

An overview of the 2020 AABP Conference

AABP Attendees Believed, Engaged, Connected and Adapted at First-ever Virtual Annual Conference

Despite sudden challenges and having to relocate and re-focus the hybrid in-person/virtual 2020 53rd American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) Annual Conference in Louisville, Ky, to a virtual-only conference in a matter of hours because of civil unrest in the city, the conference still went on with a skeleton crew of AABP staff members and volunteers. Regardless, beef and dairy veterinarians were able to get high-quality CE and interact with speakers and others via the AABP virtual conference platform, Zoom and other ways to virtually meet.

With the theme “Believe. Engage. Connect!” AABP could have easily added the word “Adapt”. AABP staff, some leadership, audiovisual staff and a handful of others brought the full virtual conference live-streamed to attendees and members.

“The world outside AABP is in a difficult time,” said AABP Executive Director Dr. K. Fred Gingrich, II. “As this conference morphed into a virtual-only offering, the safety of our attendees was of the highest concern. Prior to the conference when downtown Louisville was being shutdown, we moved quickly to a new site away from downtown.” He noted that the originally planned in-person conference changed to a hybrid conference in three months, which then changed to a virtual-only conference in a matter of hours. Gingrich says, “Our mantra became, ‘We’re going to figure it out!’”.

“We had some quick-thinking, problem-solving people already here and ready to act,” added AABP President and 2020 Program Chair Dr. Carie Telgen. “We found another location to stream the conference. One of the best qualities of cattle veterinarians is we know how to dodge the kicks, how to figure things out quickly and keep the ‘cattle’ moving!”

There was a handful of attendees in-person in Louisville. Telgen noted it was great to have keynote speaker Amy te Plate-Church, as well as the two 2021 vice president candidates, Drs. Michael Capel and Randall Spare, presenting live on-site, which were live streamed to viewers. “The live presentations provided an excellent opportunity for both the members as well as the speakers, and it was just enough ‘normalcy’ to keep us energized for the next couple days,” she added.

In addition to scientific CE and presentations on cattle diseases, nutrition, etc., the theme of mental health and wellness was addressed several times. Clinical psychologist Josh Tanguay, who is married to a bovine veterinarian, noted in his presentation that the suicide rate for male veterinarians and female veterinarians are 2.1 and 3.5 times higher than the general population, respectively.

In his departing address, Immediate Past President Dr. Calvin Booker specifically pointed out AABP’s new initiative, the Humans of AABP Facebook series. “These posts describe the real struggles of members in an anonymous way. By posting these we hope it will help normalize these situations and that sharing them will help ourselves and others seek out practical ways to improve our wellness.”

“There is an unacceptable rate of suicide in our profession,” Gingrich added. “There have been AABP members who have ended their life rather than living it with us. If you need help, reach out. Believe in yourself and your future and engage and connect with your colleagues.”

Gingrich noted that bovine veterinarians have foresight and look for new ways to provide services for their clients, and AABP strives to do the same for its members.

The American Association of Bovine Practitioners is an international association of veterinarians serving society as leaders in cattle health, welfare and productivity.

New and free initiatives for members include a bi-monthly e-newsletter, podcasts (37,500 downloads in a little more than a year), virtual CE that has been provided long before COVID including 800 RACE-approved live webinar views, RACE-approved conference presentations available online through the Beef Cattle Institute (8,000 views so far), and searchable Proceedings and the *Bovine Practitioner*.