectomy, to remove an undescended testicle in stallions, and removal of granulosa cell tumors of the ovary in mares. As technology improved, research and procedures for performing laparoscopic surgery began to proliferate and be refined.

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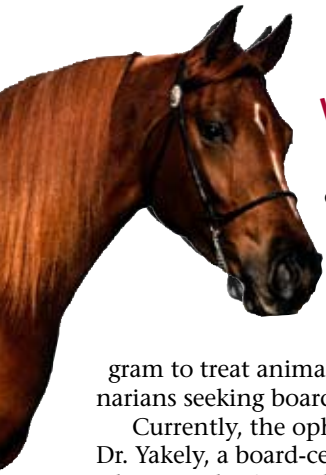


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WSU Adds Eye Care among Its List of Specialties

Ophthalmology is the newest specialty added to the repertoire of services offered at the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. In July, WSU teamed up with Spokane veterinary ophthalmologist **Dr. Bill Yakely** to form a combined residency program to treat animals with eye problems and train veterinarians seeking board-certification as eye care specialists.

Currently, the ophthalmology team at WSU consists of Dr. Yakely, a board-certified ophthalmologist for 31 years, who runs the Animal Eye Clinic in Spokane, and resident veterinarian **Dr. Terri Schneider**, a WSU clinical assistant professor and former head of the WSU Community Practice Service. At present, WSU offers the only ophthalmology service for animals in the Palouse area.

"Our goal is to increase WSU veterinary students' awareness of animal eye diseases, and to diagnose and care for animals that have them," Dr. Yakely said. "We also think it will be very useful to have Dr. Schneider board-certified in ophthalmology to help clients and serve the needs of the community."

"We treat all species of animals, including horses, dogs, cats, alpacas, birds, and geckos," Dr. Schneider said. "Animals can be seen by referral or owner scheduling."

"Typically, the cases we see are referred because of a failure to respond to treatment or the animals have complicated ocular problems," she said. "Patients with cataracts are also referred for surgery. Many times, general practitioners refer eye problems because certain conditions can deteriorate rapidly and the eye is not very forgiving."

Commonly seen eye problems in horses include non-healing corneal ulcers, deep ulcers, traumatic injuries, perforations, and an inflammatory disease of the eye called equine recurrent uveitis (ERU).

"Some problems are curable, and others such as ERU need to be managed and controlled to keep the animal's

vision," Dr. Schneider said. "Even if the animal can't see, there are ways to make the animal more comfortable. People need to know if their pet's condition is treatable or not, and sometimes owners just need an explanation for what is going on. From there, we can help with the best treatment for that animal."

Many conditions like chronic eye ulcers can be treated medically. Surgery can also be performed for traumatic injuries, cataracts, and other qualifying conditions. Some cases that come to WSU with cancers in and around the eye, including squamous cell carcinomas, are handled in a team fashion with the equine medicine and surgery service and oncology service.

"WSU is a great place for us to see horses because of the combined services offered here and the equipment that is available," Dr. Schneider said. "The demand for ophthalmology services is high. Our caseload is very full, both in Spokane at the Animal Eye Clinic and at the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital."

"Most ophthalmologists are located in big cities, and because there are so few board-certified veterinary ophthalmologists, many universities that have them are losing them to private practices," she said. "WSU is trying to overcome that problem through this program."

In addition to providing more specialized care for clients, the goal of training WSU veterinary students was also a large motivating factor in implementing the program.

"For the past two years that I was in the Community Practice, the students really wanted to be involved with ophthalmology cases," Dr. Schneider said. "The feedback I got from students was that they were so grateful to help with eye care cases and that it was a real asset to their education. The clients always say thank you too. They know how hard it is to get specialty eye care."

For more information about ophthalmology care for horses or to make an appointment, contact the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital at 509-335-0711 or the Animal Eye Clinic of Spokane at 509-535-9394. 📍

Laparoscopic Surgery, *continued from page 1*

Laparoscopy use in horses falls into two different categories: specific operative procedures and procedures used to diagnose, make prognoses, and treat horses therapeutically. Some techniques can be performed on standing horses, while others require the animal to be under general anesthesia.

Operative procedures include cryptorchidectomies, ovariectomies, ovariohysterectomies, closure of the nephrosplenic space, and bladder stone removals.

Laparoscopy is also useful for evaluating horses with diseases in the abdominal cavity, such as chronic colic, peritonitis, or reproductive problems, breaking down adhesions in horses that have repeated colic episodes, viewing and obtaining biopsies of internal masses, and performing site-guided tissue samples of various internal organs.

