

'Animal ER' features Maryland specialist

By **BARBARA KREISLER**

Journal staff writer

Mandy Patinkin has some competition.

"ER's" attractive, capable, caring doctor may be upstaged tonight if Seth Koch wins the hearts of the audience.

The Silver Spring, Md., physician is featured in "Animal ER," a new documentary from Turner Original Productions. This one-hour special premieres tonight at 9 p.m. on TBS.

But you certainly won't find Patinkin treating Koch's patients.

Koch is a veterinarian, but the emergency scenario is no less dramatic.

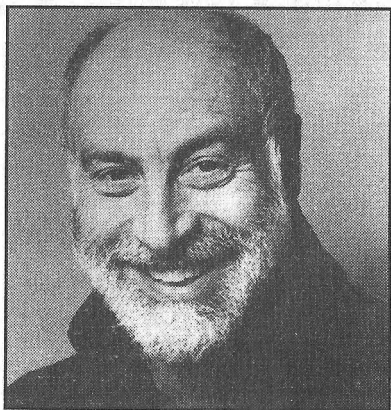
One patient just swallowed a battery from a remote control. Another becomes blind after routine surgery. A third struggles with a degenerative hoof disease.

"It's an adrenalin rush," said Koch, 56, as he described the fast-paced action that is demanded in treating an animal in an emergency situation.

"It's intense. Because you don't have the same communication that a human has to convey pain or a condition to a physician, there are no skills beyond what a human perceives as an animal's need."

In the segment featuring Koch, he and his students examine Bandit, a terrier who has cataracts in both eyes. Additionally, he performs prosthetic eye surgery on a boxer named Maggie.

"Animal ER," featuring life-and-death stories about animals and the people dedicated to saving them, goes behind the scenes at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in Philadelphia to reveal the intense relationships and emotional bonds veterinarians, pets and



Veterinarian Seth Koch

their owners develop in times of crisis, explained Koch, a clinical professor of ophthalmology at the school. "It's one of the busiest emergency clinics in the U.S.," added Koch, who operates the Animal Eye Clinic in Silver Spring and the South Paws Veterinary Referral Center in Springfield, Va. Koch, who specializes in ophthalmology, was the first veterinary specialist practicing on the East Coast.

The University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine is one of the world's most advanced medical centers for the treatment of animals, providing myriad medical and surgical care, from magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to oncology treatment. Established in 1884, VHUP is the only veterinary school to be developed in association with a medical school. It is one of only two private veterinary schools in the nation.

Neurologists, surgical teams and intensive-care units comprise the staff of veterinarians, who keep the center's doors open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.