

# Vet on wheels makes (dog) house calls

By Neal Heldano  
staff writer

**D**R. BILL SMALLER is a man driven to provide convenient veterinary care.

Smaller is so driven he spent \$45,000 for a fully-equipped medical van to make house calls on area pets.

"When I was in private practice I categorized client complaints," the Southfield resident said. "And the one thing that kept coming up was house calls. A great percentage of cases involve geriatric pets, older people or people with a lot of pets."

So Smaller started Oakland Veterinary Services, the Housecall Practice. The Southfield-based service started in May when Smaller received his hospital on wheels.

"Everything I can do in a hospital I can do here," Smaller said. "I used to have a wagon but there were too many times I had to refer cases back to the hospital."

Smaller solved that problem by equipping his van with an operating table, X-ray equipment, pharmacy, cage space, refrigeration and lab facilities.

The veterinarian booked up with Dr.

Robert Stone at the Stone Veterinary clinic, 19160 10 Mile, Southfield, and uses that location as his base.

"I do some surgery at the hospital and handle all of the road work," Smaller said.

THE ROAD work involves being on duty from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. everyday, handling around 40 to 50 calls a week and responding to emergency situa-

tions in the Southfield, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Birmingham areas along with neighboring communities.

"This keeps me busy working 60 to 70 hours a week," he said. "But I got tired working in an office 9 to 5. I found it very confining. I like being outside. The only drawback is the way people drive."



Dr. Bill Smaller, using a microscope in his mobile office, checks out a specimen for signs of parasites. "Everything I can do in a hospital I can do here," Smaller says.

Driving to treat animals in their homes has its advantages, Smaller said. By examining the home situation, Smaller said it is easier to spot problems such as lead poisoning and insecticide contamination.

"The animals seem to act much better in their home environment than they do in the hospital," Smaller said. "A lot of them I actually examine in the home if they don't need any special attention."

Client Linda Sherman of Southfield agreed.

"This is easier than going to the vet five or six times," said the owner of three cats, two birds and a great dane named Baron. "I could get Baron to the vet, but not in to see the vet."

Smaller treated Baron in the van and then went inside to examine the two birds. The charge for this kind of house call is \$20, but Smaller said the increased convenience often offsets the \$5 difference in price compared to a regular office visit.

"About 75 percent of my patients are dogs and cats but I also treat birds, horses and other exotic pets," Smaller said.

When Smaller started his work, he said other vets were wary of a new doctor on wheels taking away clients.

But Smaller said his practice has expanded the number of treated animals without hurting other veterinarians.

"A lot of my clients are not veterinarians' clients," he said. "These animals would not see a vet unless the vet came to them. I'm getting to treat animals vets normally would not see."

## Softball teams set to register

The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department will be accepting registrations for adult co-ed and men's over 30 softball teams at the parks and recreation office, 31555 11 Mile, until Monday, Aug. 6.

A \$295 team registration fee is due at the time of registration.

Teams will play a 14 game schedule beginning in mid August and will culminate with a double elimination playoff for the top five teams. Games will be played twice a week. There is no residency requirement.

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