Anatomic Veterinary Usage: Discussion Around Technical Nomenclature Vs. Jargon

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ABSTRACT
This article discusses some examples of problems derived from the mix of technical jargon and anatomical veterinary words and makes recommendations regarding their use according to specific situations.

Keywords: anatomy, comparative medicine, Nomina Anatomica Veterinaria, anatomy teaching

Any type of scientific nomenclature must be clear, precise, coherent, comprehensive and globally accepted (Musil, Blankova, and Baca 2018) (Chmielewski 2020), in addition to being correctly used within the field (Chmielewski and Strzelec 2020). Knowledge of anatomical nomenclature ensures veterinarians are able to communicate in the same way. Anatomical nomenclature is therefore an essential tool when communicating information between veterinarians, academics, students, researchers, veterinary nurses, physiotherapists, and others both within the profession and related professions.

I want to articulate some personal reflections in relation to the proper use of veterinary anatomical nomenclature. This letter is intended to provoke broader and more open discussions within the profession and encourage readers to reflect upon their own use, and that of others, in relation to terminology and nomenclature of animal anatomy.

Two frequent examples from clinics can illustrate why clinical jargon is so different from official anatomical nomenclature. The use of jargon is only justified when it is addressed to non-veterinarians. For instance, using “honeycomb” and “ren-net”, which is jargon for reticulum and abomasum, respectively. Additionally, “Achilles’ tendon” for tendo calcaneus communis, “fontanella” for fonticuli cranii, “twin muscles” for musculus gastrocnemius (Caput laterale and Caput mediale), “jaws” for maxilla and mandibula, “fangs” for dentes canini, “the side” for lateralis, “stern” for cauda, “windpipe” for trachea and so on. In summary, jargon must be used but only in the appropriate situation. Mixing them is almost never justified.

But some jargon is commonly applied in technical contexts. For instance, the term “navicular”, which is nearly always used instead of distal sesamoid bone, with no sense that anatomically it corresponds to the navicular bone [Os naviculare] or the central tarsal bone [Os tarsi centrale]. This erroneous form is so widespread that it is unlikely that the correct form would be recognized as valid in the clinical world; “milk vein” is another example. The term is used instead of vena epigastrica [Vena epigastrica cranialis superficialis]. Other examples include names of the acropodial series, which go from Phalanx proximalis [Os compedeale], to Phalanx media [Os coronale] and Phalanx distalis [Os unguculare, Os ungulare], and not “first” to “second” and “third”; “check ligament” for caput tendineum of the deep digital flexor tendon; and “perforated tendon” and “perforating tendon” for tendons of musculus flexor digitorum superficialis and musculus flexor digitorum profundus, respectively.

The origins of anatomical nomenclature date back to antiquity, originating in the common languages of that era, Greek as well as Latin (Kachlik et al. 2008). Veterinary anatomical nomenclature is currently compiled by the International Committee on Veterinary Gross Anatomical Nomenclature (ICVGAN) in its Nomina Anatomica Veterinaria (the most recent, sixth edition was published in 2017), often referred to as NAV. The World Association of Veterinary Anatomists (WAVA) has overall responsibility for the text, committees and publication with professionals from all over the world contributing to this essential undertaking. Specific names have been brought together as well as duplicate terms, and the reduction in the number of words has made professional life easier, with less complexity and, additionally, better communicative effects. WAVA has additionally published similar volumes for histological and embryological anatomy, namely the Nomina Histologica Veterinaria and Nomina Embryologica Veterinaria, which also make use of a series of international nomenclature committees. Although the publication of NAV is issued as a free open access booklet online and as a traditional book, its promotion has not always been taken up by everyone and, furthermore, it is not always used by everyone.

A well-developed scientific veterinary training takes pride in quality and unambiguous and proper nomenclature. Moreover, I am aware that a minimal, academic knowledge of Latin and Greek roots helps make anatomical nomenclature more sensible. To cite two examples: the “Azygos vein” [vena Azygos], from the Greek “without a pair”, explains the lack of a similar vein, for some domestic species, on the contralateral side of the vertebral column in the thorax. And the spleen, “lien” or “spleen” (although Nomina prefers the first term [lien]), both involving derivative adjectives such as “lienalis” [Lig. Lienorenale] and “splenicus” [Sulcus splenialis]. It is essential that technical nomenclature is internationally accepted and recognized, but never “democratized” with vernacular words within technical contexts.

REFERENCES
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