



## Made in Northwest Illinois

### NW ILLINOIS

Economic Development

*Celebrating 16 Years in Business!*

SPOTLIGHTING BUSINESSES IN  
CARROLL AND JO DAVIESS COUNTIES



Shank's Veterinary Equipment Inc. is making an industry impact in a BIG way - *in every sense of the word*. When you are a leading manufacturer of large animal surgery tables the competition pool may be small, but the impact of developing one-of-kind veterinary-type products is HUGE.

Meet Todd Short, owner of Shank's Veterinary Equipment Inc. located in the town of Milledgeville, Illinois, population 1,026.

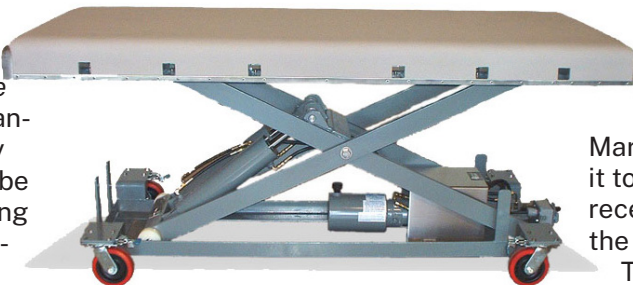
"We're a small company that does big things," said Todd. "I think we're a little gem people don't know about."

The company manufactures products for veterinarian needs in a wide range of industries, from veterinarian medicine to universities, zoos, marinas and private and corporate clients.

"Veterinary medicine has come a long way over the last 40 years," Todd said. "We've even had a rhinoceros on our tables before."

That being said, the company isn't new by any means, nor was it always located in Milledgeville. It was founded in 1957 by Eldon Shank in Sterling, Illinois, and called Shank's Machine Co., Inc. At that time, the company was manufacturing one simple veterinary table that could support a partially sedated large animal and lay it from a standing position to its side.

"Shank's also made anything and everything at that time as a machine shop in a rural community," Todd noted.



In 1985 Eldon sold the business to his son, Carl Shank, and the company officially changed its name to Shank's Veterinary Equipment Company. Four years later, in 1989, Carl sold the company to an existing company employee and his son, Alvin and Mark Dettman. As a result, the business really started to change.

The two new owners moved the

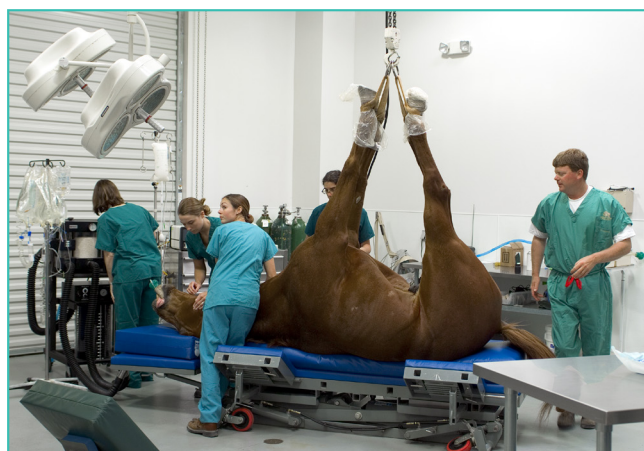
company approximately 15 miles north to its present location in Milledgeville.

Alvin retired in 1996, leaving Mark to run the business and taking it to a new equestrian level after receiving some unique inquiries from the veterinary population.

The company continued to grow as the specialized needs of the veterinarian practitioner increased. Shank's expanded quickly into other areas of the large animal market products with customized surgery tables, necropsy tables, stocks and transfer carts, as well as marketing and manufacturing a line of heavy-duty recovery stall doors, induction/crowding gates and a wide range of pertinent industry products.



The proverbial 800# gorilla in the room at the Rotterdam Zoo in Rotterdam, Netherlands! Shank's tables have held everything from horses and rhinoceroses to gorillas and large marine life over their years in production.



Shank's tables can weigh up to 1,500-2,000 pounds, but are able to support up to 2,500 pounds of animal.

After years of growth and success, Mark too decided to retire in June of 2024. As a result, Todd purchased the business upon his own retirement from Abbott Laboratories in Chicago, Illinois, as a procurement and operations manager.

For Todd, the new venture was a little bit of a dream come true.

"The veterinary field is something I've been interested in all my life," he explains. "As a kid I wanted to be a veterinarian, but the cards weren't there for me. When this came along, I thought this was interesting. Shank's has a tremendous reputation for quality. The name is very well known."

Today, Shank's market includes over 60 countries in their portfolio of customers, with big consumers like the University of Illinois, Brookfield and Lincoln Park zoos in Chicago and the Edmonton Valley Zoo in Canada, numerous marinas in Florida and veterinary universities across the globe, such as the Hunter Equine Centre in Australia, NC State College of Veterinarian Medicine and Veterinarian Hospital, Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine to name a few.

Over the years, Todd said competitors have come and gone. Regardless of Shank's size, he said they can compete well with bigger and more equipped competitors,

especially international competitors since the market is small and orders are often customized. As a result, the big corporations cannot compete with small shops like Shanks because the market is so specialized and has lower gross profit margins. Internationally those competitors, big and small, are from Finland, Belgium, China and Germany.

"It's a very niche market that we are in, so there are not a lot of players. We're definitely proud that we are made in Illinois and made in the USA," Todd said.

While the product offerings vary, the tables are designed to hold approximately 2,500 pounds. Costs on the tables range from \$20,000 to \$40,000, depending on the customers' needs and are made of steel and/or stainless steel. The tables have a life expectancy of about 25

years, depending on the wear and tear and often the chemicals they come in contact with.

Customized tables take around four weeks to produce once the supplies are gathered. The company produces 40-50 per year with a relatively small employee base of five to six.

And because of the investment, Shank's also takes trade ins for refurbishing and resale at close to 40% off a new one.

"They're a very serious investment for the veterinarian," Todd added.

So serious of an investment that Todd takes his customer service to an even higher level. It is not unusual for him to load a table into his company van and personally deliver it and demonstrate it for the customer. That service is also available internationally as well he said.

So, what's next for Shank's?

"Bigger, better," concluded Todd. "I bought the company to grow it. Growing our business in the European and Middle Eastern market is definitely in the plan."



The Shank's Veterinary Equipment team includes (from left to right): Kenny Floto, Mike Munz, Owner Todd Short, Jake Queckborner and Mark Kaufman. In 2004, the company erected a new 18,400 square foot facility to house its specialization and manufacturing processes.

## Contact Details

### Shank's Veterinary Equipment Inc.

**Address:** 505 E. Old Mill Street, Milledgeville, Illinois 61051

**Phone:** 815-225-7700

**Website:** [www.shanksvet.com](http://www.shanksvet.com)

And on **Facebook**