



Spotlight on your District 8 Trustee

**Morag Mackay RVN, Cert. Ed, RLATG, SRS
District 8 Trustee (2010 – 2012)
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1. **What position do you hold in your local branch?**

SDAALAS President 2009 and Past President 2010

2. **How did you get involved with SDAALAS?**

Mari Bray introduced me to the local SDAALAS branch 12 years ago when I first moved to San Diego. Diana Kelsey, who was the SDAALAS Program Chair for eight years prior to my accepting the position, recruited me. I think Diana needed a well-deserved break!! I served as Program Chair for several years then was elected as President Elect in 2008, President 2009.

3. **How did you get involved at the national level of AALAS?**

I served on the National AALAS Certification and Registry Board (CRB) for 3 years and then was elected District 8 Trustee (2010-2012) ☺

4. **What was your first job working in lab animal science?**

My first job was as a trainee veterinary nurse for Glasgow University Veterinary School. I worked in a multi-species facility that included dogs, cats, pigs, sheep, rabbits, rats, mice, guinea pigs, marmosets, baboons, and potoroos, which are now an endangered species (see picture below).



5. **Where do you work and what is your current position?**

I work for La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology and my position is Director of the Department of Laboratory Animal Care (DLAC). I am also an adjunct teacher for the Mesa College of Animal Health Technology RVT program where I teach practical lab animal science.

6. **What are your qualifications?**

I am a Registered Veterinary Nurse and have a Certificate in Education. I am certified at the RLATG level and also as a SRS (Surgical Research Specialist) by the Academy of Surgical Research. I also hold a certificate in Pet Store Management. Next stop – CMAR!

7. **What is your area of expertise?**

My area of expertise would be small animal surgery, followed closely by training, and of course management. Each day brings a new challenge 😊

8. **How long have you worked in the field of Laboratory Animal Science?**

I have worked in the Laboratory Animal Field for my whole working career, 25 years, and still love every day of it!

9. **When did you realize you wanted to work with animals?**

I guess I realized (or my mum and dad did) when I was only three years old and was found “playing” with a wild mouse in some packing boxes when we were moving house. From here I developed a love and passion for working with animals and started working nights and weekends in a local veterinary practice when I was thirteen. My first paid weekend job was in a Pet Store where they sold a whole range of pocket and exotic pets.

10. **What is your favorite species to work with and why?**

I really love working with all the species but I had lots and lots of fun working with the pigs and training them to stand still and have injections and catheters placed without screaming the facility down.

My other favorite must be the laboratory haggis, a quiet, mild tempered, shy little Scottish rodent, shown here is the female of the species and a few young.



A female Haggis and her young



11. Who are your mentors?

Having worked in the field for so many years I have had the privilege of working with many fine scientists and veterinary surgeons. They have all inspired and encouraged me for a variety of reasons and I have become very good friends with all of them.

12. List your 3 greatest achievements

- 1) When I qualified as a Veterinary Nurse (passing both my examinations on the first attempt)
- 2) When I received the Barry Sauer Award for achieving the highest score in the Surgical Research Specialist exam
- 3) When I completed my first half marathon in just over 2 hours and then went on to run another 2 that same year (Triple Crown).

13. If you could give one piece of advice to someone working with laboratory animals what would it be?

Love the work you do, take pride in your daily tasks, and never give up!! My motto is:

“If you think you can, you can. If you think you can’t, you’re right”

14. What are your hobbies?

Jogging, yoga, reading, taking care of my 12-year-old (13lb) cat and my 5 year old Black Labrador. Of course I also love to be part of the Lab Animal Community and volunteer my time and help where I can.

