



Dr. Richard Lawrence Berta

February 11, 1949 - January 25, 2026

Dr. Richard Berta, DVM, 76, passed away at home after a brief illness on Sunday, January 25, 2026, leaving behind a legacy of compassion, service, and dedication to both animals and the people who loved them.

He was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on February 11, 1949, to the late Joseph T. Berta, Jr. and Elizabeth Lamonby Berta. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Susan Patricia Berta of Atlanta, GA. Dr. Berta devoted his life to the practice of veterinary medicine, earning the respect of colleagues and clients alike for his skill, integrity, and deep care for the well-being of animals. For decades, he served his community not just as a veterinarian, but as a trusted professional whose calm presence and steady judgment brought comfort during difficult moments. To many, he was more than a doctor—he was a friend, a teacher, and a constant source of reassurance.

Beyond his professional life, Rick was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He valued family deeply and took great pride in the lives and accomplishments of those he loved. He was known for his quiet strength, his thoughtful nature, and a dry sense of humor that revealed itself once you knew him well.

As the second eldest in a large, animal-loving family of six children, his expanding family moved several times before permanently settling in Atlanta in the 1960s. Rick's affinity for animals was established early on. His grandfather had ponies and horses on a large farm in Philadelphia. Rick's

parents nurtured a constant parade of beloved small animals, and Rick began his lifelong habit of running his dogs outdoors in nearby woods and fields. It was his good fortune in high school to meet a young beauty on a blind date in 1966 who would eventually become his bride and the love of his life. Rick graduated from W.F. Dykes High School in 1967 and went on to receive his undergraduate education at the University of Georgia, where he was a proud member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, and earned a BS in Agriculture in 1971.

He married Susan Eileen Franks (Susie) in June 1971 at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, and they spent that summer happily renting a tiny duplex on Park Avenue in Athens, Georgia, while Rick finished school. When the UGA veterinary school wait-listed him for admission, Rick was accepted at Tuskegee Institute, and he and his bride set off together for Tuskegee, Alabama, where Rick would earn another BS in Agricultural Sciences in 1973 and his DVM / Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1975. In addition to receiving a fine veterinary education at a historically black college, it was in Tuskegee where Rick would also experience an eye-opening exposure to acceptance and inclusion as a white minority

In a predominantly Black community, he had the opportunity to establish diverse relationships and develop a keen appreciation for social awareness and social justice.

Dr. Berta's first job following vet school was at Woodside Equine Clinic in Ashland, Virginia, under the employ and tutelage of two esteemed equine veterinarians, Dr. Milton Kingsbury, a middle-aged veterinary dynamo, and Dr. Olive Britt, a font of wisdom, older, renowned, and respected as a trail-blazing female in veterinary medicine. It was where Rick first learned the practicalities and hard lessons of life as an equine vet, running the Virginia roads at all hours, making farm calls, pillar to post. He visited every kind of place a horse could reside, from prestigious farms including The Meadow, home of Secretariat, to scrappy backyards with barbed wire fences. During his two years in Virginia, he amplified and honed an already strong work ethic that

would persist for his entire career.

In May of 1977, the firstborn son, Scott, arrived, and the little family moved from Virginia back home to Georgia, where Dr. Berta would open his own large-animal veterinary practice in Newnan. A back bedroom in their house served as a business office while Rick made farm calls, and Susie manned the phones. Thus began Dr. Berta's several-decade career as an esteemed large-animal vet, visiting farms, dairies, and backyards throughout Coweta County and in multiple counties surrounding Newnan. In 1982, with a second child's arrival imminent and requiring the use of office space at home, Dr. Berta built a large-animal clinic on Pine Road and took on a partner in the practice. Second son, Nick Berta, was born in December 1982.

After several rewarding decades of large animal medicine and looking out over the hood of a truck, often 16-plus hours a day, Dr. Berta built Dogwood Veterinary Hospital, where he would finally retire from the road and devote himself to saving small animals' lives in a climate-controlled environment. He expanded his practice to include several partners and an enlargement of the building. After many years at Dogwood, Dr. Berta sold his share in the thriving practice and went to work at Family Friend Animal Hospital, where he quickly established himself as a valued member of the full-time veterinary team, and he could concentrate solely on medicine without the headaches of ownership. After years at Family Friend, the time finally came for him to semi-retire altogether. In 2018, Dr. Berta found a home at Moreland Animal Hospital in a part-time capacity. He joked that he still loved going someplace once or twice a week where he could keep his skills current and his jokes in shape; where he could stay relevant, be with and enjoy people and their pets, and be where somebody did what he told them.

After a long and distinguished career, Dr. Berta retired fully in 2021.

He became a scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 41. He spent time engaging in his favorite hobbies: hunting, fishing, fly-tying, bamboo rod making, gardening, and reading. And after outliving the last of his beloved family dogs, he was

devoted Grand-dad to his grand-dogs, faithfully running them in the fields and woods nearby.

Those who knew Rick will remember him for his kindness, his work ethic, his compassion for animals and their owners, and the way he lived his values every day. For his brilliant mind and almost encyclopedic knowledge of history. For his sense of humor, silly dad jokes, and intelligent quips. For his propensity to avoid all things digital and to default to all things analog at every opportunity, always scribbling lists and notes on scraps of paper and the backs of envelopes that he folded and kept in his pocket, affectionately calling them his Palm Pilot.

His impact will continue through the countless lives-human and animal-that he touched throughout his career and his life.