In fact, clear viewing inside the abdominal cavity is one of the main advantages of laparoscopy, not only for performing surgical procedures, but also for teaching.

"It is great for continuing education of veterinarians and teaching students anatomy," Dr. Ragle said. "You can look at anatomy books, but it is a real eye-opener to see and study the real anatomy. There is a lot to learn. For many types of equine operations we do, only one or two people actually doing the surgery can see what is going on.

Every time we do a laparoscopic surgery, everyone can see what is being done via large video monitors."

Still, laparoscopy is an emerging skill, generally only offered at large veterinary hospitals and performed by board-certified veterinary surgeons.

"It takes considerable time to train and become competent with minimal invasive operative techniques," Dr. Ragle said. "There are hospitals in most regions of the country that have laparoscopic equipment, and will vary in the range of laparoscopic procedures offered."

WSU continues to be a leader in the laparoscopic field. Recently, the college obtained a new electrosurgical instrument, called a Ligasure, that seals blood vessels during laparoscopic surgery.

"It really speeds up the whole process of doing ovariectomies in horses," Dr. Farnsworth said. "It is a clamp that seals across a vessel up to the size of a pencil in diameter. So rather than placing ligatures around a vessel, we are able to go in and seal it. We have had it now for about a year and we continue to be impressed by its performance."

For more information about laparoscopy or to schedule an appointment, contact the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital or Dr. Ragle at 509-335-0711 or ragle@vetmed.wsu.edu. 📍

New Procedure to Correct Equine Heart Rhythm Problem

Recently, the WSU equine internal medicine and cardiology team was trained to perform a new technique designed to help horses with an abnormal heart rhythm. The procedure, called electrical cardioversion, delivers an electrical shock internally to a horse's heart to convert the abnormal heart rhythm back to normal.

"This is a new service we are offering," said **Dr. Debra Sellon**, a WSU professor and board-certified veterinarian in equine internal medicine. "It is used for horses with a condition called atrial fibrillation, one of the most common abnormal heart rhythm problems in horses. It is especially common in large breed horses like Thoroughbreds, warm blood horses, and draft breeds.

"It is a situation in which the top two chambers of the horse's heart, the atria, have an abnormal rhythm, but the bottom chambers, the ventricles, are still working like normal," she said. "Our goal is to get the top two chambers to synchronize with the others.

To perform an electrical cardioversion, a regular defibrillator and specially-made heart catheters are used. The catheters are placed via the jugular vein. One catheter extends into the right atrium and another passes through the right atrium into the large arteries that exit into the lungs.

At the beginning of the procedure, the catheters are placed while the horse is standing, and then it is anesthetized.

"We take chest x-rays to make sure the catheters are placed correctly," Dr. Sellon said. "When everything looks good, we connect the catheter to the defibrillator equipment and deliver a fairly low-energy shock. If that doesn't work, we gradually increase the energy the defibrillator delivers until the heart rhythm converts to normal or we reach a maximum acceptable level. If the conversion attempts fail, we can wait a week and try again."

In all, the treatment generally takes one to two hours. The horse is usually under anesthesia for less than an hour of that time.

The WSU equine internal medicine and cardiology team learned to perform electrical cardioversions from **Dr. Kim McGurrin** of the University of Guelph's Ontario Veterinary College in September. Dr. McGurrin developed the procedure at that university, and has successfully treated scores of horses herself. She has traveled to numerous universities and private veterinary practices to train

veterinary specialists to perform the procedure.

"Dr. McGurrin has not experienced any severe complications in the numerous horses she has treated, and all but two horses had their heart converted back to a normal rhythm," Dr. Sellon said. "Sometimes a horse's heart won't convert on the first try, but usually does on the second."

The procedure is a welcome alternative to traditional medical therapy with quinidine salts. For some horses, the medication had severe undesirable side effects and it did not always work. Previous to electrical cardioversions, it was the only treatment option available for horses with atrial fibrillation.

Most horses that undergo an electrical cardioversion retain their normal heart rhythm after the procedure. "About 15 to 20 percent of horses will revert to an abnormal heart rhythm, but that relapse rate is also the same for horses treated with quinidine," Dr. Sellon said.

An additional benefit of electrical cardioversions is that horses recover faster and can return to their normal training schedule faster than those that were treated with quinidine.

