

34TH INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ANTHROZOOLOGY CONFERENCE

INTERCONNECTED WORLDS: ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING IN HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS



ISAZ 2025

CANADA

JUNE 19 - 22, 2025

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

TREATY 6 TERRITORY AND HOMELAND OF THE MÉTIS

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA



Table of Contents

- I. [ISAZ 2025 in Saskatoon](#)
- II. [About the International Society for Anthrozoology](#)
- III. [ISAZ Board](#)
- IV. [Sponsors](#)
- V. [Keynote Speakers](#)
- VI. [Program](#)
 - A. [Thursday, 19th June 2025](#)
 - B. [Friday, 20th June 2025](#)
 - C. [Saturday, 21st June 2025](#)
 - D. [Sunday, 22nd June 2025](#)
- VII. [Posters](#)
 - A. [Poster Presentations](#)
 - B. [DEIB Posters](#)
- VIII. [Conference Venue Floor Plan](#)
- IX. [Events](#)
- X. [Workshops](#)
- XI. [Abstracts](#)
 - A. [Thematic Oral Presentation Sessions](#)
 - B. [Symposia](#)
 - C. [Lightning Oral Presentations](#)
 - D. [Poster Presentations](#)
 - E. [DEIB Posters](#)

ISAZ 2025 in Saskatoon

[The International Society for Anthrozoology \(ISAZ\)](#) held the 2025 conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada on June 19 - 22, 2025.

Conference Vision: To foster a deeper understanding of the intricate connections between humans, animals, and the natural world, aiming to promote harmony, understanding, respect, and mutually beneficial interactions.

To achieve this, we will bring together researchers and community members* from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and locales – and from a variety of levels of scholarship and purpose – to promote collaboration across boundaries to advance research and practice in the field of anthrozoology.

Conference Themes:

1. Innovations in conceptualizing, approaches, and collaborative research in human-animal interactions and the human-animal bond;
2. “One Health” and related frameworks with a focus on recognizing or integrating broader ecological systems or the natural world as they relate to human-animal relationships;
3. Multiple ways of knowing and seeing when approaching anthrozoology – including Indigenous research methodological approaches and innovative data dissemination;
4. Considering “interconnection” in human-animal interaction research, especially as it relates to wellness promotion for humans, animals, and the environment;
5. Cultivating animal welfare, including respect for the inherent value and rights of animals, acknowledging their sentience, and their right to live in a world free from harm and exploitation.

Conference Goals and Objectives:

1. Promote an increased understanding of “interconnection” in anthrozoology studies.
2. Provide a platform for showcasing and disseminating high-quality, innovative research from scholars at all levels of study.
3. Foster an environment for attendees to meaningfully connect with others in the field who come from differing backgrounds and locations – whether that be in the community, or at other academic institutions or research centres.
4. Create mentorship and networking opportunities for students and early career researchers to connect with established scholars to further their own academic development.
5. Serve as an opportunity to introduce Canadian researchers, and diverse students, and applied practitioners to ISAZ, this particular ISAZ conference, and to the HAI field more broadly.

Host Committee:*Co-Chairs*

Dr. Colleen Anne Dell, University of Saskatchewan
Alexandria Pavelich, University of Saskatchewan

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Dr. Linzi Williamson, University of Saskatchewan
Dr. Clinton Westmen, University of Saskatchewan
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Practicum Placement Students

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Kaylee Smith, University of Saskatchewan

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Dr. Renata Roma, University of Saskatchewan
Lisa Schwann, St. John Ambulance
Stacey Wallace, Correctional Service Canada
Erin Wasson, University of Saskatchewan

Land Acknowledgement

“The land is acknowledged as our Mother, the Earth. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to honor and support the Indigenous peoples, Indigenous cultures, Indigenous values, and Indigenous languages that belong to the land of Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis. The University of Saskatchewan is committed to working towards mending colonized lands and protecting the land in a way that demonstrates honour, respect, and love. The

University of Saskatchewan extends this commitment to the lands and Treaty territories (Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10) that constitute kisiskâciwan ([Saskatchewan], “the swift current”, Cree/Saulteaux), and all Indigenous people that call kisiskâciwan home. We are born to the land and the land claims us.”

-The Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement, University of Saskatchewan

Ceremony

As part of our commitment to honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and being — central to both the University of Saskatchewan’s institutional values and the principles guiding the ISAZ 2025 conference hosting — the PAWSitive Connections Lab has actively engaged in ceremony from the outset of our planning.

Under the guidance of the former Buffalo Reconciliation Circle at USask, our Lab has respectfully grown tobacco for ceremonial offering. We have also been engaged in spiritual preparations for the conference, led by Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Knowledge Advocate Larry LaLiberte (KA WA CI PI). These ceremonies have included prayer and Four Directions cloth offerings, intended to provide grounding, guidance, and spiritual integrity to all aspects of the event. This is not symbolic — it is foundational, shaping how we approach the planning work, our relationships, and the space we are creating for the conference attendees.

Planetary Conservation

We acknowledge our shared responsibility to care for the natural world in the planning of and attending this and other conferences. We did our best to foster respect for the planet by promoting sustainable practices and reducing our environmental impact in planning, with many lessons learned, and could and will do better in the future. Generations of people, animals, and the planet depend on this.

Human, non-human animal and environmental wellness

Like other cities across North America and the globe, Saskatoon is challenged with significant human health and social issues. We are also facing increased animal welfare issues since the COVID pandemic and even more so in recent months with increasing economic challenges. The land is being equally challenged, with issues such as wildfires in the province as one example. If you feel like you would like to offer back to this space that you are visiting, here are some suggestions of places the PAWSitive Connections Lab partners with to make an offering, and there are many others you could choose:

- Prairie Harm Reduction (www.prairiehr.ca)
- Saskatoon SPCA (www.saskatoonspca.com) & Saskatchewan SPCA (www.saskspca.ca)
- The Meewasin Valley (www.meewasin.com/locations)
- Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (www.afcs.ca)

Welcome from the PAWSitive Connections Lab and our Canine Ambassadors!



We are thrilled to be writing to say **Welcome to the ISAZ 2025 Conference - Interconnected Worlds: Advancing Understanding in Human-Animal Relationships!**

We would like to welcome you on behalf of the PAWSitive Connections Lab at the University of Saskatchewan, along with our conference co-chairs Dr. Colleen Anne Dell and Alexandria Pavelich, and our beloved canine ambassadors—Reina, Reacher, and Molly.

Founded in 2016 within the Office of One Health and Wellness at the University of Saskatchewan, the PAWSitive Connections Lab has grown into a vibrant interdisciplinary team. Under the leadership of Dr. Colleen Anne Dell from the Department of Sociology and School of Public Health, Dr. Darlene Chalmers of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina, and Dr. Linzi Williamson of the Department of Psychology and Health Studies at USask, the Lab brings together a diverse group of employees, students, graduates, community members, and faculty collaborators.

At the heart of our work are the community members who guide and shape our research and activities. Together, we explore the dynamic interactions between animals and people, with a specific focus on the potential power of the connection between animals and individuals recovering from addiction and mental health challenges. We study how companion animals and people benefit each other and focus on improving the health and wellbeing of both. Our scope spans a wide range of animals, with particular attention to service dogs, therapy dogs, emotional support animals, and companion animals.

Thank you for being part of this important event, and the conversations it will spark!



Warm regards,
The PAWSitive Connections Lab Team



About the International Society for Anthrozoology

The International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ) was formed in 1991 as a supportive organization for the scientific and scholarly study of human-animal interactions. ISAZ is a non-profit, non-political organization with a worldwide, multi-disciplinary membership of students, scholars and interested professionals.

Our mission is to serve the growing community of scholars and scientists working in the field of Anthrozoology (the study of human-animal interactions and relationships) by supporting research, publishing and disseminating new insights and discoveries, and promoting the exchange of knowledge and expertise within the field.

To learn more, please explore our website: www.isaz.net

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Our Journal

Anthrozoös: A Multidisciplinary Journal of the Interactions of People and Other Animals

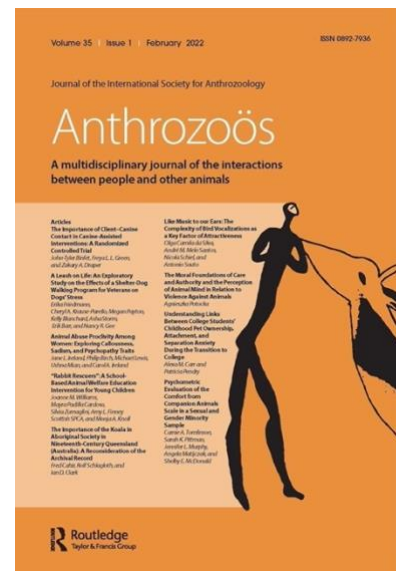
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Anthrozoös is a bi-monthly, peer-reviewed publication whose focus is to report the results of studies, from a wide array of disciplines, on the interactions of people and animals.

Academic disciplines represented include anthropology, archaeozoology, art and literature, education, ethology, history, human medicine, psychology, sociology and veterinary medicine.



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The Pets and Wellbeing Study (PAWS) Program.

A global research project, PAWS aims to be the world's largest international study program into the impact of cats and dogs on human mental health and wellbeing.

Find out more on:

mars-petsandwellbeing.com



Keynote Speakers

Robert Losey, PhD

A professor in the University of Alberta's Anthropology Department, Robert Losey has travelled across the North American and Siberian Arctic and the prairies of Saskatchewan for his field research. Through his research, Losey studies the archaeology of human–animal relationships, his recent work focusing on the domestication of dogs and reindeer. In 2022, he and a team of researchers studied the impact that domestication — and access to human scrap food — had on the evolution of canines in the Arctic. His work studying the distant ancestors of modern dogs has also dealt with topics such as the impact that trade and migration has had on the species, and the genetic legacy of prehistoric dogs.

Beyond his extensive zooarchaeological research, Losey is also interested in the fields of ethnoarchaeology and the broader field of human–animal studies, and has studied additional Arctic species. In one 2023 paper, Losey and his colleagues investigate seal hunting in the Holocene in Siberia's Lake Baikal by comparing samples dating back up to 9,000 years with modern seal bodies and bones.

Losey graduated with a bachelor of science in anthropology from Kansas State University before moving across the United States to study at the University of Oregon. There he earned his masters of science and PhD in archaeology. Later, Losey joined the U of A as an associate professor and then, in 2019, became a full professor, and is currently teaching numerous graduate and undergraduate courses.

"Becoming Friends with Animals: Lessons from History and Culture"

9:40-11:10am Friday, 20 June, 2025

Domestication has created strong, complex, and continually changing relationships between people and some animals. These shared multi-species histories date back thousands of years. Archaeology and ethnography provide fascinating insights into these relationships, but also reveal how science's portrayal of domestication has been misleading. Love, care, and commitment are essential to domestication and continue to shape how these relationships unfold.

Sponsored by:



Tasha Hubbard, PhD

Dr. Tasha Hubbard is a filmmaker and an associate professor in the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. She is from Peepeekisis First Nation in Treaty Four Territory and has ties to Thunderchild First Nation in Treaty Six Territory. She is also the mother of a seventeen-year-old son. Her academic research is on Indigenous efforts to return the buffalo to the lands and Indigenous film in North America. She has been working to support the Buffalo Treaty since 2015, and is one of the founding directors of the International Buffalo Relations Institute. Her first solo writing/directing project *Two Worlds Colliding*, about Saskatoon's infamous Starlight Tours, premiered at ImagineNATIVE in 2004 and won the Canada Award at the Gemini

Awards in 2005. In 2016, she directed an NFB-produced feature documentary called *Birth of a Family* about a 60s Scoop family coming together for the first time during a holiday in Banff. It premiered at Hot Docs International Film Festival and landed in the top ten audience choice list. It also won the Audience Favourite for Feature Documentary at the Edmonton International Film Festival and the Moon Jury prize at ImagineNATIVE. Her last film was *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, an exploration of the impact of the death of Colten Boushie that premiered in the spring of 2019. It opened the Hot Docs International Film Festival and won the top Canadian documentary prize. It also won the Colin Low Award for the top Canadian film at the DOXA International Film Festival and the Canadian Screen Award for Best Feature Documentary. Hubbard was awarded the DGC Discovery award in 2019. She is the writer/director/producer of *Singing Back the Buffalo* (2024).

"Singing Back the Buffalo"

1:30-2:30pm Friday, 20 June, 2025

Tasha Hubbard will share an intimate, behind-the-scenes look at the making of *Singing Back the Buffalo*, including her research journey, the knowledge and guidance from Elders, and the experiential and community-based knowledge of plains Indigenous peoples, all who work towards the notion of justice for the Buffalo. She will connect the dots on the constellation of history, ecology, and Indigenous creative expression that culminates in Indigenous-led buffalo consciousness and buffalo repatriation projects.

Michael Yellow Bird, PhD

Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, MSW, PhD, an enrolled member of the MHA Nation (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara), is a former Dean and current Professor at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. He is an international thought leader on the effects of colonization, methods of decolonization, Indigenous mindfulness, and the cultural significance of Rez dogs. His scholarship can be found in numerous articles, books, book chapters, and research reports, including his most recent article, *Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation Perspectives on Rez Dogs on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, U.S.A* (2023), and his forthcoming book *Rez Dog Meditations*.