He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

Survivors include his wife, Susan Franks Berta of Newnan, GA; sons, Scott Andrew (Valerie) Berta of Newnan, GA and James Nicholas "Nick" (Olga) Berta of Hong Kong, China; grandchildren, Harper Towns Berta, Gabriel Wade Noland, Daniel Bryant Noland, and Sawyer Anderson Berta of Newnan, GA; siblings Joseph (Shelly) Berta III of New Canaan, CT, Peter Stephen Berta of Atlanta, GA, Lisa Anne (Bob) Willard of Milford, MI, David Michael (Jane) Berta of Jacksonville, FL; brother-in-law Lawrence Michael (Ellen Berelsen) Franks; and several cousins, nieces, and nephews.

There will be an informal public gathering to visit with the family and celebrate Rick's life at the Historic Train Depot in downtown Newnan (60 E. Broad St.) on Wednesday, February 11, 2026. Drop in any time between the hours of 1pm - 3pm. All are welcome.

Condolences can be expressed online at www.mckoon.com.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to HELP Spay and Neuter Clinic, 12 The Crescent, Newnan, GA 30263; helpspayneuter.org. Also Newnan Coweta Humane Society, 608 US-29 N., Newnan, GA; nchsrescue.org.

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory 770-253-4580

Cemetery Details

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

38 Jackson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
care@mckoon.com
<http://www.mckoon.com>

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 11. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Newnan Historic Train Depot
60 East Broad Street
Newnan, GA 30263

Tribute Wall



“ *McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Richard Lawrence Berta*



McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory - February 10 at 04:06 PM

CW

Hey Berta, I'm so sorry for the loss of your Dad. I was thankful to get to know him and he and the rest of your family have always made me feel very welcome and a true brother to the family. I know he has left a great mark on many people and the town of Newnan. I know you'll carry on that tradition and make him proud even when he's not with us. Love you, brother and stay strong! -Chris Windley

Chris Windley - March 08 at 11:02 AM

BH

“ *Dr Berta was my dogs first Vet here. I adopted a puppy from the shelter and Dr Berta walked into the room with a big smile on his face and said..."Someone did a good deed today!" I will never forget that. That was over 14 years ago... sadly my dog died of old age.. I know Dr Berta will look after him in Heaven now. My deepest sympathy.*

Barbara hurst - February 10 at 02:57 PM

JC

“ Ellis and I met Rick when we bought our first Palomino, “Dollar,” and then added a precious but abused mare we named “Honey.” He would be the vet who beamed the day he performed an ultrasound on “Honey” to confirm that she was in foal. His smile was a mile wide when he told me “there’s your foal” as we watched a days old baby horse start to grow. Rick is a rare man: a true gentleman and a gentle, kind person with remarkable vet skills and equal warmth and friendship for his human clients. We are very grateful for his care and concern for our three horses and for his friendship. His passing is such a loss to us and this community. Judy Conklin and Ellis Grubbs. Dollar, Honey and Sweet Boy



Judy Conklin - February 07 at 12:20 AM

PS

“ Phillip & Abby Sirmans planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Richard Lawrence Berta.

Phillip & Abby Sirmans - January 30 at 02:24 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. Richard Lawrence Berta.



January 30 at 02:24 PM

MI

“ *Berta family,
I met Dr Berta soon after he opened his large animal veterinary clinic, in Newnan. My horse was very ill and died while Dr Berta was with him. His comforting words and presence meant a lot to me. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Mike Ivie
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*

Mike Ivie - January 29 at 01:10 PM

EF

“ *I met Dr. Berta at Dogwood Hospital. He did a wonderful job of caring for my small dogs and cats. I'll always appreciate his compassion for the animals as well as the people who cared for them.*

Elise Farnham - January 28 at 03:53 PM

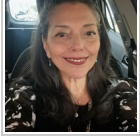
DB

“ *So sorry to hear about my friend Rick's passing. He and I were roommates for several years at UGA. We did a lot of hunting together during that time. We lived in a house called "The Bakery" hence being called the Bakery Boys. It was a house converted into bakery and then back into a house. We told everybody we did a lot of loafing in that house. It was located at the five points south of campus. We ate a lot of blue-plate specials at Harry's Diner across the street.*

I only saw him once after graduation when he came to visit me in Iowa to do some pheasant hunting. It's sad to lose your old friends. No doubt he will be greatly missed.

Rev. Dennis N. Bradley

Dennis N. Bradley - January 28 at 11:38 AM



“ I was lucky enough to have gotten to know Dr. Berta through working with him, before he retired. He was a lovely, compassionate and funny man and I will miss him. Prayers for peace and healing to Susie and all who loved him.

Dana L - January 28 at 10:49 AM

KH

*“ I am so saddened to hear this news.
Dr. Berta was the absolute best. He pulled my Golden Retriever back from death several times allowing us more precious time with him. He loved all of our dogs but had a special affection for Lucky Floyd.
Dr. Berta was not only a great Vet but a compassionate man. He showed me that compassion on several occasions; one in particular stands out.
He will be missed.*

Kim Hatton - January 27 at 10:37 PM

GW

“ I am so very sorry for your loss. My deepest condolences are with you. May he rest in eternal peace.



Geraldine Welch - January 27 at 06:43 PM

JH

“ Susie and family, I'm so very sorry to learn of Rick's passing. He took care of my dogs for years at Dogwood and we all shared worshipping at St. Paul's when your boys and my girls were young. He was always a calm and steady presence and will be very missed. Sending prayers to you and the whole family, Jennie (Stone) Harp

Jennie P. Harp - January 27 at 03:54 PM

SW

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with ya'll during this difficult time.
Susan Whatley and family

Susan Whatley - January 27 at 03:27 PM

TH

“ Dr Berta was my vet for many years, there was never anyone I trusted more to help me through so many trials with my beloved animals, from Horses and then to my dogs. My deepest sympathy for all he loved 2 & 4 He will be greatly missed and always fondly remembered.

Teresa Hubbard - January 27 at 03:27 PM