

CUSTOMER CASE

“Each week, we see hundreds of images sent by all types of vet practices using a wide range of equipment. Images produced by Agfa HealthCare’s CR 30-X are among the best we receive.”

Bennett Fagin, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Vet-Rad Ltd., Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging



Vet-Rad Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging, Ohio, USA

Teleradiology goes Vet

Teleradiology is becoming popular in the animal care profession, due in part to the growing number of veterinary digital imaging systems capable of sending images over the Internet. One such system, Agfa HealthCare’s CR 30-X digitizer, provides excellent image quality to help veterinarians do this effectively.

The Agfa CR30X is the most popular veterinary CR system in the UK with well over 300 systems currently installed. The CR30X offers outstanding resolution and workflow at a budget most practices can afford.



What began 21 years ago as a film-based, mail-in consultation service for veterinary practices in Northern Ohio, is today undergoing a significant expansion thanks to teleradiology and the growth of highly reliable, in-office digital imaging systems. By linking these two platforms through the Internet, and affiliating with nearby veterinary medical referral centers, Vet-Rad Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging's five board-certified veterinary radiologists not only support animal care on the front lines, but offer their X-ray interpretive skills and clinical experience nationwide.

CR 30-X Tabletop Digitizer

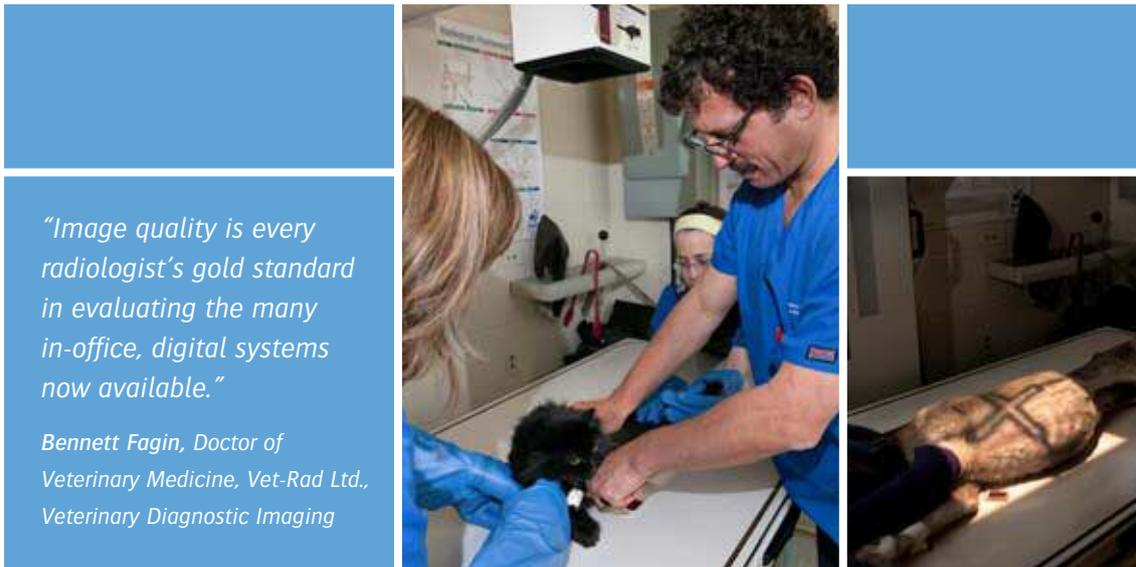
- Reliable digitizer with Agfa HealthCare's MUSICA² software for uncompromising and consistent image quality.
- Ideally suited to support a wide range of veterinary imaging.
- Compact footprint – easy to position in small rooms.
- Cost effective – uses standard office electrical current. No special installation needed.

"Years ago, I used to take films home with me each evening," says veterinary radiologist Bennett Fagin. But as high-speed Internet access grew across America in the late 1990s, radiographic images produced digitally could be transmitted almost instantly to a radiology workstation, and displayed on a high-resolution computer monitor.

In 2001, Vet-Rad, the radiology practice Dr. Fagin started in 1990, initiated a teleradiology service. The result has been nothing short of phenomenal, especially in its growth over the past three years.