As a youth, he immersed himself in stories about dogs and by reading books such as *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Old Yeller*, *Call of the Wild*, *The Incredible Journey*, *Desert Dog*, and many others. Over the years, Dr. Yellow Bird has rescued and cared for many Rez dogs and a few Rez horses and cats. The first dog that he rescued and cared for was a Rez pup he named Sam who was known and loved by the entire community. His family currently live with and care for two rescued Rez dogs named Takara (Japanese: meaning treasure) and Cayha (Indonesian: meaning the light). He is currently the Principal Investigator of a project entitled, *"Exploring Technology: A Pilot Study on Utilizing AI to Empower Indigenous Youth"* which is intended to foster creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills by formulating key questions related to free-roaming dog management and understanding, and to facilitate the use of AI tools and technologies to develop and discuss solutions for caring for and reducing the free-roaming dog population.

"The Future of Rez Dogs: Indigenous Youth, Quantum Canines, and AI"

1:30-2:30pm Saturday, 21 June, 2025



This presentation will discuss a proposed AI, Indigenous Youth, and Rez Dog project on the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation in North Dakota. The project aims at fostering creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills by helping youth to formulate key questions related to free-roaming dog management and understanding. The project will facilitate the use of AI tools and technologies to develop and discuss solutions for caring for and reducing the free-roaming dog population. By integrating AI technology with traditional knowledge about Rez Dogs, this program seeks to build skills that support community resilience and innovation for the future of the people and Rez Dogs.

Thursday, 19th June 2025

	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge	Salon Batoche	Other
11am - 12pm					USask Vet Tour - ticket required
12 - 1pm	Registration Opens (ongoing through 3:00pm)				USask Vet Tour - ticket required
1 - 2:45pm	Workshop: What is the Future of Community-Engaged Research and Practice in Human-Animal Interactions? <u>E King</u> , L Powell	Workshop: Measuring What Matters - Centering Made-Vulnerable Community Voices in Program Evaluation to Strengthen and Protect Human-Animal Relationships <u>Q Rausch</u>	Early Career Researcher Panel	Workshop: Shared Spaces - Shared Solutions, Community-driven Dog and Cat population Management in a One Health Context <u>L Keetman</u> , <u>T Kartal</u> , M Rowlings	Poster Set-Up 1-6 pm Posters & DEIB Posters available for viewing ongoing through Saturday lunch (William Pascoe)
2:45 - 3pm	Refreshment Break				
3 - 4:30pm	Conference Opening & Appetizers (Adam Ballroom)				
5:45pm	Meet up for Travel to the Roxy Theatre (Hotel Lobby)				
6:30 - 9:30pm	"Singing Back the Buffalo" Film Screening Evening Event (Roxy Theatre)				


Friday, 20th June 2025

	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge	Salon Batoche
8:15 - 8:45am	Registration Opens (ongoing) - Coffee Available and Breakfast Snack (not a full breakfast)			
8:45 - 9:20am	Welcome (Adam Ballroom)			
9:20 - 9:40am	Comfort Break			


FRIDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge	Salon Batoche
9:40 - 11:10am	Keynote: Dr. Robert J. Losey - Becoming Friends with Animals: Lessons from History and Culture (Adam Ballroom)			
Sponsored by: 				
11:10 - 11:25am	Refreshment Break			
11:25am - 12:30pm	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Canine-Assisted Services 11:30 - 11:50am The Loki Impact: Exploring the Integration of a Rehabilitation Dog into Pediatric Outpatient Physiotherapy <u>V Caron</u> , A Oates, J Lanovaz, R Pinto, C Dell, S Donkers 11:50am - 12:10pm Advancing Understanding of Human-Animal Interaction in PTSD Treatment for Veterans B Pratt, <u>C Krause-Parello</u> , J Sessa 12:10 - 12:30pm The Importance of Patient Oriented Research in a Research Project Supporting Canadian Veterans Working with Service Dogs <u>L Williamson</u> , <u>G Rath</u>	Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Communicating and Perceptions of Animal Emotions 11:30 - 11:50am Exploring the Validity, Reliability, and Structure of the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS) for Use with Companion Rabbit Owners Using a Mixed Methods Survey <u>C Tinga</u> , J Coe, L Niel 11:50am - 12:10pm Towards a Creative Ethology: Empathy and Imagination as Practice <u>A Letteri</u> 12:10 - 12:30pm Engaging Animal Voices in Conservation and Human-Wildlife Coexistence Using Intuitive Interspecies Communication <u>S Kuppenbender</u> , M Barrett	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Human-Cat Relationships 11:30 - 11:50am Understanding Cat Rescue Fostering as a Reciprocal Relationship: Insights from Aotearoa-New Zealand Rescue Foster Program Coordinators <u>C Roseveare</u> , L Murray, M Breheny, J Mansvelt 11:50am - 12:10pm From Foster to Forever: Caretaker Perspectives on Kitten Socialization Guidelines <u>C Graham</u> , K Koralesky 12:10 - 12:30pm Welfare and Social Network of Two “Resident Cats” in a Nursing Home: Impact of Admission of a New Resident to a Disability Unit <u>H Vesque-Annear</u> , C Sueur, M Grandgeorge, A Stachowiak, A Piermattéo, M Pelé	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Animals in Communities 11:30 - 11:50am Patterns and Trends in Animal Law Enforcement in the U.S.: A Retrospective Data Analysis from 2015 to 2022 L Moss, K O'Reilly, M Hansen, A Arrington, <u>K Morris</u> 11:50am - 12:10pm Strengthening Community Bonds: A Systematic Review of Human-Animal Interactions and Social Connectivity <u>S Parzniewski</u> , H Wu 12:10 - 12:30pm Socioeconomic and Environmental Determinants of Companion Animal Relinquishment in Australia: Insights for Policy and Support Interventions <u>S McDowall</u> , S Hazel, A Hamilton-Bruce, R Stuckey, T Howell
12:30 - 1:30pm	‘Taste of the Prairies’ Lunch Break & Meet the Leaders Event (Adam Ballroom)		Sponsored by: 	
1:30 - 2:30pm	Keynote: Dr. Tasha Hubbard - Singing Back the Buffalo (Adam Ballroom)			
2:30 - 2:40pm	Comfort Break			

FRIDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge	Salon Batoche
2:40 - 3:45pm	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Canine-Assisted Services for Students</p> <p>2:45 - 3:05pm Pawsitive Impact: Measuring the Dog Mentor's Effect on Neurodiverse Students <u>J Duckworth</u>, M Dimolareva, N Gee, K Meints, V Brelsford</p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Heads or Tails: A Randomized Study of the Differential Effects Of Interacting with Different Parts of a Therapy Dog within a Canine-Assisted Intervention <u>J Binfet</u>, F Green, R Godard, M Dahlman, Z Basiri</p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm Pause for Paws: A Drop-In Therapy Dog Clinic for Graduate Students <u>C Kivlen</u>, <u>E White</u></p>	<p>Community & Personal Experience Oral Presentation Session</p> <p>2:45 - 3:05pm Considerations for Indigenous Species in Animal Assisted Services <u>D Home</u></p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Promising Practices: Engaging Men & Boys as Allies in Preventing Gender-Based Violence Through Community Based Humane Education Programming <u>S O'Neill</u>, <u>C Dulude</u>, G Grittner</p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm Paws and Patients: Therapy Dogs Guiding Patient Oriented Forensic Research <u>S Wallace</u>, <u>Patient Partners</u> <u>ANONYMOUS prisoners</u>, Todd ANONYMOUS past prisoner, L Williamson, C Dell</p>	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Humane Education for Care Professionals</p> <p>2:45 - 3:05pm Grounded Theory Model of a OneWelfare Experiential Humane Education Course <u>L Stewart</u>, <u>S Tjaden</u>, W Reece</p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Early Career Veterinarians' Educational Experiences and Perceived Gaps Affecting Well-Being During the Transition to Practice <u>E Morabito</u>, A Jones, T Kittisiam, C Pelka, A Stacey, C Ritter</p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm A Survey of Veterinary Medical Professionals' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences with Animal Sexual Abuse <u>A Zidenberg</u>, B Sparks, M Olver</p>	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Pet Ownership in Vulnerable Populations</p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Associations Between Identity-Based Stressors, Human-Animal Bonds, and Substance Use Among LGBTQ+ Emerging Adults S McDonald, L Wisnieski, C Sobolewski, A Matijczak, L Kogan, <u>A Malone</u>, M Scaggs, R Corona</p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm Development and Validation of the Pet-Related Stress Scale <u>A Matijczak</u>, C Tomlinson, J Applebaum, L Kogan, S McDonald</p>
3:45 - 4pm	Refreshment Break			


FRIDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge	Salon Batoche
4 - 5:05pm	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: AAS for Brain Injuries & Psychiatric Conditions</p> <p>4:05 - 4:25pm Comparing the Effectiveness of Animal-Assisted Therapy and Standard Care in Goal Attainment in Minimally Conscious State Patients <u>F Carbone</u>, R Marti, E Pauli, N Bernasconi, S Brodmann, N Grimm, K Hediger</p> <p>4:25 - 4:45pm Exploring the Perceptions of Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury Participating in Animal-Assisted Therapy with Domesticated Ducks <u>A Sargsyan</u>, L Beebe, F Horn</p> <p>4:45 - 5:05pm A Pilot Randomized Clinical Trial of a Canine-Assisted Intervention Demonstrates Reduced Loneliness in Adults Hospitalized for Mental Illness <u>N Gee</u>, L Townsend, E Friedmann, M Mueller, T Thakre, S Barker</p>	<p>Symposium: From Virtual Reality to Genetics - Technology's Influence on Human-Animal Interactions</p> <p>Chair: <u>N Bennett</u> Presenter 1: <u>M Pagano</u> Presenter 2: <u>J O'Sullivan</u> Presenter 3: <u>N Bennett</u> Discussant: <u>J Binfet</u></p>	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Stress & Emotions</p> <p>4:05 - 4:25pm The Effect of Dogs on Acute Stress Reactivity: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis <u>M Delzio</u>, K Rodriguez</p> <p>4:25 - 4:45pm Why is Fido Stressed? Crossover of Employees' Job Stress to their Dogs <u>T Mitropoulos</u>, A Andrukonis</p> <p>4:45 - 5:05pm Human Enjoyment in Tactile Interactions with Horses and Dogs: A Comparative Study A Sarrafchi, E Lassalette, N Zwaan, M Tucker, <u>K Merkies</u></p>	
5:05 - 5:15pm	Comfort Break			
5:15 - 6:15pm	'Posters, Pizza & Punch' Poster Session (William Pascoe) Poster presentations listed at the end of the program			
7 - 8pm	Optional Walk of Downtown Saskatoon			

	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge
8:15 - 8:45am	Registration Opens (ongoing) - Coffee Available and Breakfast Snack (not a full breakfast)		
8:45 - 9am	Welcome (Adam Ballroom)		
9 - 10am	ISAZ Annual General Meeting (Adam Ballroom)		
10 - 10:10am	Comfort Break		
10:10 - 10:50am	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Saying Goodbye & Retirement 10:10 - 10:30am Before Goodbye: Anticipatory Grief and Burden of Care in Guardians Caring for Dogs with Canine Cognitive Dysfunction <u>T Taylor</u> , J Tuke, S Hazel 10:30 - 10:50am Understanding Grief Experiences of Pet Loss Among African Americans <u>M Whitney</u> 10:50 - 11:10am Preparing for Assistance Dog Retirement: Insights and Recommendations for Enhancing Human-Dog Partnerships <u>N van Veggel</u> , S Gray, Z Thomson, B Reka, D Emmerson, H Engward	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Perceptions of Dogs & Human-Canine Relationships 10:10 - 10:30am Wild or Domestic? The Role of Ideological Frameworks in Shaping Owner Care Practices for New Guinea singing dogs (NGSDs) <u>M Sumridge</u> 10:30 - 10:50am “Leashed Methodology:” A Transdisciplinary and Transspecies Approach to Reciprocal Recognition in Contemporary Indigenous Depictions of Dogs <u>R Moffett</u> <i>Sponsored by:</i>  Your Pet, Our Passion.®	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Sanctuaries & Zoos 10:10 - 10:30am Euthanasia Decision-Making in Korean Public Zoos: Ethical and Emotional Challenges for Veterinarians <u>E Choi</u> , M Chun 10:30 - 10:50am Factors Influencing Human Recognition of Emotional Valence and Arousal in Zoo Animals <u>L Hiisivuori</u> , K Alavalkama, H Telkänranta, E Vitikainen, S Koski
11:10 - 11:25am	Refreshment Break		

SATURDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge
11:25am - 12:30pm	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Secondary Impacts of AAS</p> <p>11:30 - 11:50am The Effect of Animal-Assisted Services on Caregivers: A Systematic Scoping Review <u>M Knight</u>, Z Ng, J Williamson</p> <p>11:50am - 12:10pm Bridging the Bond in Occupational Therapy Practice: A Qualitative Study to Understand Professional Reasoning in Situations Involving Older Adults and Animal Companions <u>N Obradovic</u>, V Provencher, M Désormeaux-Moreau</p>	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Benefits & Challenges of Pet Ownership</p> <p>11:50am - 12:10pm "It's All Worth It." The Joys, Challenges and Life Lessons from Rescuing Chickens <u>A McFalls</u>, O Tassou, L Bertone</p> <p>12:10 - 12:30pm Assistance, Planning, and Unmet Needs: Factors Shaping Older Adults' Pet Care Behaviors in the United States <u>J Bibbo</u>, S Nicolay, S Tuft</p>	<p>Lightning Oral Presentations</p> <p>11:25 - 11:30am Equine Coworkers: Worth Their Weight in Gold <u>C Winkelman</u></p> <p>11:30 - 11:35am Healing Through the Wild: Exploring the Psychosocial Benefits of Human-Dolphin Interactions for Youth with Trauma <u>D Bay-Markins</u>, <u>H Kurian</u>, <u>S Salko</u>, W Dominick</p> <p>11:35 - 11:40am Buzzing with Benefits: Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Bee Houses <u>N Bromfield</u></p> <p>11:40 - 11:45am Zoosemiotics in Visual Representations of Woodland Caribou <u>M Pospisil</u></p> <p>11:45 - 11:50am The Symbolic Mind of Prehistoric Societies: A Cognitive Archaeology Study on Jomon Animal Figurines <u>M Kakinuma</u>, A Tsuchida</p> <p>12:00 - 12:05pm Fostering Happy, Healthy Human-Dog Relationships in Education: Building a Sustainable Community of Practice through the National School Dog Alliance. <u>H Lewis</u>, J Oostendorp Godfrey, R Grigg</p> <p>12:05 - 12:10pm Pet Companionship Among International Students in the U.S.: Motivations and Challenges <u>J Tian</u>, M Mueller, S Dowling-Guyer</p> <p>12:10 - 12:15pm The Impact of Pet Ownership on Empathy Development in Middle Childhood <u>K Bemister</u></p> <p>12:15 - 12:20pm Children's Close Relationships with Companion Animals: Considerations in Measuring Attachment, Bond, and Other Nuances <u>L Guazzelli da Costa Rodrigues</u>, J Ludwig, C Tardif-Williams</p>
12:30 - 1:30pm	<p>'Vegetarian' Lunch Break & Mentor-Mentee Meet-Up (Adam Ballroom)</p>		

SATURDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge
1:30 - 2:30pm	Keynote: Dr. Michael Yellow Bird - The Future of Rez Dogs: Indigenous Youth, Quantum Canines, and AI (Adam Ballroom)		
2:30 - 2:40pm	Comfort Break		
2:40 - 3:45pm	<p>Symposium: Pets and Human Mental Health and Wellbeing: Embracing Complexity, Context, and Collaboration Through an Innovative HAI Research Program</p> <p>Chair: <u>V Ashall</u> Presenter 1: <u>M Mueller</u> Presenter 2: <u>L Powell</u> Presenter 3: <u>E Bray</u> Presenter 4: <u>B Smith</u> Discussant: <u>C Dell</u></p> <p><i>Sponsored by:</i></p> 	<p>Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Perceptions of Animals</p> <p>2:45 - 3:05pm Eye Size Affects Perceived Suitability of Laboratory Rats: Evidence for Baby Schema Effects in Animal Research <u>M Theubet</u>, N Allabban, K Babayeva, N Carbonell Munõz, M Krikeli, E Rizou, L Taschin, C Mohr</p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Co-Creating with Bears: Visual Storytelling, Multispecies Entanglements, and the Making of Bears in Hot Tubs <u>C Musser</u></p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm All Paws On Board: An Analysis of the Concept of the Total Institution and Dog Mascots on Naval Vessels during the 20th Century <u>K Rogers</u></p>	<p>Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Human-Equine Interactions</p> <p>2:45 - 3:05pm Cultivating Consensus about the Impact of Horse Experiences on Youth Development: A Delphi Study <u>C Lunzmann</u>, J Applebaum, N Stedman</p> <p>3:05 - 3:25pm Retraining Horse Leaders in Therapeutic Riding to be Equine Advocates: Preliminary Concepts in Practice <u>E Kieson</u>, H Sabolek Consiglio, A Nolan, L Ryan</p> <p>3:25 - 3:45pm "I Get It, But You're Also Scaring Me": A Multispecies Ethnographic Account of the Relationship Between Dressage Rider Emotions, Horse Behaviour and Coach-Rider Communication <u>M Ross</u>, G Doiron, K Proudfoot, K Merkies, C Lundgren, C Ritter</p>
3:45 - 4pm	Refreshment Break		

SATURDAY	Adam Ballroom	Kelsey & Saskatchewan	Terrace Lounge
4 - 5:05pm	Continued Symposium: Pets and Human Mental Health and Wellbeing: Embracing Complexity, Context, and Collaboration Through an Innovative HAI Research Program	Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Quality of Life, Health & Behavior 4:05 - 4:25pm Look at Me, Please! Human Auditory Attention-Getting Devices in Dog-Human Play R Mitchell, E Howard, M Saylor, L Minor 4:25 - 4:45pm Dog Owners' Health and Nutrition Risk Perception Concerning Four Different Diets A Knörr, A Bearth, X Zhou, M Siegrist 4:45 - 5:05pm Regulatory Practices of Canine Citizenship and the Social Situatedness of Dogs M Beste	Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Equine-Assisted Services 4:05 - 4:25pm Assessing the Influence of Equine Assisted Services on the Biopsychosocial Responses of Both Human and Equine Participants N Lorig, N Pickard, C Adams, <u>K Cole</u> 4:25 - 4:45pm Mission Transition: An Equine Facilitated Learning Project R Bisha, <u>S Freeman</u>

7 - 9pm	Indigenous Buffet Dinner, Closing Reception & Awards Ceremony COMPLETE registration package ticket required (Adam Ballroom)		<i>Student Oral Award Sponsored by:</i>	
			<i>Student Poster Award Sponsored by:</i>	



Sunday, 22nd June 2025

10:45am	Meet up for Travel to Wanuskewin Hertiage Park (Hotel Lobby)
11am - 3pm	Wanuskewin Heritage Park Day Trip - ticket required

Poster Presentations

ID# 1: The Relationship Between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Human-Animal Interactions (HAI): A Scoping Review

J Yacilla, K Weigand, L Nieforth

ID# 2: Women Companion Animal Guardians' Contributions Towards Animal Welfare During Pandemic Emergency Response in Vancouver, BC, Canada

H Wu

ID# 3: Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Service Dog Teams in Academic Environments

C Squair, L Williamson

ID# 4: Eye Contact and Smiles Matter: Canine-Assisted Occupational Therapy for Children on Autism Spectrum Disorder

M Figueiredo, F Freitas, R Roiz, L Magalhães

ID# 5: Fostering Connections in Cais: Handlers' Insights Around How to Optimize University Student-Therapy Dog Interactions

C Dell, F Green, A Pavelich, M Dahlman, J Binfet

ID# 6: Feasibility of Recruiting Psychiatrically Hospitalized Adults for a Randomized Controlled Trial of an Animal-Assisted Intervention

L Townsend, N Gee, E Friedmann, M Mueller, T Thakre, S Barker

ID# 7: Reevaluating Domestic Animals' Role in Human Society: Culture, History, and Ethical Dilemmas

A Tsuchid, M Kakinuma

ID# 8: Incorporating Diverse Perspectives into the Conservation and Management of the Sturgeon River Plains Bison Herd

M Nemeth

ID# 9: The Teen & Dog Study: Longitudinal Idiographic Assessment of Adolescent-Dog Relationships and Adaptive Coping for Youth with Social Anxiety

N Mason, L Charmaraman, J Mote, E Anderson, S Dowling-Guyer, E King, J Brown, E Mingo, R Sabelli, E Mccobb, M Mueller

ID# 10: The Impact of Human-Dog Interactions on Stress Recovery: Influence of Interaction Methods and Relationship Types

R Nishiura, H Weng, B Kish, Y Tong, N Ogata

ID# 11: What's The Experience of Getting a Service Dog in Canada?

A Dixon, L Williamson

ID# 12: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Experiences with a Long-Standing Pets-at-Work Program

E Macinnis, N Ogata, L Nieforth

ID# 13: Exploring Cognitive Dissonance of Meat Eaters who Believe in Animal Sentience: A Phenomenology

A Lettner, J Do, R Cox

ID# 14: Human and Canine Behavioral Predictors of Adolescent Anxiety in an Experimental Setting

S Dowling-Guyer, N Mason, E Anderson, M Mueller

ID# 15: Investigating the Association Between Trainer Ratings and Independent Assessments of Desirable Dog Behavior

D Jonkoski, T Block, B Kennedy, E Maclean, E Bray

ID# 16: Animal-Assisted Learning in the University Curriculum: Canine and Equine Examples

S Freeman, K Beyer, M Czuchry, R Bisha

ID# 17: Understanding Non-Zoo Visitors' Perceptions in Hong Kong and the UK Toward Zoos

T Fok

ID# 18: Evaluation of Dog Training with Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence to Improve Well-Being

H Shean, K Snopkowski

ID# 19: The Relationship Between Attachment to Pets and Grief of Pet Loss: The Effect of the Memorial Service

S Hamano

ID# 20: A Cat's Influence on Interpersonal Process in Teletherapy: An Autoethnographic Approach

S Cronin, A Fournier

ID# 21: The Role of "Tsukisoi-Ken" for Children Undergoing a Forensic Interview

M Yamamoto, K Fujihara, K Hida, Y Maruyama

ID# 22: Understanding the Lived Experience of Veterans who Work with Service Dogs

K Taekema, L Williamson

ID# 23: How Do Older Adults in a Rural Community View the Use of Non-Human Animals in Research; For Consumption and as Pets?

R Mueller

ID# 24: Understanding the Complexity of Pet Attachment, Social Connectedness and Loneliness for Older Adults Aging at Home in the Community

C Beaupre

ID# 25: Addressing the Human-Animal Bond in Generalist Social Work and Human Service Practice

N Lang

ID# 26: Leadership in Human-Animal Interactions and Human Behaviour Change

D Bornemann

ID# 27: Interactions with Therapy Dogs and Child Stress Response: An Experimental Study

K Jacobson, I Jordan

ID# 28: Human-Dog Bond Scale: A Pilot Study

W Moczarska, S Makuła

ID# 29: Co-Creating Launching a Collaborative a Transdisciplinary Effort to Develop a HAB Human-Animal Bond Working Group Within the One Health Commission

K Abu-Hena Mostofa, M Balinska, C Dell, P Doutre, C Mccrindle, E Mumford, U Ogbodo, V Ormea, F Otuel, W Ribb, P Ulrich

ID# 30: A Content Analysis of Canine Therapy on Youth in Juvenile Detention Centers

E Bonham, M Nunes

ID# 31: The Impact of Therapy Dog Visitation for Emergency Department Patients with Mental Health Concerns

A Rowsell, A Pavelich, H Mckenzie, C Dell, J Stempien, J Smith, A Hozack, J Gunderson, E Pease

ID# 32: The Supportive Role of Service Dogs for Canadian Military Veterans Experiencing Suicidality

P De Groot, A Pavelich, C Dell

ID# 33: Unleashing Insights: Examining Graduate Student Stress Reduction and Engagement in Canine-Assisted Interventions

C Kivlen, A Chargo, E White, J Binfet

ID# 34: Claw and Disorder: Psychopathic Traits and the Human-Feline Bond

K Margeotes, A Zidenberg, R Sohail, B Sparks

DEIB Posters

Key Findings from the Pet Education Partnership's Children and Pets Survey 2025

A Baggott, E Tipton, K Taylor, J Cortis, D Allen, C Francoli, S Brown, D Bedford, N Wells, A Cowling, M Kyle, A Griffiths, S Weidman, B Greenwood, L Agnew

Shared Care, Shared Space: Student Reflections on Mutual Healing and the Welfare of Campus Animals in the Philippines

D Parreño

Navigating Climate & Culture Change: The 3C Pathway to Resilient Animal Care in a Shifting World

S Ferber

Taming the Risk Narrative: A Species-Centred Model for Handling Wild Equids

B Mealand, S Rigg, L Shelton, L Wood

Quality of Life in Cats and Dogs – Pathway to developing a standardized Questionnaire

C Smetaczek, F Rhein, S Krämer, R Klee, B Albrecht, J Aden, D Seistock, A Haslinger, B Stetina

Primate Anthrozoology in Action: Inclusive, Multisectoral Conservation and Knowledge Co-production in Brazil's Atlantic Forest.

