

# Donald Abt, Penn Vet

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DEATHS

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Donald (Don) Abt, V'61, a professor emeritus of aquatic animal medicine and pathology, director of the Laboratory for Marine Animal Health, and a former associate dean at Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine, died on July 29.

A native New Englander, Dr. Abt obtained a BS in zoology from the University of Massachusetts and, in 1961, graduated from Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine. After graduating, Dr. Abt joined Penn Vet's faculty, teaching anatomy and doing graduate work in biostatistics and epidemiology. In 1966, he became an associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in Penn Vet, and seven years later, he was promoted to a full professor. In 1970, he became Penn Vet's associate dean for academic affairs, implementing a then-unusual core-elective curriculum at the school. He continued teaching at the same time,

*Donald Abt*

directing Penn Vet's Aquavet program, an intensive introductory course in aquatic veterinary medicine.

In 1989, Dr. Abt was named the Robert Marshak Term Professor of Aquatic Animal Medicine and Pathology (*Almanac* October 24, 1989 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v36pdf/n10/102489.pdf>)). As part of this role, he assumed direction of the Laboratory for Marine Animal Health, a diagnostic laboratory established by Penn and the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University and located in Woods Hole, MA. "It is most fitting that the individual who pioneered our Aquavet program and the school's focus on aquatic animal medicine and pathology be awarded this honor," said then-Penn Vet dean Edwin Andrews. "He brings to this position his enthusiasm for this specialty area, his encyclopedic knowledge of the school and of veterinary medicine across the nation." As the director of the LMAH, Dr. Abt helped catalog the effect of environmental factors on marine life, identifying previously unknown diseases. He retired from Penn and LMAH in 2001, taking emeritus status, but continued teaching in the Aquavet program.

Outside of Penn, Dr. Abt was active in the International Association for Aquatic Animal Medicine. He was an elected member, served as president, and won its William Medway Award for Teaching Excellence. "[He had] a positive and lasting impact on the hundreds of students that were lucky enough to learn from and spend time with him (especially at the famous end-of-course clambakes he hosted every year!)," said the IAAAM in an online tribute.

Dr. Abt is survived by his wife, Sandy, and his children, David (Debby) and Debbie (Bill).