Signs of atrial fibrillation in athletic horses emerge quickly after onset. These horses will not be able to run as fast or compete to their full potential. Because of these problems, most horses with atrial fibrillation are examined soon after onset of the problem and a diagnosis is made. Non-athletic horses may go longer before an owner notices a problem, and often a veterinarian discovers the abnormal rhythm in a routine checkup.

Horses referred to WSU for electrical cardioversion treatment generally stay in the veterinary teaching hospital two days before the procedure. During that time, the horse's heart rate and rhythm is monitored and attending veterinarians obtain blood work and perform a physical and complete cardiac evaluation. After the procedure, the horse remains in the hospital for two days.

"The WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is an ideal place to have this procedure done because we have the equipment and the combination of expertise between our internists, cardiologists, radiologists, and anesthesiologists," Dr. Sellon said.

For more information about electrical cardioversion treatment, contact the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital at 509-335-0711, or Dr. Debra Sellon at 509-335-0733 or dsellon@vetmed.wsu.edu.



WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital Switchboard

Main Hospital Switchboard and Emergencies....	509-335-0711	Department Chair	509-335-0738
Equine Appointments.....	509-335-0711	VTH Fax Number.....	509-335-3330
Agricultural Animal Appointments.....	509-335-5377	Billing	509-335-0816
(Non-Theriogenology)		Pharmacy	509-335-0736
Theriogenology (Equine and Ag Animal).....	509-335-0741	Pet Partnership Program.....	509-335-4569
Small Animal Appointments	509-335-0751 / 509-335-0752	Pet Loss Hotline	509-335-5704
Dean's Office	509-335-9515		

Want to know more about our equine clinical services, research, and accomplishments?

Check out our equine Web site at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-equine or the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital Web site at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/equineServices.asp.

Also feel free to call 509-335-0711 for **equine appointments** or **emergency care**.

Your 2007 WSU Equine Health Advisory Board Members

The WSU Equine Health Advisory Board is a volunteer leadership committee with equine interests from around the Northwest. The volunteers' role is to advise the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine's equine section about industry needs, health studies, and other issues of importance that affect horses and their owners, including long-term fundraising.

As valued advocates and advisors to WSU's equine program, the group works to promote and advance shared interests in equine health care service and research programs. These programs are significant contributors to horse health throughout the region, nation, and internationally. Because the board is enthusiastic about communicating with horse owners, they are featured in this issue. We invite readers to contact them with any questions, ideas, or suggestions you may have. You are also welcome to contact Dr. Richard DeBowes, chair of WSU Veterinary Clinical Sciences, at 509-335-0738 or debowes@vetmed.wsu.edu.



Linda Sferra

Linda Sferra is chair of the Equine Health Advisory Board and a life-long horse enthusiast. She has competed on the Northwest hunter/jumper circuit since 1979. Since 2000, she has focused on competing at Spruce Meadows in Calgary, Alberta. Sferra also helped train racehorses at Longacres Race Course for several years with her grandmother, a noted Washington horse trainer and breeder for more than 50 years. She also fox-hunts and trail rides regularly. She lives on a 35-acre farm with her husband, two children, and 10 horses. Located on Vashon Island, Washington, Sferra can be reached at 206-463-7263 or lindasferra@earthlink.net.



Ralph Vacca

Ralph Vacca has had vast experience with horses throughout his life and career. He attended WSU, majoring in Animal Husbandry, in the 1950s. He has worked in various horse industries in Washington and Kentucky and at the Washington Horse Breeders Association since 1964. As the association's general manager, Vacca is involved with horse sales and breeding stock purchases, and advising people who want to become involved in the industry. He also oversees publication of the monthly magazine, *The Washington Thoroughbred*. He is a past member of the Washington Horse Racing Commission and of the King County Agricultural Commission. Vacca can be reached at 253-288-7878 or maindesk@washingtonthoroughbred.com.



Dr. Michael G. Mason

Dr. Michael Mason graduated from the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine in 1968. He has been an equine practitioner in Washington for more than 35 years, treating equine athletes, including racing Thoroughbreds, rodeo, hunter-jumper, and dressage horses. He is

associated with the Washington Horse Racing Commission, Longacres, and is currently the morning emergency veterinarian for training horses at Emerald Downs. Dr. Mason is located in Auburn, Washington, and can be reached at 253-833-7883.