G de Melo Daly, E Silva, P Soares, Z Queiroz, A Bastos, M Gomes

The impact of sensory gardens on dogs

Msc. Lieve L Meers, MSc Elizabeth A Walsh, MSc Anita Claus, BSc Liesbeth Daems, Dr Carolina Duarte-Gan, Dr Sara Platto, Dr Magdalèna Barnišinová, Dr Laura Contalbrigo, Dr Simona Normando

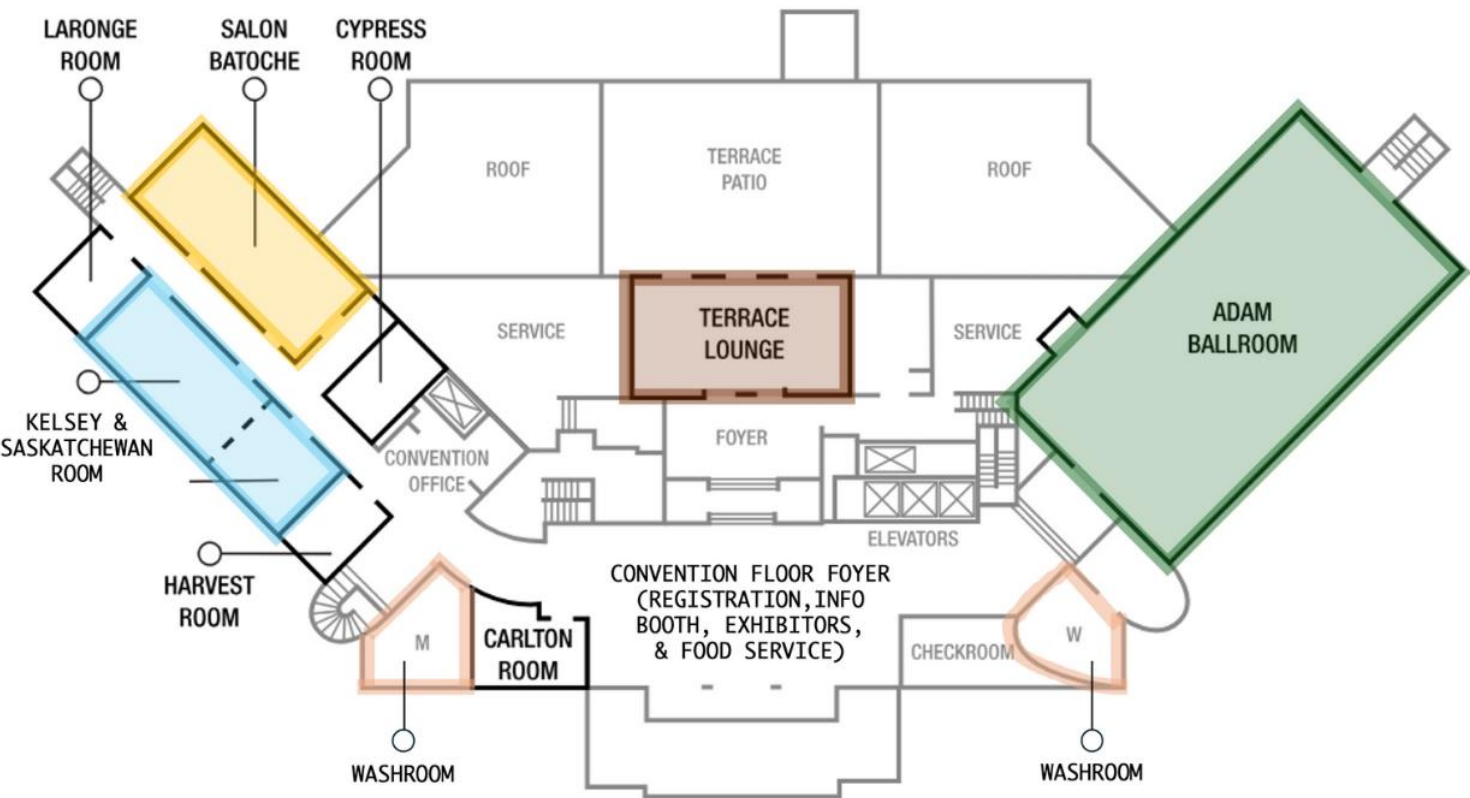
Personal experience with animals, but not religious belief predicts the perception of animal mind and consciousness among Turkish university students

K Kerman, D Keçe

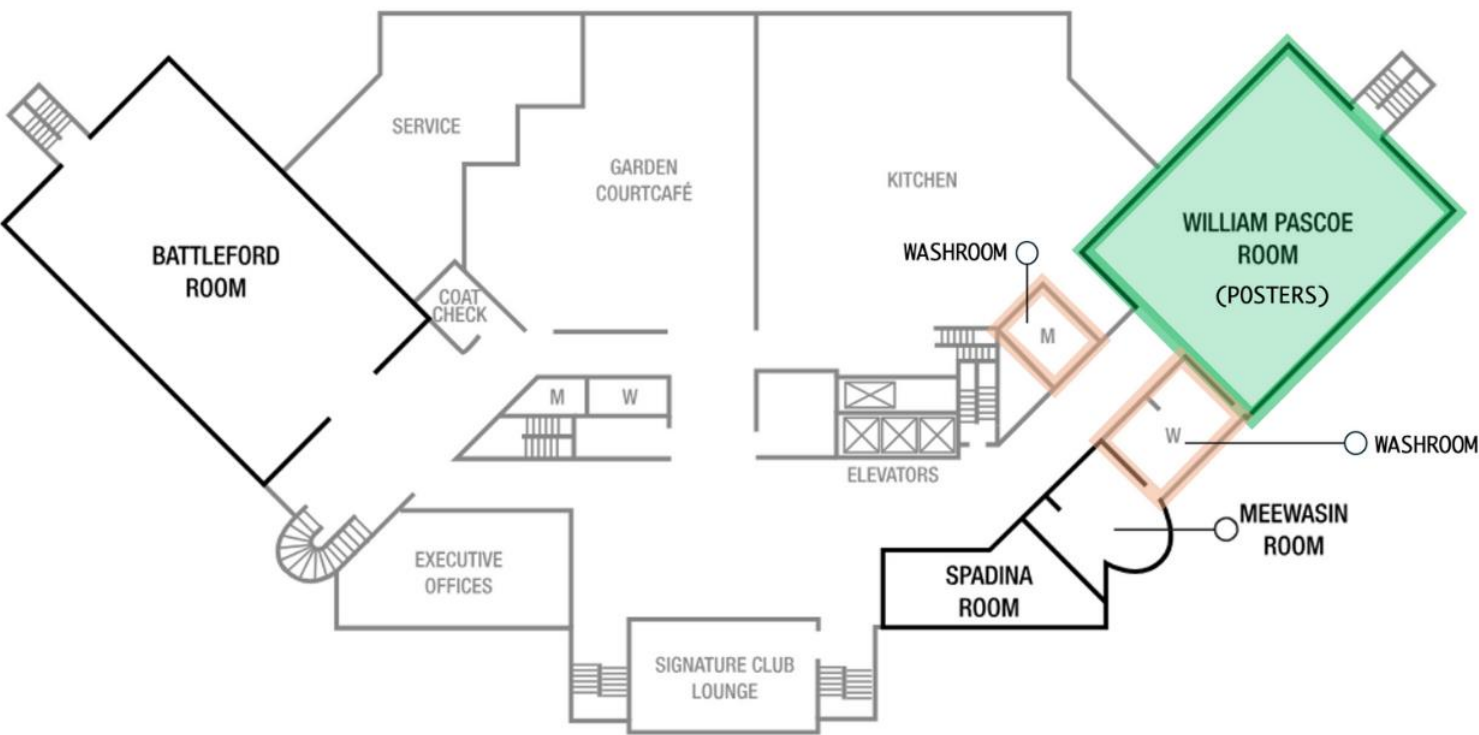
Social determinants of human and companion canine health in Los Angeles County: results from an NICHD-funded adolescent obesity research study during the COVID-19 pandemic

O Solomon, A Deavenport-Saman, D Linder, M Wilson, T Mason, V Castro, L Yin

DELTA BESSBOROUGH CONVENTION FLOOR



MEZZANINE FLOOR



Events

Outgoing Board Meeting & Lunch - ISAZ Board Only

9:00am - 1:00pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

USask College of Veterinary Medicine Tour - ticket required

11:00am - 12:00pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

Veterinary Medical Centre

We are offering delegates the chance to tour our state of the art college of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan!

USask College of Veterinary Medicine Tour - ticket required

12:00 - 1:00pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

BJ Hughes Centre

We are offering delegates the chance to tour our state of the art college of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan!

Conference Opening & Appetizers

3:00 - 4:30pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

The Conference Host Chairs, Colleen Dell and Alexandria Pavelich, along with ISAZ President, Nancy Gee, welcome you to ISAZ 2025!

Meet up for Travel to the Roxy Theatre

5:45 - 6:30pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

There will be an option to walk to the Roxy Theatre in a group starting at 6:00pm from our conference location or take one of our shuttle buses leaving the hotel at 5:45, 6:00, and 6:15. If attendees are able to take the first two buses, they will have more time to mingle with other attendees and get a free popcorn and pop!

Return buses for all will leave from the Roxy Theatre directly following the event.

Here is a google maps link to the

location: https://www.google.com/maps/search/roxy+theatre+address/@52.1297999,-106.6754007,15z?entry=tts&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDYwMS4wIPu8ASoASAFQAw%3D%3D&skid=2a4fb09f-fa07-4ed3-bfa7-eb673c959605

"Singing Back the Buffalo" Film Screening Evening Event

6:30 - 9:30pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

We will be hosting a documentary film screening on the first night of the conference at the historic Roxy Theater as a part of our welcome reception! This event is foundational and essential to attend, as its focus will be a running theme throughout all conference activities. The screening will be licensed with an intermission for socializing, as well as a panel with director and producer, [Dr. Tasha Hubbard](#), and others following the viewing.

'Taste of the Prairies' Lunch Break & Meet the Leaders Event

12:30 - 1:30pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Lunch provided.

This event will be held during lunch and is intended to provide conference attendees with an informal opportunity to meet and engage with current leaders in the field, discuss topics of interest, and facilitate collaborations. The event will include about 5

leaders, who will each be seated at round tables. Conference attendees will then rotate between the tables at timed intervals to meet several leaders throughout the event. All are welcome to participate!

Come meet our ISAZ 2025 featured leaders!

Dr. Erika Friedmann

Professor Emerita, University of Maryland

Species of Interest: Companion animals, service or emotional support animals - any species

Dr. Nancy Gee

Professor of Psychiatry, Director Center for Human-Animal Interaction, Bill Balaban Chair in Human-Animal Interaction

Virginia Commonwealth University - School of Medicine

<https://medschool.vcu.edu/about/portfolio/details/geen2/>

Species of Interest: Dogs, but has done research involving fish and pets in general (all species)

Dr. Cheryl Krause-Parello

Associate Vice President for Research, Florida Atlantic University

Species of Interest: Dogs

www.fau.edu/i-health/c-paww/

Dr. Helen Lewis

Swansea University, UK

Species of Interest: Dogs

<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/staff/helen.e.lewis/>

<https://www.nationalschooldogalliance.co.uk/>

Dr. Robert Mitchell

Foundation Professor of Animal Studies and Psychology, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY

<https://www.eku.edu/personnel/dr-robert-mitchell/>

Dr. Megan Mueller

Associate Professor of Human-Animal Interaction, Tufts University, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine

Species of Interest: Companion animals, dogs specifically

<https://sites.tufts.edu/tpawlab/>

Sponsored by:



Optional Walk of Downtown Saskatoon

7:00 - 8:00pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Meet in the hotel lobby at 7:00pm to join a walking group to explore downtown Saskatoon!

ISAZ Annual General Meeting

9:00 - 10:00am Saturday, 21st June, 2025

The ISAZ AGM provides an opportunity for ISAZ members to hear updates from the ISAZ Board of Directors about the society's activities. The AGM will also include an announcement of the ISAZ 2026 location and date! All members are encouraged to attend, and non-members are welcome.

'Vegetarian' Lunch Break & Mentor-Mentee Meet-Up

12:30 - 1:30pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Lunch provided.

Mentor-Mentee Meet-Up is for ISAZ members who have opted into the Mentor-Mentee Program. This will be a chance for mentors and mentees to meet each other and chat.

Returning & New Board Meeting - ISAZ Board Only

5:05 - 5:35pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Conference Dinner, Closing Reception & Awards Ceremony (COMPLETE registration package ticket required)

7:00 - 9:00pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Following conference activities, a ticketed dinner and awards ceremony will be hosted for delegates in the Adam Ballroom of the Delta Bessborough.

Award winners are not required to be in attendance at the conference dinner.

Student Oral Award Sponsored by:



Student Poster Award Sponsored by:



Wanuskewin Heritage Park Day Trip - pre-ordered ticket required

11:00am - 3:00pm Sunday, 22nd June, 2025

Wanuskewin Heritage Park

A planned outing to the Wanuskewin Heritage Park will occur on Sunday, June 22nd from 11:30am-2:30pm. The park and its cultural center are a proposed UNESCO Heritage Site, just outside of the Saskatoon city limits. If this is your first time to Saskatchewan, do not miss exploring the Opimihāw Valley's more than 6,400 years of Northern Plains Indigenous histories and cultures!

The goal of this trip will be to introduce attendees to the “One Health” framework within a naturally preserved, 6,000 year old Northern Plains ecological site; learn more about Indigenous cultural practices and ways of knowing; and view the Prairie Bison (Buffalo) that were re-introduced to the area in 2019 after their near-extinction due to colonial activities 150 years ago.

Workshops

What is the future of community-engaged research and practice in human-animal interactions?

Erin King¹, Lauren Powell²

¹Tufts University, North Grafton, MA, USA. ²University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA
1:00 - 2:45pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

Health inequities and social determinants of health are increasingly being recognized in the field of anthrozoology which has inspired many groups to initiate projects that support community members and their pets. As the field expands to consider human-animal interactions across diverse settings and populations, there is a need for ethical engagement in both research and practice. When engaging with the people and animals within marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented communities, we have both opportunities and responsibilities. There is vast potential for anthrozoologists to have positive impacts, although good intentions do not guarantee positive outcomes and there is also an opportunity for inadvertent harm. We therefore have an obligation to identify and follow evidence-based ethical engagement practices refined through decades of research from human health engagement programs. However, many existing resources fail to account for the nuances of ethical engagement with animals. In this workshop, we will discuss the importance of ethical engagement, and introduce concepts such as community-engaged research, systems thinking and strength-based ideologies. We will then review a recently published document in the Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health, titled Principles of Veterinary Community Engagement, that translates existing work on culturally competent, culturally humble, and ethical collaboration to settings with animals and their guardians. Attendees will participate in interactive discussions about how they apply ethical engagement principles in their own work, and opportunities for increased ethical engagement in human-animal interactions in the future. The workshop will end with a guided self-reflection to help attendees identify takeaways from the workshop that can be applied to their own work in human-animal interactions.

