



## 2025 UPEI Distinguished Alumni Award

### Dr. Lesley Steele (DVM 1997)

Dr. Lesley Steele began her veterinary medicine journey at the Atlantic Veterinary College in 1993, graduating in 1997 as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Early in her career, she faced an ethical challenge, which inspired her to rehome unclaimed animals rather than euthanize them, sparking her passion for compassionate care. That same year, she purchased her first animal hospital, introducing ethical policies and partnering with non-profits to rehome strays.

Today, Dr. Steele is an accomplished veterinarian and entrepreneur who leads Atlantic Canada's largest independently owned group of veterinary hospitals. As CEO of Steele Veterinary Group, she oversees eight hospitals, a telecommunications company, and real estate holdings across Atlantic Canada, employing more than 150 people.

Steele Veterinary Group has since grown into a thriving network known for gold-standard care and employee well-being. Over 90 per cent of her team members are women and Dr. Steele is passionate about mentoring female veterinarians, guiding them to embrace leadership and business ownership.

Her approach of preserving each hospital's unique identity while integrating them into a supportive group has earned Dr. Steele numerous accolades, including the 2023 Atlantic Award of Excellence in Veterinary Medicine from the Atlantic Veterinary College, the 2024 Trupanion Canadian Veterinary Professional of the Year award, and the 2024 RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Momentum Award. She was included on *Atlantic Business Magazine's* Top 50 CEO of the Year list in 2024, and its 25 Most Powerful Women in Business list in 2025.

Very recently, Dr. Steele became only the second Atlantic Canadian to be selected for EY's Entrepreneurial Winning Women program, and in November 2025, will be inducted into the Junior Achievement New Brunswick Hall of Fame.

Dr. Steele is a graduate of the Wallace McCain Institute for Business Leadership Entrepreneurial Leaders Program and has blazed a trail as a serial entrepreneur. In 2009, she founded and was CEO of Vet Alliance Inc. and in 2018, she founded Virtual Veterinary Solutions, which helps veterinarians and veterinary hospitals across the United States by solving common administrative and human resources challenges.

Dr. Steele has applied her entrepreneurial thinking to important initiatives to address the mental well-being of fellow veterinarians and is an ambassador for the profession. She is a member of Not One More Vet, a US-based charitable organization focused on addressing the epidemic of veterinarian suicides and improving the mental well-being of veterinarians by providing peer support and other resources.

Dr. Steele developed a Not One More Vet ambassador chapter program that launched in 2021. The local chapters strive to reduce mental health stigma and increase awareness of mental wellness challenges for

veterinarians; identify, share, and collect resources for local support; build supportive social networks; and develop educational opportunities.

She further demonstrated her community focus by bringing veterinary services to the remote Fogo Island in Newfoundland and Labrador and through her partnerships with non-profits and local SPCAs. That passion for giving back extends to other collaborations with PAWS International in Costa Rica and Ecuador, and the Animal Welfare Alliance Aruba, where she helped lead volunteer trips during which her team provided vital veterinary care to thousands of pets.

In recognition of her entrepreneurial leadership and her many contributions to the veterinary profession in North America, the UPEI Alumni Association is proud to present Dr. Lesley Steele, DVM 1997, with a 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award.