Tom Thorne and Beth Williams Award 
Recipient for 2011: Dr. Jonna A. K. Mazet

Dr. Jonna Mazet is one of the nation’s leaders in the field of wildlife health teaching, research and service. Her career since graduation from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, just 20 some years ago are a model for the role that veterinary medicine plays in wildlife and ecosystem health and conservation on regional, national and global scales. She has also been at the forefront of the national movement towards better integration of veterinary and human medicine, or “One Health.”

Jonna graduated from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine (UCD-SVM) in 1992 with both DVM and MPVM degrees. Her MPVM thesis work on sarcoptic mange in bighorn sheep provided a new serologic assay and revealed the widespread nature and clinical complexity of that disease and strongly influenced wildlife management policy. Her PhD established mink as an experimental model for the effects of both acute and chronic exposure to oil in sea otters and remains the definitive work in this field.

Dr. Mazet was promptly hired by the California Department of Fish and Game’s (CDFG) Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) to help accomplish the delicate task of bringing together oil industry, academic, government, and wildlife care groups to build the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN). This program is now widely acknowledged as the world leader in oiled wildlife response and has demonstrated how the veterinary profession can contribute to address disasters involving wildlife. Under her leadership and vision, Jonna successfully transferred the OWCN program from DFG-OSPR to the UCD-SVM, which helped established the Wildlife Health Center (WHC) as a stand-alone unit within the SVM in 1998. This work earned her the CDFG “Sustained Superior Accomplishment Award” in 1995 and the States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force “Legacy Award” in 2000. Dr. Mazet then helped build the WHC into a UCD “Center of Excellence” that is now one of the most comprehensive and successful programs of its kind at a school of veterinary medicine. She managed a $20 million annual budget, oversaw a eight senior wildlife veterinarians, biologists, supporting administrative and technical staff, and involvement of more than 60 faculty engaged in wildlife health research and teaching. Under her leadership and vision, the WHC established and implemented several signature programs, including the SeaDoc Society and the Health for Animal and Livelihoods Improvement (HALI) project in Tanzania. More recently, she forged a partnership with the non-profit Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, now Gorilla Docs, which leads conservation of the world’s most endangered great apes.

In addition to directing the WHC, as a Professor of Wildlife Epidemiology in the Department of Medicine and Epidemiology and she trained future veterinarians, epidemiologists and wildlife biologists. In 12 years, Jonna has served as major advisor to 20 PhD and 24 MPVM students, and sustained one of the most fertile training rounds for wildlife health professionals anywhere. Her research on free-ranging wildlife health, wildlife zoonoses, ecosystem health risk assessment, and diagnostic test validation has resulted in 60+ peer-reviewed scientific papers in high impact journals such as Emerging Infectious Diseases, PLoS ONE, and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. In 2011 Jonna was awarded a $75 million grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to establish the PREDICT project under USAID’s Emerging Pandemic Threats program. This is the largest single competitive federal award ever received for investigating wildlife health, and brought national and international attention to the importance of wildlife disease surveillance and the interconnectedness between wildlife and human health.

Jonna’s accomplishments are diverse and numerous and her leadership in the field of wildlife and One Health is truly exemplary. At essentially every phase of her career she has both provided important
new discoveries in wildlife health and then guided the implementation of that knowledge such that it changed and improved wildlife management and conservation.