Measuring What Matters: Centering Made-Vulnerable Community Voices in Program Evaluation to Strengthen and Protect Human-Animal Relationships

Dr. Quinn Rausch

Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
1:00 - 2:45pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

Organizations supporting made-vulnerable communities and their animals often face challenges in evaluating and measuring the impact of their programs, largely due to limited knowledge, resources, and meaningful community partnerships. This workshop will make evaluation more approachable by introducing Community-Based Evaluation (CBE), a flexible and adaptable approach that combines existing evaluation frameworks while centering community voices, trust-building, and iterative growth.

The workshop has three key objectives:

1. Provide simple, community engagement tools that can be integrated into existing work or replace time-intensive data tracking with meaningful community connection, making program evaluation more accessible and reflective of real-world impact.
2. Highlight the value and expertise that comes with lived experiences within communities facing the hardships that programs aim to alleviate and demonstrate how their insights can shape and refine services for greater relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.
3. Emphasize the role of flexibility, collaboration, and relationship-building in evaluation, showing how organizations can adapt their impact measurement strategies, strengthen trust-based partnerships with communities, and foster relationships with other service-providing organizations to create more cohesive, effective, and sustainable support systems for people and their animals.

Participants will also learn how to apply a mixed-method framework to quantify (e.g., valence, intensity, prevalence, sustainability) and qualify (e.g., community needs, goals, experiences) program impact over time and identify opportunities for cross-sector collaboration to improve service delivery. Through this approach, organizations can use assessment as a tool for ongoing learning, capacity-building, and deeper engagement with the communities and partners they serve.

Early Career Researcher Panel

1:00 - 2:45pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

Led by veteran HAI researcher Dr. John-Tyler Binfet and doctoral student Freya Green from the University of British Columbia, this workshop will appeal to graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and early career researchers curious to learn strategies to keep up with the ever-developing HAI field, identifying and building your research expertise, finding and working with an HAI mentor, and tips on moving projects through to deliverable outcomes. Humor filled, engaging, and participatory, participants will leave this workshop energized to continue building their skills and capacity as HAI researchers.

Shared Spaces – Shared Solutions, Community-driven Dog and Cat population Management in a One Health Context

Lisette Keetman¹, Tamara Kartal², Manuela Rowlings³

¹FOUR PAWS, Amsterdam, Netherlands. ²FOUR PAWS, Hamburg, Germany. ³FOUR PAWS, Vienna, Austria

1:00 - 2:45pm Thursday, 19th June, 2025

In this workshop, participants dive into the essential role local communities play in the design and implementation of their dog and cat population management programmes. Recognising that free-roaming dogs and cats play a role into human, animal, and environmental health dynamics and thus are grounded in the One Health approach, this workshop explores strategies through real case studies from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia to mitigate the challenges posed by unmanaged populations.

Through a blend of interactive discussions, field data, case studies, and practical tools, participants will gain insights into how stray populations contribute to public health concerns and how local communities and decision-makers can take control to humanely and sustainably manage their stray populations.

This workshop will also emphasize ethical considerations of animal welfare, community engagement, and sustainable practices that align with One Health principles, to equip participants to:

1. Understand the complexities of dog/cat populations
2. Identifying key stakeholders, outlining their roles and responsibilities
3. Understand what part local and international NGOs could take in to help communities and their veterinary network
4. Discuss key components of successful projects, including capacity building, veterinary services, community engagement, responsible pet ownership and adoption programmes
5. Address common challenges in a practical and relatable way discussing and applying case studies, innovative initiatives and lessons learnt from Eastern Europe and Asia.

Ultimately, this workshop seeks to inspire innovative and inclusive approaches to manage stray dog and cat populations, creating healthier communities for people and animals alike.

Abstracts

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Canine-Assisted Services

11:25am - 12:30pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

111 The Loki Impact: Exploring the integration of a rehabilitation dog into pediatric outpatient physiotherapy.

Dr. Valerie L Caron, Dr. Alison Oates, Dr. Joel Lanovaz, Dr. Romany Pinto, Dr. Colleen Dell, Dr. Sarah J Donkers

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada

Background: Ambulatory children with cerebral palsy (CP) face walking and balance challenges, often addressed with physiotherapy (PT) to improve participation. Engaging in high-intensity training and frequent medical appointments is challenging and not part of typical childhood development. Integrating a rehabilitation dog (Loki) into PT (animal-assisted PT; AA-PT) may enhance motivation and engagement. A mixed methods approach evaluated impacts of integrating Loki into walking and balance training for children with CP.

Methods: We collaborated with Loki, a 3.5-year-old Labernois, trained rehabilitation dog (Mira). This study had 2 parts: 1) single timepoint walking with and without Loki; 2) 8-week AA-PT integrating Loki. Participants: ambulatory children with CP, 7-17 y.o.a, and caregiver(s). Walking function was assessed with and without Loki using spatiotemporal parameters. Visual analog scales (VAS) rated perceived change in enjoyment, confidence, safety, and comfort walking with and without Loki. Part 1 used paired t-tests to evaluate differences between walking conditions. Part 2 added measures of balance (Kids Mini BESTest) and dual-task cost (DTC) with an individual responder analysis. Qualitative interviews were conducted at all time-points and reflexive thematic analysis was used. Loki routinely saw a rehabilitation veterinarian and completed a training program to stay healthy and ready for his role.

Results: Changes to spatiotemporal parameters varied across participants. Part 1 (n=11) showed trends of decreased step length and walking speed and increased time in double support with Loki. VAS increased significantly ($p \geq 0.05$) for perceived enjoyment, comfort, and safety with Loki. Part 2 (n=4) showed clinically and statistically significant improvements in walking, balance, and DTC. Qualitative findings identified three main themes: 1) The bond; 2) Support; 3) Increased engagement.

Significance: Integrating Loki into PT improved balance and walking. Participants reported increased comfort, safety, and enjoyment, centered around a connection to Loki. Children reported an immediate and deepening bond with Loki. Parents noted Loki helped humanize medical interventions and increased willingness.

76 Advancing understanding of human-animal interaction in PTSD treatment for Veterans
Dr. Beth A Pratt, [Dr. Cheryl A Krause-Parello](#), Dr. Joy Sessa
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL, USA

Introduction: PTSD affects 7-29% of U.S. military veterans, with medication and talk therapy showing limited efficacy for some veterans. Utilization of complementary treatment options, such as human-animal interaction, to improve mental health and wellbeing has risen. This study evaluated the impact of a dog adoption and training program on PTSD symptoms, anxiety, depression, loneliness, meaning/purpose, perceived stress, positive affect, and sleep quality among veterans with self-reported PTSD.

Methodology: In this longitudinal RCT, eligible veterans were randomized into the dog adoption/training intervention or waitlist control arm. Intervention participants had 8-weekly dog training sessions compared to the 12-week waiting period for waitlist control participants. Psychosocial measures were collected at three time points. Linear mixed models were used to evaluate change over time and between arms.

Findings: Forty-two veterans whose ages ranged from 22 to 71 ($M = 41.03$, $SD = 13.206$) were in the intervention ($n=18$) or waitlist control ($n=21$) arm. Three participants dropped out of the intervention before protocol initiation. Changes in depression ($p = .027$) and anxiety ($p = .036$) over time were statistically significant between the intervention and waitlist control arms. Differences in PTSD symptoms ($p = .247$), loneliness ($p = .288$), meaning and purpose ($p = .610$), perceived stress ($p = .811$), positive affect ($p = .247$), and sleep quality ($p = .220$) were not statistically significant. Intervention participants demonstrated a greater downtrend in PTSD and loneliness scores and a greater uptrend in positive affect and sleep quality over time compared to waitlist control participants.

Principal conclusions: Dogs have been shown to positively impact veterans' mental health and wellbeing. Results suggest important implications for clinical practice and policy, including the incorporation of dog ownership into individualized care plans and the protection of pet-friendly policies to support dog ownership for veterans in their homes and public spaces.

59 The Importance of Patient Oriented Research in a Research Project Supporting Canadian Veterans Working with Service Dogs

[Dr. Linzi Williamson](#)¹, [M.A Grace Rath](#)²

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Introduction: Canadian Veterans are increasingly working with service dogs (SDs) to mitigate health issues. The current 6-year-funded, patient-oriented research (POR) project is comprised of multiple sub-studies examining the lived experiences of Veterans working with SDs and the SD socio-political environment across Canada.

Methodology: Patient partners (e.g., veterans, service dog trainers, etc.) are consulted throughout and inform the research process. POR allows for research projects to be relevant to the issues that patients partners are facing in their daily lives. The primary issues in this project that our patient partners highlighted were public access issues, integrating a SD into the family home, determining the social value of SDs, navigating the challenges of the SD industry, and highlighting the lived experience of Veterans working with a SD. Data collection methods include interviews and online questionnaires. Data analyses centre qualitative (e.g., content and thematic analysis) and quantitative (e.g., descriptive and inferential statistics) approaches.

Results: While the project is still ongoing, results from completed sub-studies can be reported. SDs are seen as integral to the family home and can have a positive impact on Veterans' romantic relationship with their partner. The Canadian public is also generally accepting of SDs in public spaces, however the public's understanding of how SDs work in public spaces, or how they differ from other working animals, is lacking. This lack of awareness can create unsafe environments for SD teams where they experience hostility from the public which in turn distracts the SD from tasking for their handler.

Implications: Findings from this project highlight a need for public education on what SDs do for their handlers and how to accommodate them in public spaces. Educational outputs will be developed for the SD industry and general public (e.g., technical reports, publications, videos) to incorporate these findings into programming and SD education.

Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Communicating and Perceptions of Animal Emotions

11:25am - 12:30pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations integrated with a related community & personal experience presentation each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

Talk 1: Standard Oral Presentation

Talk 2: Community & Personal Experience Presentation

Talk 3: Standard Oral Presentation

145 Exploring the validity, reliability, and structure of the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS) for use with companion rabbit owners using a mixed methods survey

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Introduction: Little research exists characterizing owner-companion rabbit attachment. In previous survey studies using the LAPS, many rabbit owners' responses were missing. Using a new sample, we explored using the LAPS for measuring owner attachment to companion

rabbits and the scale's relationship with owner demographics and perceptions (rabbit retention, emotionality, and intelligence).

Methodology: An online Qualtrics survey for rabbit owners included the 23-item LAPS as well as questions about owner demographics and perceptions; rabbit demographics and husbandry; two other relationship scales (not presented here); and open text boxes for owners' opinions on LAPS items they thought were not applicable and potentially missing when used with companion rabbits. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using SAS Studio and GraphPad, and NVivo, respectively.

Results: Participants (n=2093) identified mostly as women (82.5%); had one rabbit (50.4%); and averaged 8.4 years of rabbit experience (median 5.0). Rabbits mostly lived indoors (87.2%), were neutered (77.5%), and were male (58.4%). After combining "Don't Know or Refuse" responses (range 0.2%-7.0%/item) with missing responses (range 0.8%-1.5%/item), 724/2093 (34.6%) of the surveys became incomplete. Cronbach's alpha was 0.93. The PCA had a 4-component solution including Two-way Relationship, Valuing Rabbits, General Attachment, and Sharing Rabbit Experiences. Popular not applicable and potentially missing items centered around rabbits being rabbits. Distributions of categorical groupings for many owner demographic factors differed ($p < 0.05$). Owners who were currently thinking about giving their rabbit away or freeing their rabbit outside were more likely not to have completed the LAPS (Fisher's Exact Tests: $p = .0073$, $n = 2080$; $p = .0102$, $n = 2084$; respectively). Rabbit emotion ratings and LAPS scores were positively correlated ($r = 0.36$, $p < .0001$, $n = 1367$) as were rabbit intelligence ratings and LAPS scores ($r = 0.40$, $p < .0001$, $n = 1368$).

Principal conclusions and implications: Driven by ambiguous responses related to several scale items, missing data for the LAPS could bias results and interpretations about human-rabbit relationships.

34 Towards a Creative Ethology: Empathy and Imagination as Practice

Dr Abby Letteri

International Institute of Modern Letters, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington,
Wellington, New Zealand

This multimedia presentation will incorporate still and moving images and spoken word storytelling. I describe several wild and free-living horses encountered during my travels, consider multiple ways of seeing and knowing horses through observation and interaction, and attempt to express more-than-human viewpoints. I introduce the practice of *creative ethology* which combines empathy and imagination to see and understand horses holistically, and explore the role of creativity as a tool of inquiry, engagement and advocacy.

While writing my PhD thesis, *Waiting for the Light: Considering the Horse in the Human World*, I travelled extensively to observe horses living in many different types of situations, from free-living managed herds in the UK, to the last truly wild horses left on earth in the Mongolian desert, *Equus ferus przewalskii* (and the rangers who protect them). I developed an observational practice which combines art and science, and shaped the essays as a kind of *creative ethology*: a way of seeing and understanding horses and rendering that experience on the page. I came to better understand who horses are and what matters to them through observing their *telos*, the unique traits and powers that allow horses to function and thrive in the environments for which they are adapted. I witnessed how the ‘horseness’ of a horse includes other horses, because sociality, the herd, is a defining characteristic of their lives.

My research led me to reconfigure my own relationship with horses, and to try to overturn the dominant narratives of the horse in the human world, which often fail to question the fundamental assumption of the use of horses for human purposes. I write on behalf of horses and yet I write through a human lens; I can’t speak for horses, only of them, an unresolvable paradox which I explore in my creative work.

