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HEALTH CARE

CityVet brought on a new chief strategy officer. Here's what's ahead



IN THIS ARTICLE

Dr. Jennifer Welser is the new chief strategy officer of Dallas-based CityVet.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



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In May, Dallas-based CityVet appointed Dr. Jennifer Welser as its new chief strategy officer.

In her new role, Dr. Welser will lead the company's growth initiatives and elevate CityVet's clinical learning and

development program.

Prior to joining CityVet, she served as chief medical officer at Washington-based Mars Veterinary Health. Dr. Welser is also a practicing, board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist.

Founded in 1999 by Dr. Chip Cannon, CityVet has a network of 29 branded and non-branded, veterinary-owned practices with 500 employees across Texas and Colorado. The practices offer vet care, boarding, grooming and pet products.

There are currently 21 locations across North Texas.

Dr. Welser spoke with the *Dallas Business Journal* about why CityVet was the right fit for her and shares her goals for her new role.

What inspired you to become a veterinarian?

I am a second-generation veterinarian. My father, Dr. John Welser, was a veterinarian, so I was exposed early on to what medicine look like. He was in academia and then in the pharmaceutical industry. I was one of those kids that was bringing home every pet from the side of the road, so that was always in my blood to be a veterinarian.

I had a brief time when I thought about going into human medicine. During my undergrad at the University of Vermont, I took a year off, went to Colorado and worked at a ranch to decide what I wanted to do for a while. After, I went back to veterinary school at Michigan State.

Why was CityVet the right fit for you?

When I became the chief medical officer for Mars, it was really a different career path for a time. I was building a global medical function and getting exposed to so many things and it was awesome. But I was also getting a little itchy being so far away from the delivery of care and wanted to change from the big corporate environment.

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The veterinary world is very small, so I had known about CityVet and had been tracking them over the course of my career. We had a couple conversations, and I was sold, it sounded perfect. I was living in the Pacific Northwest at the time and relocated here to Dallas a couple of months ago.

Are there any challenges currently facing the veterinary health sector?

There is the challenge in the cost of veterinary care. It's good that we have a third-party payer system and insurance. But there are some things that need to adjust, like making sure we're paying our staff appropriately. Veterinarians are always saying that they're not in it for the money, but they deserve to make a good living, so we're trying to balance some of those pieces.

We also have a shortage of clinical staff in both the veterinarians and technicians. There's a lot of high student debt and burnout. I think that the telemedicine will play a big role in access to care for people because regionally there aren't as many veterinarians as possible available. Sometimes the veterinarian is backed up and you can't get in for a few weeks. There's a lot of things that we can play with for accessibility and affordability.

What do you hope to accomplish in your new role?

I want to bring the shared ownership model to the emergency specialty work. The model will allow people from my background to be able to own their own practice, because starting a specialty practice is much more expensive.

We also need to up it a little bit on technology and digitization to make sure we're streamlining the process for everybody and bringing in efficiencies.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.



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