

# American Veterinary Medical History Society

“Devoted to the Diffusion of Veterinary History”

---

## AVMHS Annual Program – June 18, 2025

### *“Dr. James Steele: A Zoonotic Disease Legacy We Can Still Learn From”*

**Karen M. Becker, DVM, MPH**

Area Veterinarian (DE, MD, DC, VA)

Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

United States Department of Agriculture

Beltsville, Maryland

Program Chair/President-elect Dr. Arnold Goldman ([drgoldman@cantonanimalhospital.com](mailto:drgoldman@cantonanimalhospital.com)) cordially invites all AVMHS members and guests to a virtual presentation on Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at 7-8 pm EDT (6-7pm CST) via Zoom videoconferencing.



James Harlan Steele DVM, MPH (1913-2013)

Dr James Steele’s career in public health spanned seven decades and is still evolving as veterinary and human health epidemiologists carry on his legacy throughout the world. Dr. Karen Becker's presentation will summarize experiences Dr. Steele shared with professionals he mentored throughout his career until his death at the age of 100. Highlights from Dr. Steele’s biography will be included to provide a historical perspective with illustrations that are relevant to current challenges we face that demand One Health solutions.

Being so fortunate to have had the opportunity to know Dr. Steele as a mentor, colleague and dear friend, the speaker will share personal, first-hand experiences that will provide insight into the brilliance and genius of one of the most extraordinary veterinarians that has ever lived.

The speaker will use her own experiences with Dr. Steele as well as share stories from other public and animal health leaders who have stood on the shoulders of a visionary One Health leader to face zoonotic disease threats. The experiences and lessons learned will transition to recent global health threats which have emerged since Dr Steele’ death, including COVID 19 and the H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus, which was first reported in the United States in January of 2022, and has evolved to infect dairy cattle and other mammals.

The presentation will lead the audience through a process to view problems from a One Health lens that will allow us to better understand the creativity, innovation and collaborative spirit needed to solve some of the biggest challenges we now face in agriculture and public health.

The Zoom invitation link will be sent to all members and guests prior to the meeting.

President Dr. Margaret “Peggy” Brosnahan ( <a href="mailto:pegbros@gmail.com">pegbros@gmail.com</a> ) will convene the <b>AVMHS Annual Business Meeting</b> immediately following Dr. Becker’s talk from 8-9pm EDT (7-8pm CST).
---

## About Dr. Karen M. Becker



Dr. Karen M. Becker, a veterinarian, currently serves at the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) as the Area Veterinarian in Charge for Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia with focus on preparedness and response to foreign diseases and animal health to support the U.S. export and import industry. She practiced small animal and some large animal veterinary medicine from 1987-1998.

Dr. Becker was a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officer (1998-2000) based in North Carolina with a focus on infectious disease investigation and response and surveillance during natural disasters such as the major hurricanes (i.e., Dennis, Irene, and Floyd) at North Carolina's Department of Health. In 2000, she joined the U.S. Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Global Health based in Washington DC with a focus on global health policy. During her tenure she helped create a Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program in China and served on a U.S. Committee to assess and interpret the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Systems Performance Report. In addition, she was assigned to evaluate needs and assess progress of the Healthy People 2000 goals and objectives.

From 2001 through 2006, Dr. Becker served as a senior public health advisor to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness, with a focus on strengthening National and Global health security against naturally occurring and intentional public health threats. She was on detail (2006-2010) from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service to USAID's Africa Bureau to assist with the prevention and control of avian influenza as well as other zoonotic and livestock disease threats impacting public health and agricultural development. From 2013- 2018, she served as the Director of the Applied Epidemiology Staff within USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service's (FSIS) Office of Public Health and Science. From 2018-2020, Dr. Becker's position as the Director of the Office of Health Services for the Peace Corp was unprecedented in demonstrating how veterinarians can make an impact and lead in both animal and human health, including during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Becker earned a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree from Brown University, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree from the University of Illinois's College of Veterinary Medicine, a Master's in Public Health (MPH) from Johns Hopkins University and is board certified by the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine (DACVPM). In 2021, the American Veterinary One Health Society (AVOHS)—then called American Veterinary Epidemiology Society (AVES)—awarded her their coveted K.F. Meyer-James H. Steele Gold Head Cane Award. She was elected President of AVOHS in June 2023.

From: American One Health Veterinary Society

<https://onehealthinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Dr.-Karen-M.-Becker-Biography-July2023-2.pdf>

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Carter, Craig N. and Cynthia Gregg Hoobler. *One Man, One Medicine, One Health: The James H. Steele Story*. [Charleston, SC?]: C.N. Carter, 2009. 471 pgs. ISBN: 9781439240045

Carter, Craig N. and Cynthia Gregg Hoobler. *Animal Health Human Health One Health: The Life and Legacy of Dr. James H. Steele*. CreateSpace, USA: [C.N. Carter], 2015. 439 pgs. ISBN: 9781511558013

Schultz MG. In memoriam: James Harlan Steele (1913-2013). *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2014 Mar;20(3):514-5. doi: 10.3201/eid2003.im2003. PubMed Central, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3944871/>

Steele, James H. and Peter Schantz. CDC History: James H. Steele, DVM, MPH, interview by Dr. Peter Schantz, 1989. *The Global Health Chronicle*. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/20854>