56 Engaging Animal Voices in Conservation and Human-Wildlife Coexistence Using Intuitive Interspecies Communication

Sydney Kuppenbender, Dr M.J. Barrett

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Introduction: Despite animals holding a stake in issues that affect them, they are rarely directly involved in decision-making. Scholars in various disciplines are advocating for animal engagement in research, yet many struggle with how to put this into practice. This research documents how professional animal communicators (ACs) are using the method of intuitive interspecies communication (IIC) as a potential response to bring animal voices forth in the contexts of conservation and human–wildlife coexistence (HWC).

Methodology: Using exploratory case study and reflexive thematic analysis, this research provides detailed case study accounts involving AC work with wildlife. Three documented cases provide insight from the ACs, recollections and transcripts of communications with animals, as well as reflections from other humans involved.

Main Results: The case studies demonstrated how IIC was used as a tool by ACs to engage animals in decision-making, thus eliminating guesswork and increasing informed decision-making, as well as encouraging greater interspecies understanding. Reflexive thematic analysis illustrated the ethical orientation of the humans interviewed, the roles of human and animal stakeholders, the approaches and strategies of the ACs to engage everyone in their respective roles, and the outcomes of ACs using IIC. Examples of outcomes include interspecies understanding of one another’s needs, behaviours, and expectations, which enabled the altering of both human and animal behaviours to accommodate one another.

Principle conclusions: Ultimately, study findings suggest that ACs can work as “bridges” to facilitate animal engagement in issues that affect them. This research also raises important questions with respect to animal agency and consciousness. The work that ACs are conducting as interspecies translators demonstrates the power of IIC as a method for engaging with the wisdom and autonomy of animals to address issues in conservation, HWC, and beyond.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Human-Cat Relationships

11:25am - 12:30pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

45 Understanding cat rescue fostering as a reciprocal relationship: Insights from Aotearoa-New Zealand rescue foster program coordinators

Christine Roseveare¹, Dr Linda Murray¹, Dr Mary Breheny², Professor Juliana Mansvelt²

¹Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. ²Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Introduction: Nearly 60% of cats in New Zealand animal rescue organisations are housed in foster homes. Therefore it is crucial to understand how fostering relationships affect both animal welfare and human public health. Existing research often frames fostering as an intervention to achieve specific outcomes such as reduced loneliness in humans, or animal rehoming, but these approaches may limit our understanding of fostering's relational dimensions. This study examined how foster programme coordinators understand the reciprocal nature of human-animal relationships and particularly, older adults' potential contributions as fosterers.

Methodology: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 fostering programme coordinators from rescue organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand. Thematic Analysis was used to examine both the practical considerations of foster programmes and deeper themes about the nature of fostering relationships informed by a broad Aotearoa New Zealand perspective of hauora (health).

Results: Rescue Foster Programme Coordinators emphasized aspects of fostering that supported positive intervention outcomes such as rehoming. They also mentioned aspects of fostering not captured in these metrics - describing reciprocal, interdependent, relationships where both humans and cats actively contribute and matter. While noting practical challenges, coordinators highlighted how fostering creates meaningful connections and community. Their perspectives suggest the need to expand traditional notions of what constitutes "health-promoting" relationships to include these reciprocal bonds. Several interviewees identified opportunities for more inclusive approaches that could support diverse older adults' contributions through fostering.

Conclusions: Foster programme coordinator perspectives suggest the value of moving beyond solely intervention-focused frameworks to understand fostering as a meaningful, reciprocal inter-species relationship. This points toward research approaches that recognize the value of older adults' contributions as fosterers while capturing fostering's relational dimensions. Implications include developing more inclusive programs that continue to respect feline participants while addressing practical barriers to older fosterer participation.

141 From foster to forever: Caretaker perspectives on kitten socialization guidelines
Dr. Courtney Graham¹, Dr. Katherine E. Koralesky²

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Introduction: Kittens entering shelters are often fostered by volunteers who play a crucial role in their development. While shelters commonly provide guidelines for socialization and general care, little is known about foster caretakers' perspectives on the effectiveness of these recommendations for kitten development. This study aimed to explore foster caretaker views on the importance of these guidelines for promoting good kitten welfare and successful, lasting adoptions.

Methodology: We conducted an online mixed-method survey with 487 participants, of which 414 received shelter guidelines, and 245 reported guidelines specific to socialization. Qualitative responses (N=208) were thematically analyzed to identify key themes related to adoption success and barriers. A subset (N=10) of shelter guidelines was also thematically analyzed to identify common recommendations.

Main Results/Findings: Respondents were primarily from the US (69%) and Canada (19%). Critical guideline recommendations for kitten development identified by respondents included: socialization (to humans, other animals, new environments, play), health (veterinary care, litterbox training), emotional development (encouraging positive behaviours, kitten agency), environmental management (safe spaces, gradual introductions), and adoption practices (matching kittens to adopters, shelter support). Caretakers recognized the importance of these recommendations to facilitate adaptability to a home environment and realistic adopter expectations. Barriers to adoption success included adoption mismatches, undersocialization concerns, and lack of support. These findings align with established guidelines, which emphasize the significance of the foster role in kitten development, providing gradual exposure to socialization opportunities, and recognizing individual kitten behaviours.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: The study highlights the complexity of successful kitten fostering, underscoring the need for robust socialization guidelines and comprehensive support for foster caretakers and adopters. Shelters can improve adoption outcomes by refining adoption processes, enhancing education, and incorporating foster caretaker agency. Future research should investigate how caretaker demographics and personality traits influence perspectives of guidelines, enabling further refinements.

39 Welfare and social network of two “resident cats” in a nursing home: impact of admission of a new resident to a disability unit

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Introduction: Although cats (*Felis catus*) are the most common pets in French nursing homes, no scientific literature has investigated the impact of this particular environment on their welfare and social interactions. Our aim was to assess how the arrival of a new human resident affected the welfare and social network of two cats in a nursing home unit.

Methodology: Twelve residents (mean age = 67.3±5.2 years including the new resident), nine caregivers and two European cats (Gizmo and Felix) were observed with ethological methods for 45 hours. Three periods were established: T-11 days (11 days before the new resident's arrival), T+10 days (first 10 days after) and T>10 days (9 days following). General behaviors and areas frequented by each cat were continuously recorded during these periods (focal sampling). Social physical contact between residents, caregivers and cats was recorded every 10 minutes (scan sampling) to create social networks (*i.e.* the number of social interactions per individual) at T-11, T+10 and T>10 days (110, 100 and 90 records/individual, respectively).

Results: At T+10 days, Gizmo's avoidance time increased 2.8 times compared to T-11, though not significantly (GLM: $p > .05$), with a significant decrease between T+10 and T>10 (Tukey: $p < .001$), probably related to more time spent in the residents' bedrooms at T+10 and T>10 days (GLM: $p < .001$). For Félix, a significant decrease of play time was observed at T+10 days compared to T-11 (Tukey: $p < .001$). Social network analysis showed a decrease of contact interactions for both cats at T+10 days. However, on the global network, the total number of social interactions per individual remained stable (Dietz R-test: $p < .001$, $r = .472$), but with a reorganization within the network (Spearman correlation: $\rho = .253$, $p = .296$; $R^2 = .13$).

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field: The new resident's arrival impacted behaviors and areas frequented, with adaptation differences between the two cats, highlighting the importance of inter-individual differences. This study offers insights into assessing feline welfare using quantitative methods based on their individual behaviors.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Animals in Communities

11:25am - 12:30pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

70 Patterns and trends in animal law enforcement in the U.S.: A retrospective data analysis from 2015 to 2022

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Introduction

Animal law enforcement has many of the same powers held by police (e.g., ability to issue citations, confiscate property, and charge crimes). However, no quantitative studies of how U.S. animal control agencies engage with their jurisdictions exist.

Methodology

Retrospective enforcement data (2015-2022) that included case type, outcome, and location were provided anonymously by five large animal control agencies located in all four U.S. census regions. The aggregated 1,034,211 cases involving dogs and cats were assigned to census tracts and the associated Centers for Disease Control-generated Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) using GIS mapping. Deviations in the median and quartiles for cases per 1,000 residents were calculated by total SVI and its four domains (socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic minority composition, household characteristics, and housing type and transportation). Similar analyses were conducted with a ratio of punitive to non-punitive outcomes, which were also analyzed for longitudinal trends. Logistic regression modeling was used to provide unweighted analyses that controlled for multiple variables.

Main results

Enforcement cases skewed toward higher SVI communities, with the median at 0.68 and the top quartile at 0.85. This skew was largely driven by the race/ethnicity domain, with the median at 0.87 and the top quartile at 0.95. The punitive to non-punitive outcome ratio also positively correlated with SVI, with the high quartile having 1.4 times ($p < 0.001$) more punitive outcomes than the low quartile. This association was again largely driven by the race/ethnicity domain. Importantly, results of the logistic regression modelling align with these weighted analyses.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field

This study demonstrates that animal law enforcement is a barrier to maintaining the human-animal bond in systemically marginalized communities, particularly those with high racial and

ethnic diversity. The large longitudinal dataset, geographic representation, and consistency between the weighted and unweighted analyses support the generalizability of the findings.

159 Strengthening Community Bonds: A Systematic Review of Human-Animal Interactions and Social Connectivity

Dr. Szymon Parzniewski, Dr. Haorui Wu
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Introduction: Social isolation and weakened community engagement are growing public health concerns, affecting individual well-being and societal cohesion. Human-Animal Interactions (HAI) have been identified as a potential solution to these challenges by fostering social connectivity and strengthening interpersonal relationships. Pet ownership, animal-assisted interventions (AAI), and animal-inclusive public spaces serve as key facilitators in enhancing community bonds. This paper systematically reviews the role of HAI in bridging social gaps and examines its broader implications for public health and urban development.

Methodology: A systematic review of 294 studies from international databases (ProQuest, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase, and VetMed), including studies from 2011 to 2025 was conducted using PRISMA approach to analyze the social benefits of HAI at individual, family, and community levels. The review included both quantitative and qualitative studies examining the impact of pet ownership, structured animal-assisted programs, and community-based HAI initiatives. Key themes such as social interaction, inclusivity, and public health were identified using thematic synthesis.

Main Findings: Findings indicate that HAI contributes significantly to community engagement by facilitating social interactions and reducing isolation. Activities such as dog walking and the use of pet-friendly spaces encourage social encounters, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual trust. Structured programs, including therapy animal visits and prison dog rehabilitation initiatives, show positive social outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations such as older adults, individuals experiencing homelessness, and incarcerated persons. Furthermore, HAI aligns with the One Health framework, emphasizing its role in improving public health and environmental sustainability.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: HAI plays a crucial role in strengthening community connections and enhancing social well-being. However, gaps remain in policies and infrastructure to fully integrate HAI into urban planning and public health initiatives. This paper advocates for evidence-based policies that support pet-friendly housing, animal-inclusive social services, and community-centered AAI programs. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and controlled interventions to establish causal relationships between HAI and community resilience.

66 Socioeconomic and Environmental Determinants of Companion Animal Relinquishment in Australia: Insights for Policy and Support Interventions

Ms Sonya E McDowall^{1,2}, Associate Professor Susan Hazel³, Associate Professor Anne Hamilton-Bruce³, Associate Professor Rwth Stuckey¹, Dr Tiffani Howell¹

¹Latrobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. ²The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia. ³The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

Abstract

Introduction:

Companion animals enhance human well-being, yet socioeconomic and environmental challenges may jeopardise guardians' ability to retain their companion animal. This study investigated the interplay between socioeconomic factors and health-related variables with the decision to relinquish companion animals. The objective was to identify barriers to maintaining guardianship and to inform evidence-based recommendations for policies and interventions to reduce relinquishment.

Methodology:

A survey of 400 Australian companion animal guardians was conducted, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data. Statistical analyses examined relationships between socioeconomic status, human and animal health challenges and whether a participant has ever considered relinquishing their companion animal.

Main results:

Housing instability, particularly among renters (65.4%), was significantly associated with relinquishment considerations ($\chi^2=10.550$, $p=0.001$). Lower educational attainment was significantly associated with pet relinquishment ($\chi^2=11.141$, $p=0.004$). Participants with secondary education were significantly more like to relinquish their companion animal compared to those with vocational education ($p=0.020$) or higher education ($p=0.003$). However, education level was not a significant predictor for consideration of relinquishment ($\chi^2=0.700$, $p=0.705$) or the thought of relinquishment in the last 12 months ($\chi^2=0.860$, $p=0.650$). Chronic health conditions were not statistically significant predictors ($\chi^2=3.449$, $p=0.063$). Financial constraints were strongly associated with economic hardship, significantly influencing decisions regarding veterinary care and animal welfare ($\chi^2=4.856$, $p<0.001$). Qualitative data highlighted the emotional toll of these challenges and the importance of community-based solutions.