Ron Palelek

Ron Palelek has more than 40 years of experience in the management, care, breeding, training, and showing of Arabian and half-Arabian horses. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1963 and has owned and operated Vantage Point Farm II Ltd. since 1964. Since then, he has successfully shown more than 60 Arabian horses to national championships in both halter and performance categories. A renowned speaker, Palelek has conducted public and private seminars throughout North America, Europe, and Australia for showing and breeding Arabians. He is also an international judge for the South African and Australian national championship horse shows, and judges several horse shows in the United States as well. Located in Cheney, Washington, Palelek can be reached at 509-456-4057 or vpfltd@aol.com.



Debbie Pabst

Debbie Pabst, along with her husband Rick, owns and operates Blue Ribbon Farm, a Thoroughbred market breeder business in which they sell yearlings for racing. Pabst has worked with horses for more than 30 years and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Washington Thoroughbred Association (WTBA). She also is very involved in Nurse Mares, a network through the Farm Managers Association of the WTBA that matches orphan foals to mares that have lost foals. Occasionally she races horses herself. Miranda Gosselin, daughter of Debbie and Rick, graduated from the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine in 2006 and is practicing equine veterinary medicine near College Station, Texas. Located in Buckley, Washington, Pabst can be reached at 253-862-9076 or blueribbonfarm@tx3.net.



Ed Armstrong

Ed Armstrong is a life-long horse enthusiast and lobbyist for the horse industry in Washington state. He is a liaison for the Washington State Horse Council, the Washington State Horseman, and several other organizations to the Washington State legislature and other state agencies in matters regarding the horse industry. He also chairs the Ride for Research Benefit to support WSU. This successful event was held for the first time in August 2005 and again in 2006, and plans are being made for next year. Armstrong comes from a long line of horsemen, and is the son of the only living charter member of the Washington State Horseman, founded in 1941. He was born and raised south of Olympia, and showed horses at the prestigious Hilltop Stables in Pullman as a child. He is also an

experienced competitor in many aspects of the horse industry. Today he is very active in many state and breed organizations, and rides and drives horses regularly. Armstrong is proud to be affiliated with WSU, and is well respected throughout the horse industry for his dedication to the horsemen way of life. Located in Olympia, Washington, Armstrong can be reached at 360-352-5883.

Dick Monahan



Dick Monahan is an attorney and horseman who has been involved with quarterhorse racing for more than 30 years. He was a football player at the University of Idaho, where he graduated from law school in 1967. He returned to his hometown of Walla Walla, where he currently practices law. For 20 years, he has also served on the national board of the American

Quarter Horse Association, and is currently the association's chair of the racing committee and the racing council, which oversees quarterhorse racing worldwide. Monahan can be reached at 509-529-5700 or dmonahan@roach-monahan.com.

Jeff Anthony



Jeff Anthony is an investment banker and lifelong horse enthusiast whose family has been involved with saddle-bred, cutting, and hunter/jumper horses in Washington state for more than three generations. Anthony is a member of the USEF and the Washington State Hunter/Jumper Association. His wife, Cara, competes

on the hunter/jumper circuit nationwide as both a grand prix rider and trainer. They own and manage Potcreek Meadow Farm, an equestrian boarding and training facility located in Redmond, Washington. Anthony can be reached at 206-669-3440 or jeff@cfr-inc.com.

Dr. Richard and Kathy Vetter



Dr. Richard (Dick) Vetter and Kathy, his wife and technician, have a mobile equine veterinary dental practice, Performance Equine Dentistry Inc. P.S. Their "clinic" is a 24 foot gooseneck trailer that accommo-

dates both clinic and exam area for horses. Their practice covers everything from routine preventative dental care to periodontal and restorative work. They have recently added a digital x-ray system to further diagnostic capabilities. They offer a referral service for other veterinarians with special financial considerations.

Dr. Vetter earned his DVM from the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine in 1975. Kathy was also attending WSU when they met and married that same year. Dr. Vetter had

a mixed animal practice in Montesano, Washington, and a large animal/equine practice in Bend, Oregon, before settling in Chehalis, Washington, in 1985. He worked for the Washington State Department of Agriculture as an Area State Veterinarian and ran his own veterinary practice for a number of years. Currently, the equine dental practice and speaking engagements to horse groups on dentistry keep the couple busy traveling throughout Washington.

The Veters have three grown children: Kristy and Kerry, both WSU graduates, and Scott, who is a senior at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. All have been riders at some point, and Dick and Kathy still own several horses and enjoy trail riding. The Veters can be contacted at 360-245-3476, vetent@centurytel.net, or via their Web site, www.perfequinedentistry.com.