Many factors drive digital

That growth was spurred by the advent of compact computed radiography (CR) imaging systems specially designed for veterinarians' offices. "Our first clients were small animal practices whose partners realized their original X-ray machines or film processors needed replacement," Dr. Fagin says. "Those veterinarians had the foresight to enter the digital age. Today, I don't know a single veterinarian with a digital system who doesn't take more images than they did before they 'went digital'. In fact, they usually regret that they didn't switch to digital sooner."



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Added to this is the ability to transmit images almost immediately for referral or consultation. In addition, digital systems have large image archival capacity with highly automated software that retrieves and displays previous images with current ones, all at the click of a mouse. "No more rummaging about the office looking for films that fell behind the file cabinet months ago," Dr. Fagin says. Digital storage also lets practices easily retain backup copies off-site in the event of fire or structural damage.

Finally, there is today's intense interest in animal healthcare by pet owners. Small animal practices perceived as being on the cutting edge of technology receive a greater share of the tighter pet care dollar, despite challenging economic conditions. "Thanks to the new CR digitizers, a veterinarian can now economically provide clients a CD of their pet's images to view at home. This helps demonstrate their use of cutting-edge technology," he adds.

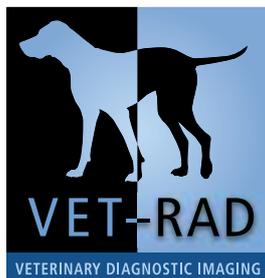
To this day, Vet-Rad focuses on small animal practices and remains the only facility of its kind based in Northern Ohio. But they're no longer confined there. "Thanks to teleradiology, we now serve more than 700 veterinary hospitals, referral centers, and emergency clinics nationwide," he adds. In a typical month, Vet-Rad performs over 2,000 diagnostic consultations, using the

latest workstation computers and multiple, 24-inch high-resolution monitors.

More than reading images

However, Vet-Rad's success is attributed to more than the latest bold technology. Dr. Fagin says a key Vet-Rad benefit is its partners' clinical expertise. "We don't sit in dimly lit rooms all day viewing images," he says. "Instead, we are clinical radiologists at major referral centers. These include the nearby Akron Veterinary Referral & Emergency Center, Cleveland Veterinary Referral Service, Great Lakes Veterinary Specialists, and the Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital. This clinical exposure includes collaboration with board-certified specialists in internal medicine, surgery, oncology, cardiology, neurology, ophthalmology and veterinary practice. This collaboration enables the Vet-Rad radiologists to provide valuable clinical recommendations to their clients.

As a result, Vet-Rad's service facilitates exceptional confidence in helping veterinarians understand and correctly diagnose from digital images. "We routinely pick up pathology that was overlooked," Dr. Fagin says. "It's a valuable learning experience for our clients." Another benefit is speed. Once received, Vet-Rad's radiologists are able to review images and return a report by e-mail and/or fax in a matter of minutes.



Did you know ...

- Vet-Rad's standards for image transfer and presentation in its veterinary teleradiology practice are similar to those used for human teleradiology. This enables a higher diagnostic accuracy of interpretations.
- Until the late 1990s, teleradiology was used by medical radiologists to interpret emergency studies from offsite locations, such as the radiologists' home. Connections were made through standard analog phone lines.

Image quality paramount

"Image quality is every radiologist's gold standard in evaluating the many in-office, digital systems now available," Dr. Fagin says. "Each week, we see hundreds of images sent by all types of vet practices using a wide range of equipment. Images produced by Agfa HealthCare's CR 30-X are among the best we receive."

In side by side comparisons, he finds images produced by the CR 30-X tabletop digitizer are preferred over many other systems for a variety of reasons.

Dr. Fagin cites the system's MUSICA² intelligent image processing software, which automatically optimizes the final image quality without manual intervention. The CR 30-X first scans a phosphor plate with a spatial resolution of 10 pixels/mm, then feeds the data to the MUSICA² software. "There are very few systems I've seen that produce better images," he says, "regardless of price."

The CR 30-X's time to first image is approximately 30 seconds. The system also runs off standard office current versus the higher voltage required by larger, more costly systems, so there's no added expense for special wiring. The CR 30-X digitizer can be installed, quality-checked, and functioning in one day. As a tabletop, it fits in the tightest locations.

"The old adage, 'you get what you pay for', is not always true." Dr. Fagin says. "Image quality should be the primary factor in your decision. Veterinarians should consider the CR 30-X among the best of its breed." •

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