Principal conclusion:

Findings reveal housing, education level and financial stability are strongly associated with companion animal relinquishment. Policies promoting pet-friendly housing, financial support for veterinary care, and integrated human-animal welfare programs are essential to mitigate

relinquishment risks and reinforce the human-animal bond. This research should be used to inform targeted interventions to enhance welfare outcomes for both guardians and their pets.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Canine-Assisted Services for Students

2:40 - 3:45pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

78 Pawsitive Impact: Measuring the Dog Mentor's Effect on Neurodiverse Students

Mrs Jenny L Duckworth¹, Dr Mirena Dimolareva², Professor Nancy Gee³, Professor Kerstin Meints², Dr Victoria Brelsford²

¹The Dog Mentor, Rochester, Kent, United Kingdom. ²University of Lincoln, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, United Kingdom. ³Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, Richmond, Virginia, USA

Introduction. School and visiting dogs have increased in popularity, perhaps due to the well-documented positive education-related outcomes. Animals also act as attachment figures, potentially supporting children to self-regulate. However, there is variability in the programs offered within schools, the children they are offered to and the type of training/ expectations of the dogs. This research investigated the types of activities and outcomes on The Dog Mentor program for children with Autism. We assessed teacher perceptions of effectiveness of the interventions and the challenges encountered.

Method. Dog handlers and/or owners from 54 schools completed a survey indicating they incorporate their Dog Mentor into activities with children with Autism. Within the qualitative survey they indicated the primary role of the dog within the school as well as specific tasks and targets for children with Autism and whether these were effective. Answers also focused on how effectiveness was measured and what the challenges were.

Results. Content analysis, using a child-dog comparison, indicated that the most common aim of including the Dog Mentor was to facilitate learning through increasing motivation and reinforcement, improving on task behaviours and completion. Self and emotion regulation, as well as mental health, social skill and communication were also targeted within The Dog Mentor interventions. Activities differed and were based on the children's needs including regulation activities such as 'Dog Mentor breathing' and 'getting the classroom ready' (regulated) for the dog to enter.

Conclusions. Schools followed the set training of The Dog Mentor, hence the intended similarities in the provision were achieved. However, the ability to tailor the provision for children's needs has been emphasised as beneficial by educators. Future research will need to accommodate evaluation of both, smaller, bespoke interventions and larger, RCT studies.

55 Heads or Tails: A randomized study of the differential effects of interacting with different parts of a therapy dog within a canine-assisted intervention

Dr. John-Tyler Binfet, Ms. Freya L. L. Green, Ms. Rebecca J. P. Godard, Ms. Mikaela L. Dahlman, Ms. Zahra Basiri

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Despite a plethora of research attesting to the benefits of canine-assisted interventions (CAIs) on participants' well-being, little is empirically understood about the mechanisms within CAI interactions that elicit these outcomes. This study is a follow-up to research (presented at ISAZ in 2023) that examined the effects of touch during a CAI – establishing that direct touch was optimal in eliciting well-being benefits for student participants. The aim of the current study was to extend these findings by examining the differential effects of direct contact with different areas of the therapy dog. Participants ($N = 198$) were randomly assigned to one of three therapy dog conditions (*head, middle, tail-end*). To assess self-reports of well-being, measures of optimism, positive and negative affect, happiness, integration into the campus community, stress, homesickness, state anxiety, and loneliness were administered. Paired samples t -tests indicate that participants (from pre-to-post, regardless of condition) experienced significant decreases in stress (3.33-1.81; $d=-1.85$), negative affect (1.68-1.24; $d=-1.06$), anxiety (1.71-1.23; $d=-1.04$), loneliness (2.57-1.81; $d=-0.92$), and homesickness (2.5—2.24; $d=-0.30$) as well as increases in happiness (3.10-4.06; $d=1.15$), optimism (3.28-3.64; $d=0.78$), connection (2.54-3.03; $d=0.68$), and positive affect (2.78-2.89; $d=0.19$). A series of ANCOVAs revealed that stress, happiness, optimism, homesickness, and positive affect, post-CAI scores varied significantly among experimental conditions, after controlling for pre-CAI scores. However, these effects were small, explaining at most 6% of the variance in outcomes. Although no follow-up pairwise comparisons were significant, participants in the *head* condition had the highest levels of post-CAI stress and homesickness, but also the highest levels of post-CAI happiness, optimism, and positive affect. For negative affect, anxiety, loneliness, and connectedness, there were no significant effects of experimental condition. Findings are discussed within the broader field of human-animal interactions and hold both applied (i.e., program delivery) and empirical (i.e., the study of mechanisms within interactions) implications.

36 Pause for Paws: A Drop-In Therapy Dog Clinic for Graduate Students

Dr. Christine Kivlen, Ethan White

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Introduction: Therapy dogs are increasingly recognized for their efficacy in alleviating stress and anxiety in educational settings. However, their impact on graduate students, an understudied population in canine assisted intervention (CAI research), remains understudied. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of therapy dog interactions in reducing stress and anxiety among graduate students at Wayne State University (WSU) and to explore participants' perceptions of the experience.

Methodology: Using a drop-in study design, WSU graduate students participated in 722 therapy dog visits, reflecting the format's accessibility and broad appeal. Most visits lasted 10 to 15 minutes. Participants completed pre- and post-visit self-report measures of stress and anxiety using a 5-point Likert scale. Paired sample t-tests assessed changes in stress and anxiety levels. Additionally, the likelihood of returning for therapy dog visits and memorable aspects of the participants' visits were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative responses.

Main Results/findings: Paired t-tests assessed pre- and post-visit differences in stress (6.45 to 3.12 ($t(578) = 30.80, p < 0.001$) and anxiety (5.98 to 3.67 ($t(578) = 24.63, p < 0.001$). Qualitative analysis identified five key themes: relaxation and stress relief, physical interaction with dogs, positive emotional impact, engagement with handlers, and memorable experiences. Furthermore, 100% of participants indicated they would return for future visits, highlighting program success.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field: The findings demonstrate the significant benefits of therapy dog interactions in reducing stress and anxiety among graduate students. Findings support implementing CAI in academic settings to enhance student well-being. The results provide a compelling case for expanding therapy dog programs in higher education institutions and underscore the value of creating calming environments to support mental health. Future research should investigate long-term effects of repeated visits on resilience, academic performance, and overall mental health.

Community & Personal Experience Oral Presentation Session

2:40 - 3:45pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature community & personal experience oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

131 Considerations for Indigenous Species in Animal Assisted Services

Danielle Home

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Animals such as the Lac Lac Croix Indigenous Pony, Kunekune pig, and dogs from Indigenous communities are becoming more popular in AAS. These animals are often ideally suited for therapy work as they have developed calm and social temperaments from their history living in close contact with Indigenous people. To ethically and responsibly incorporate these animals into AAS, consideration must be given to their history and culture. This includes trauma-informed husbandry and training, cultural involvement, interspecies social justice, and reconciliation with the more-than-human world. Practitioners must be prepared to embrace and incorporate Indigenous perspectives on human-animal relationships and holistic wellness, recognizing the parallel experiences of loss, trauma, and resilience. There are multiple ways of healing that allow for the mutual benefit of animals and people which can involve

reconnection, spiritual relationships, and cultural relatedness. Working with species that have been historically devastated by colonization requires an additional commitment to reconciliation through welfare, breed preservation, education, advocacy, and establishing and maintaining community and cultural connections. This presentation will provide recommendations for research and practice in this area.

40 Promising Practices: Engaging Men & Boys as Allies in Preventing Gender-Based Violence Through Community Based Humane Education Programming

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As we move towards a violence-free future, it's crucial to involve men and boys in the prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This presentation focuses on the importance of the human-animal bond, the One Welfare approach, and humane education as powerful tools in engaging men and boys as allies in the fight against GBV. The presentation style will be an interactive PowerPoint with opportunities for audience participation within the PowerPoint and discussion.

Humane Canada's Promising Practices Project utilizes community-based humane education programming to create connections between men, boys, and the prevention of GBV. This project grew out of the work of the ACT Project and the Canadian Violence Link Coalition, which developed collaborative strategies between GBV services and animal services to better support survivors who have animals.

In this workshop, we will explore why humane education was chosen as the preferred method for delivering preventative programming and how it supports both individuals and animals in a holistic, One Welfare framework. We will also share findings from a national survey that collected best practices from humane education and GBV education programs, focusing on how these programs can effectively engage men and boys in preventing GBV. We will share the Promising Practices Framework and the results of programs piloting this framework in different communities across Canada. We will interactively engage with our audience in ways they can take the Promising Practices Framework and create or expand programs in their community as well as share the Promising Practices Online Learning Centre which offers further education and resources for humane educators, community educators, and community members who care deeply about ending violence towards humans, animals, and the environment, and moving forward to live well together.

Key takeaways will include:

- The role of the human-animal bond in promoting empathy and preventing violence
- How humane education intersects with GBV prevention efforts
- Evidence-based strategies for engaging men and boys as allies in these efforts

29 Paws and Patients: Therapy Dogs Guiding Patient Oriented Forensic Research

Stacy Wallace¹, Patient Partners ANONYMOUS prisoners¹, Todd ANONYMOUS past prisoner², Professor Linzi Williamson³, Professor Colleen A Dell³

¹Correctional Service Canada, Saskatoon, SK, Canada. ²Community, Winnipeg, MB, Canada.

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In 2018, members of our team introduced patient-oriented research (POR) to management at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC), a forensic psychiatric facility in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. In 2022, we published a case study of our experience of initiating patient and staff involvement in the POR process. This presentation shares the direction taken in the time since the publication to practically and meaningfully involve forensic psychiatric patients diagnosed with mental disorders in a POR project.

Although initially not deliberate, our efforts were greatly facilitated through the more-than-human contributions of therapy dogs. We applied lessons learned from the therapy dog program at RPC, which was established in 2013, and centered our project on a relational approach. Eight patient participants at RPC were involved in the newly formed POR patient committee starting in 2022, meeting with us monthly, and they both learned about and informed the key elements for their involvement in POR. These key elements are: (1) researchers first and foremost need to connect with patients through the development of trust, which can advance over time into feelings of safety. This is a significant goal given that carceral environments are generally experienced as unsafe spaces by patients; (2) trust is generally and effortlessly established between the patients and therapy dogs, and this opportunity should be built upon; and (3) the patients are interested in change and that requires feeling as though they are a part of something and have hope for the future. This can all contribute to a sense of patient empowerment, addressing the power differential between patients and researchers, which is a key hurdle in undertaking POR in a forensic facility.

A 4-minute video highlighting these 3 points, featuring the participating therapy dogs and directed by the patients, will be shown. A storytelling coloring book the patients developed will also be shown.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Humane Education for Care Professionals

2:40 - 3:45pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

124 Grounded Theory Model of a OneWelfare Experiential Humane Education Course

Dr. Leslie A Stewart^{1,2}, Shantelle Tjaden³, William Reece³

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Introduction. The OneWelfare Model is a holistic, empirically supported approach which aims to improve human well-being by addressing the interdependent links between human, animal, and environmental welfare. In partnership with a local AZA-accredited zoo, we designed an innovative experiential university course through a OneWelfare framework that promotes healthy relationships, healthy stress management and emotion regulation, and meaningful connection to the natural world. Within the course, students and an animal partner work towards mutually beneficial cooperative care training goals as well as engaging in personal and professional reflection throughout. Positive student and faculty feedback regarding the impact of the program prompted the research team to conduct an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). To build a working model from the initial results, we conducted the current Grounded Theory to examine the process students engaged in throughout the course.

Methodology. Researchers conducted interviews with ten students who participated in the course across 2 different semesters. Participants engaged in 3 rounds of semi-structured interviews across the span of the course for a total of 30 interviews. Interviews were transcribed and 3 researchers independently coded the results before coming together to discuss and finalize themes. Finalized themes were member checked with participants. Themes were analyzed to determine the process of students engaging in the course in alignment with the goals of Grounded Theory.

Main Results. Two concurrent processes emerged from the data. The first process described students' transition from concrete focus to process focus, the second showed the progression from self focus, to present moment environmental focus, to self awareness, to other orientation, and finally to relational awareness.

Implications for the Field. This research is a step towards creating a model that has the potential to be implemented in training for mental health professionals, as well as training for allied health professionals internationally.

87 Early career veterinarians' educational experiences and perceived gaps affecting well-being during the transition to practice

Emily A Morabito¹, Dr. Andria Jones², Dr. Tipsarp Kittisiam², Carina Pelka¹, Dr. Adam Stacey³, Dr. Caroline Ritter¹

¹Atlantic Veterinary College, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada. ²Ontario Veterinary College, Guelph, ON, Canada. ³City Psychology, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

The transition from veterinary school to clinical practice is reported to be challenging for early-career veterinarians, balancing technical demands with complex human-animal interactions. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how their educational experiences prepare them for this transition. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the experiences and perceived gaps in pre-practice life and education that were described to affect the mental well-being of early-career veterinarians as they transitioned into clinical practice. This qualitative study used phenomenological methodology to explore the experiences of 21 early-

career veterinarians who graduated from Canadian veterinary colleges. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data were analyzed using template analysis. Four key themes were identified: erosion of self-confidence, gaps in communication skills, challenges with control and perfectionism, and inadequate mental health support. Participants reported their self-confidence declined as they transitioned from veterinary school to clinical practice, particularly when confronted with the ethical side of animal care (e.g. making life-and-death decisions). Communication skills were highlighted as a gap, with participants feeling unprepared for client interactions, especially in poor animal welfare situations. The challenge of maintaining control and perfectionism were significant stressors, with participants expressing anxiety over their inability to control outcomes (e.g. when animal welfare decisions conflicted with client expectations). Inadequate mental health support was also noted, with many feeling their education insufficiently addressed the emotional complexities of practice (e.g. managing stress from caring for animals and interacting with grieving clients). These findings highlight an opportunity for veterinary education to better prepare students for the emotional challenges of clinical practice, particularly navigating the various emotions of owners and pets. Training in non-technical skills, such as managing emotions during pet loss, could support early-career veterinary well-being. Addressing these gaps could better support veterinarians' long-term well-being as they transition into practice.