Dr. Susan Bernard, DVM

Dr. Susan Bernard is a semi-retired veterinarian who works part-time at the University of Washington as a scientist, and owns a small animal practice in western Washington. She earned her DVM from WSU in 1982, and during her freshman year of veterinary college started the student chapter of the American Association of Equine Practitioners. After graduating, Dr. Bernard

completed an internship in equine internal medicine at the Santa Barbara Equine Practice in California, and practiced at a private equine veterinary practice in Woodinville, Washington, for many years.

She is a lifelong horsewoman, and passionately competes in equestrian show jumping in the adult amateur jumpers division. She and her husband, Gary, have two children, Krysta, in high school, and Kara, a sophomore at WSU. Located in Monroe, Washington, Dr. Bernard can be contacted at sbernard@u.washington.edu.

Laura Allen



Laura Allen is the newest member of the WSU Equine Health Advisory Board, joining this year in July. She graduated from San Diego State University in California with a bachelor of science degree in nutrition in 1983. She and her husband have owned and operated Mills Horse and Tack in Bellevue, and specialized in supplying tack, clothing, and equipment for English style riders. Allen is originally from the San Diego area, and became an experienced rider in both Western and English styles as a youth in southern California. She has competed in Circuit A dressage shows in the past and will compete again next summer. Her daughter also competes in hunter/jumper events. The Allens have two teenage children, four horses, three dogs, and two cats. Located in Woodinville, Allen can be reached at 206-499-2943 or allen22@verizon.net.



"Ride for Research" a Galloping Success!

PHOTOS

For the second year, the Washington State Horse Council hit the trail to benefit the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine through its "Ride for Research" event.

Events included a trail ride for prizes, camping, an evening auction, and a barbecue dinner. The benefit was held August 4–6 at the Evergreen Sportsman's Club near Littlerock, Washington. By the end of the weekend, the group raised nearly \$10,000 for equine research at WSU.


"I'm a believer in the WSU program," said Ride for Research organizer Eddie Armstrong. "It seemed to be a great way to try and do our part to help."

The annual event brought together a wide variety of riders, including those from the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders, the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, the Woodbrook Hunt Club, and the Washington State Horse Council.

WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine is a national

or international leader in many areas of equine research including sports medicine, pain management, joint diseases, and new techniques in laparoscopic surgery. Additional work includes investigating equine digestive and infectious diseases, as well as the immune responses of horses and foals to disease. The college also recently constructed two new facilities—an equine research barn and a large animal reproductive teaching barn that will house the college's breeding, reproductive research, and teaching program.

"We expect the event to keep growing strong, with a goal of doubling our gift next year," Armstrong said. Next year's ride is set for the weekend of June 16, 2007.

For more information about the event, contact the Washington State Horse Council at 360-769-8083. For those interested in supporting the equine research programs at the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine, contact Lynne Haley at 509-335-5021 or lhaley@vetmed.wsu.edu. 

Equine News at the Speed of Light!

Beginning January 1, 2007, WSU *Equine News* will be available to our readers via e-mail. Instead of waiting for a hard copy in the mail, the newsletter will arrive in your e-mail inbox as a Web link to the WSU *Equine News* Web site to peruse at your convenience.

In it, you will be able to find out what is new with the WSU Equine Team, the latest in equine research, health issues, hospital services and activities regarding our college, and horse health throughout the Pacific Northwest. You can also meet our faculty doctors, residents, interns, staff, and members of the WSU Equine Advisory Board, learn about upcoming events at the college, and keep track of critical contact information for the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and college Web site. Online, the newsletter also offers the advantages of Internet hotlinks directly to the people and programs you read about.

The newsletter is published quarterly and is sent to teaching hospital clients, referring veterinarians, equine industry people, and horse lovers in general.

If you would like to keep receiving the newsletter electronically for free, simply go online to the WSU College of Veterinary Web site at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/EquineNews/index.asp and enroll. Previous issues of *Equine News* can also be found there. Those who prefer a hard copy of the newsletter can subscribe for a \$25 annual fee to receive four quarterly issues by U.S. Mail. To request a hard copy, you can mail this slip to the address below, call 509-335-3100, or go to the WSU veterinary Web site link above.

Hard copy mailings to non-subscribers will cease on January 1, 2007, so be sure to reply soon.

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