



## ACVS Fellowship Programs

### **Background:**

ACVS recognizes that many of its members have achieved, or may wish to achieve, a level of expertise in a specific field (e.g., Minimally Invasive Surgery, Surgical Oncology, Sports Medicine Surgery, Orthopedics, Neurosurgery, Farm Animal Surgery). This expertise allows ACVS Diplomates to interact with other surgeons, related non-surgical experts and the lay community in such a way as to provide a leadership role in matters pertaining to surgery in their focused field. In order to fulfill this membership need, ACVS established ACVS Fellowship Programs. Fellows of these programs have or would have specific expertise and knowledge in their specialized disciplines beyond what can be mastered within a 3-year ACVS Veterinary Surgery Residency Program. ACVS recognizes this expertise within its own ranks and wishes to formally acknowledge this achievement, as well as provide assistance in formalizing training programs to continue discipline-specific expertise under the ACVS umbrella.

### **Overview:**

ACVS Fellowship Programs are not for the purpose of developing subspecialties, and ACVS Diplomates concluding these programs will not be recognized as subspecialists. Rather, these programs will be recognized by ACVS as ACVS Fellowship Programs, and individuals successfully completing one of these programs will be awarded the title of “ACVS Fellow” in the specific field. The objective of a fellowship program is to expand upon the surgical knowledge and experience obtained during the ACVS veterinary surgery residency. Thus, individuals participating in these programs must have completed all requirements of an ACVS veterinary surgery residency and have had their credentials approved by ACVS. The title of ACVS Fellow is not conferred until achieving ACVS Diplomate status. ACVS Fellowship Programs serve to develop highly skilled surgeons who, in turn, will become recognized experts in a specific surgical field.

### **Program Development:**

The ACVS Fellowship Committee reviews each proposed fellowship program and makes recommendations to the ACVS Board of Regents (BOR) regarding approval. Each approved fellowship program develops its own specific guidelines as to what is required for a candidate to obtain the title of ACVS Fellow in a specific field. These requirements are structured around an ACVS core of essential components. Each individual fellowship program is required to establish specific components to the training program and ensure that these minimum standards are met.

The following core components are required of an ACVS Fellowship Program:

1. Fellowship programs must be structured with robust instruction in a focused field of study but are not expected to conduct specific testing by examination.
2. The duration of fellowship programs may be variable based on the area of focus. A 52-week framework is anticipated. Deviations from this timeline should be documented and justified in writing to the Fellowship Oversight Committee. The Fellowship Oversight Committee should inform the ACVS Fellowship Committee of such changes.
3. ACVS Fellowship Programs are encouraged to utilize specialists in other fields, including American Board of Veterinary Specialties recognized specialty organizations, international specialty organizations such as the European College of Veterinary Surgery and counterparts in human medicine, for training of fellows.
4. Fellowship programs must have measurable outcomes for the successful completion of these programs and mastery of the field of surgical study such as:
  - a. Publication requirements
  - b. Research project completion
  - c. Presentation requirements
  - d. Successful completion of a defined number of surgical and related non-surgical rotations
  - e. Attendance at specified seminars, conferences, lectures, etc.
  - f. Competency assessment by supervisor evaluation, module completion and/or examination
  - g. Maintenance of Activity and Case Logs to document required clinical and non-clinical experience

**General Guidelines for Application for Establishing an ACVS Fellowship Training Program:**

The ACVS Fellowship Committee will review requests for a new fellowship program. Requests for approval of a fellowship program should include justification for the development of the fellowship program, including:

- a. Evidence of a critical mass of Diplomates within the field who desire to establish the program. A minimum of five ACVS Diplomates is required.
- b. A description of the specific knowledge base or practice area that exists to merit an ACVS Fellowship Program.

**Minimum Standards Training Document:**

Once the application to establish an ACVS Fellowship Training Program has undergone the review process and has been approved by the Board of Regents, the training document must be developed using the Minimum Standards for ACVS Fellowship Training document. The training document should be modified to specifically include:

- a. Description of the proposed training program for the fellowship. This should include case type and number, activities, seminars, rounds, scholarly activities and any pertinent training timelines.
- b. List and description of any facility or instructional requirements for programs providing training within the fellowship.
- c. Proposed procedure for recognition of fellows completing the program, including a description of the proposed method for determination of mastery within the field.
- d. Plan for organization and administration of the fellowship, such as the selection and duties of officers, board members or committee members.
- e. Mechanism for demonstrating continuing professional development in the field.

### **Becoming an ACVS Fellow in an ACVS Fellowship Program:**

- **ACVS Founding Fellows:**

Existing ACVS Diplomates may qualify as ACVS Founding Fellows for the purposes of establishing a critical mass for fellowship programs. ACVS Diplomates:

1. Would have the opportunity to respond to an “open call” to the membership upon the application for establishment of a fellowship program.
2. Would be approved if they can fulfill minimum requirements such as:
  - a. Have an established reputation of excellence in the field as documented by three letters of reference
  - b. Have an established record of publication and/or presentation in the fellowship topic area
  - c. Have sufficient experience so as to establish an area of expertise (e.g., >5 years experience as an ACVS Diplomate)
  - d. Can meet these requirements within a finite period (e.g., one year from announcement of the intent to form a fellowship program).

ACVS Diplomates who meet the minimum requirements would be granted the title of “ACVS Founding Fellow” in the specific field.

- **Extension of Consideration for ACVS Founding Fellow Status:**

1. Acceptance of founding fellows is the first step towards establishment of fellowship training programs. To maximize inclusiveness and availability of fellowship training programs, the ACVS may extend an opportunity for Extension of Consideration for Founding Fellow Status to ACVS Diplomates with national and/or international recognition within the discipline at the time of the original call for founding fellows who did not apply at that time. Also eligible would be Diplomates who applied for founding fellow status, fulfilled some of the founding fellow requirements, but lacked one or more of the stated explicit requirements and therefore were not accepted as founding fellows. Specific

eligibility requirements will be provided when an Extension of Consideration for Founding Fellow Status is announcement.

When an Extension of Consideration for Founding Fellow Status is announced, applicants' credentials will first be evaluated by the FOC to ensure that recognition and leadership in the discipline were established at the time of open call for founding fellow applications. If found eligible for Extension of Consideration, the candidate must submit credentials to be re-evaluated within 3 years of the extension, and if the previously unmet requirements have been completed, the status of founding fellow will be recommended to the Fellowship Committee, who will review the recommendations and forward to the ACVS Board of Regents for final approval.

- **New ACVS Fellows:**

1. Candidates enrolling in an ACVS Fellowship Program must have successfully completed all requirements of an ACVS Veterinary Surgery Residency Program and have had their credentials approved by ACVS.
2. Candidates must successfully complete the fellowship program.
3. The title of ACVS Fellow is not conferred and may not be used until ACVS Diplomate status has been achieved.
4. ACVS Fellowship Programs are not subspecialties and the title of ACVS Fellow shall not be referred to as a subspecialist.

ACVS members interested in establishing a fellowship program in their specialized discipline at their institution and would like further information are encouraged to contact the ACVS office ([acvs@acvs.org](mailto:acvs@acvs.org)).