112 A Survey of Veterinary Medical Professionals' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences with Animal Sexual Abuse

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To date, there has been very little study of animal sexual abuse (ASA). Subsequently, very little is known about veterinary medical professionals' (e.g., Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians, and Veterinary Nurses) knowledge of animal sexual abuse and how they may contribute to the prevention of animal sexual abuse. In one of the few studies to include an examination of ASA, Munro and Thrusfield (2001) found that 6% of animal abuse cases by small-animal practitioners involved ASA. A similar proportion was reported by veterinarians in Williams et al. (2008). Dogs are frequently reported as the most commonly targeted animals, with cats also being identified as an at-risk population (Munro and Thrusfield, 2001). Although veterinary medical professionals may be some of the first individuals to detect ASA among their patients, there have been multiple studies examining the lack of general animal welfare courses offered in veterinary schools despite indications that they can have a positive benefit for students (Lord et al., 2010). Thus, the objective of this presentation is comprehensively and purposefully study animal sexual abuse in a sample of veterinary medical professionals.

Eighty-eight professionals were recruited through provincial/state professional associations and posts on social media to take part in a survey examining non-sexual abuse, sexual abuse, and criminal justice perceptions. Results indicated that, while veterinary medical professionals reported wanting more training on both non-sexual and sexual abuse, levels of knowledge were

much lower for sexual abuse with fewer professionals reporting having received training in the area. Professionals also responded quite punitively towards individuals who have committed sexual abuse against animals and supported long prison sentences and registries for offenders. Veterinary medical professionals were very supportive of mandatory reporting of abuse but did not feel prepared to testify in these cases should they go to court. These results have major implications for practice as they indicate that veterinary medical professionals are not receiving enough training on abuse—particularly sexual abuse—which could put their patients at risk of continued harm.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Pet Ownership in Vulnerable Populations

2:40 - 3:45pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

47 Associations between identity-based stressors, human-animal bonds, and substance use among LGBTQ+ emerging adults

Dr Shelby E McDonald¹, Dr Lauren Wisniewski², Chloe Sobolewski³, Dr Angela Matijczak⁴, Dr Lori R Kogan¹, Amelia Malone¹, Meghan Scaggs¹, Dr Rosalie Corona³

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Introduction: LGBTQ+ emerging adults frequently face stressors that heighten their risk of maladaptive coping behaviors including substance use (SU). This study explored relationships between stressors associated with gender identity and expression (discrimination, rejection, and victimization), human-animal bonds (pet attachment and comfort derived from pets), and SU behaviors in 203 LGBTQ+ emerging adults aged 18–25 who were living with pets.

Method: Participants completed validated measures of minority stressors, human-animal bonds, and SU (nicotine use, cannabis use, co-use of nicotine and cannabis, and binge-drinking). Multivariable logistic regression models tested direct and moderating effects of pet attachment and comfort from pets on the relationship between minority stressors and SU outcomes.

Main results/findings: In multivariate models, gender-based victimization was the only stressor significantly associated with SU outcomes; for every one-unit increase in the victimization score, the odds of cannabis use and binge-drinking increased by 25% ($p = 0.04$ and $p = 0.01$, respectively). In the model examining the relationship between victimization and binge-drinking, a one-unit increase in pet attachment increased the odds of binge-drinking by 56% ($p = 0.02$). Similarly, in the model predicting cannabis use, a one unit increase in pet attachment increased the odds of cannabis use by 11% ($p = 0.02$). None of the human-animal bond domains examined in this study moderated the association between identity-based stressors and SU outcomes.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field: These findings suggest that, while pet attachment can provide emotional support, it may also be linked to maladaptive coping behaviors such as cannabis use and binge-drinking. Further research is needed to explore these dynamics in the context of diverse populations, including LGBTQ+ emerging adults. We discuss recommendations for how veterinarians, mental health practitioners, and other professionals can support responsible substance use while helping to safeguard the health and well-being of pets.

24 Development and Validation of the Pet-Related Stress Scale

Dr. Angela Matijczak¹, Dr. Camie A Tomlinson², Dr. Jennifer W Applebaum³, Dr. Lori R Kogan⁴, Dr. Shelby E McDonald⁴

¹University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, USA. ²University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, USA. ³University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA. ⁴Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

Introduction: Many pet owners experience pet-related stress (e.g., difficulty finding housing, managing caregiver responsibilities); yet, pet-related stress is rarely included in quantitative models within the human-animal interaction field. This may be due to the scarcity of measures developed to assess pet-related stress, perhaps contributing to the inconsistency of findings in studies examining relations between human–animal interactions and human wellbeing. This study was designed to develop and validate the Pet-Related Stress Scale (PRSS), a measure of general, multispecies pet-related stress among US pet owners.

Methodology: Between October 2021 and August 2022, we recruited a sample of 386 adult pet owners living in the US (mean age=39.7 years; 13% racialized and/or ethnic minority, 15.6% gender minority, 30.3% sexual minority). We conducted confirmatory factor analysis using the R software package to evaluate the psychometric properties of the PRSS and test competing model structures. We assessed validity through bivariate analyses between the PRSS and psychological stress, general stress, social support, and coping self-efficacy. Next, we conducted multiple group analysis to evaluate measurement invariance across age, race, Latine ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and gender modality.

Main results/findings: A three-factor model of pet-related stress (economic, psychological, and social) was the best fit for the data ($\chi^2/df=2.53$; CFI=0.94; TLI=0.93; RMSEA=0.06; SRMR=0.06). Evidence of convergent and divergent validity was found. However, the PRSS did not demonstrate measurement invariance across demographic groups.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field: The PRSS is a promising measure of economic, psychological, and social stress related to owning pets. However, the PRSS needs additional testing and refinement for use with marginalized populations most impacted by social disparities. With further testing, the PRSS may be useful in practice among animal care providers and human health providers serving pet-owning patients to identify factors that may contribute to pet-related stress.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: AAS for Brain Injuries & Psychiatric Conditions

4:00 - 5:05pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

23 Comparing the Effectiveness of Animal-Assisted Therapy and Standard Care in Goal Attainment in Minimally Conscious State Patients

MSc Fabio Carbone^{1,2}, Dr Rahel Marti^{1,2}, MSc Elena Pauli^{1,2}, MSc Nesrin Bernasconi^{1,2}, MSc Selina Brodmann^{1,2}, MSc Nadine Grimm^{1,2}, Professor Karin Hediger^{3,2,4}

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⁴Faculty of Psychology, Open Universiteit, Heerlen, Netherlands

The minimally conscious state (MCS) can occur following acquired brain injury and is characterized by partial preservation of conscious awareness. Rehabilitation of MCS patients often focuses on creating enriched and stimulating environments to support recovery. Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) can contribute to this process by offering emotionally engaging and meaningful experiences but there is only little evidence of a possible therapeutic effectiveness so far. This study compared the impact of AAT and treatment as usual (TAU) on goal attainment in MCS patients to evaluate whether these therapies were effective in helping patients achieve their therapeutic goals.

In a crossover randomized controlled trial, 19 MCS patients were randomly assigned to a block of three weeks AAT followed by a block of three weeks TAU or to three weeks of TAU followed by three weeks of AAT. For each patient, therapists defined personalized clinical goals, which were evaluated before and after each three-week block using the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS). GAS scores were analyzed with a hierarchical linear mixed model to compare the therapies, controlling for randomization order.

Results showed no significant difference in goal achievement between AAT and TAU ($B = -0.11$, $p = 0.74$). However, both therapies demonstrated positive effects, with post-session GAS scores significantly higher than pre-session scores ($B = 0.5$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, starting rehabilitation with AAT was associated with better outcomes, as indicated by the interaction between therapy type and randomization ($B = 0.96$, $p = 0.05$).

This study highlights AAT as a promising approach in neurorehabilitation for MCS patients. While not superior to TAU, AAT effectively improved goal achievement over time. Its potential to enhance outcomes, particularly in early rehabilitation, suggests it could be a valuable complement to standard therapy in fostering recovery for patients with MCS.

90 Exploring the Perceptions of Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury Participating in Animal-Assisted Therapy with Domesticated Ducks.

Dr. Alex Sargsyan¹, Dr. Lora Beebe², Ms. Frances Horn¹

¹East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, USA. ²University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA

The late twentieth century marked the emergence of Green Care therapies, which leverage nature-based environments to support the recovery of individuals with mental and physical illness. Among these interventions are animal-assisted therapies with farm animals (AATF), a subset of Green Care that promotes healing by encouraging patients to interact with and care for farm animals in natural settings.

Previous research has demonstrated the benefits of animal-assisted therapies (AAT) for individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI), leading authors to hypothesize that AATF interventions may yield comparable positive outcomes. To explore this possibility, the authors developed an innovative AATF program involving domesticated ducks for individuals with TBI.

The primary aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of individuals with TBI participating in a therapeutic intervention centered on AATF activities with domesticated ducks. A qualitative descriptive approach, rooted in atheoretical content analysis, was employed to analyze participants' experiences. At the conclusion of a 12-week AATF program, semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture participants' narratives.

To uncover recurring patterns in the data, a thematic analysis was conducted, revealing four main themes: *Emotional Wellbeing*, *Attachment*, *Care*, and *Nature and Environment*. These themes reflect participants' collective experiences and underscore the perceived value of AATF interventions in TBI rehabilitation.

For individuals with TBI, rehabilitation often involves a lifelong commitment to therapies aimed at improving physical and cognitive functioning. Research indicates that many individuals with TBI face enduring challenges in managing the long-term consequences of their condition. This study introduces AATF, specifically utilizing domesticated ducks, as a novel therapeutic approach to address these challenges. The findings suggest that fostering meaningful human-animal connections not only enhances participants' coping strategies but also significantly improves their overall well-being, offering a promising avenue for reducing the disease burden within this population.

13 A pilot randomized clinical trial of a canine-assisted intervention demonstrates reduced loneliness in adults hospitalized for mental illness.

Professor Nancy R Gee^{1,2}, Dr. Lisa Townsend^{1,2}, Professor Erika Friedmann³, Dr. Megan Mueller⁴, Professor Tushar P. Thakre¹, Professor Sandra B. Barker^{1,2}

¹Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, USA. ²Center for Human-Animal Interaction, Richmond, VA, USA. ³University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD, USA. ⁴Tufts University, North Grafton, MA, USA

Introduction

Loneliness is linked to significant health threats and is potentially more dangerous than obesity. It is associated with significant morbidity and mortality risks among people with mental illness (MI). As many as 70% of community-dwelling adults with MI endorse experiencing loneliness, which increases exponentially with the number of co-morbid psychiatric diagnoses. Emerging evidence suggests that companion animals provide a number of health and wellbeing benefits and that interacting with a trained therapy dog may reduce loneliness.

Method

Adult (aged 18-73) psychiatric in-patients (N=60, 28 male) were randomly assigned to receive one of three conditions: dog+handler interaction (AAI), handler-only Conversational Control (CC), or Treatment as Usual (TU), for 20 minutes per day over three days. Loneliness (UCLA Loneliness Short Form-UCLA-SF and an analog rating 1-100 of the statement “I feel lonely”) were measured pre-post intervention each day.

Results

After checking the assumptions, Linear Mixed Models with random intercepts were applied to examine differences in the changes from pre to post the daily intervention sessions. Intervention groups experienced significantly different changes in both UCLA-SF ($p < 0.001$) and analog scale ($p < 0.001$) measures of loneliness from pre- to post the intervention sessions. The trajectories of changes in loneliness demonstrated more improvement in both measures of loneliness from pre to post the daily intervention sessions for the AAI than the other groups.

Discussion

These results indicate that a dog+handler interaction is effective for reducing loneliness in adults hospitalized for the treatment of MI. Human handler only visits did not result in similar changes, indicating that there is something unique and beneficial about the presence of the dog during visits with psychiatric in-patients.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Stress & Emotions

4:00 - 5:05pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

85 The Effect of Dogs on Acute Stress Reactivity: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Molly C Delzio, Kerri Rodriguez

University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

Introduction: Research suggests that social support during a stressful event can reduce acute stress reactivity. Several recent studies have explored whether social support from dogs may have similar stress-buffering effects. This systematic review and meta-analysis aims to

summarize these findings by assessing how a dog's presence influences acute psychophysiological stress responses during experimental stressors compared to being alone or receiving other forms of social support.

Methodology: A PROSPERO-registered search protocol guided the screening of 9,891 articles, resulting in 28 articles (21 peer-reviewed publications, 7 unpublished theses) meeting inclusion criteria. Three-level meta-analytic models ($k=62$, $N=2,027$) were used to estimate pooled effect sizes for diastolic and systolic blood pressure, cortisol, heart rate, and self-reported stress. Study characteristics were analyzed as moderators, including dog type, dog interaction, comparison condition, type of stressor, and stressor elements.

Main Results/Findings: Most studies examined the effect of an unfamiliar dog on stress reactivity, and the most common control condition was completing the stressor alone. Most studies used cognitive tasks, and the Trier Social Stress Test was the most frequently used stressor. Funnel plots and Egger tests indicated no publication bias. There was a significant effect of dog presence on heart rate ($k=31$, $g=-0.12$; $p=0.04$) and self-reported stress ($k=17$, $g=-0.29$; $p=0.01$). There was no significant effect of dog presence on diastolic blood pressure ($k=19$, $g=-0.06$; $p=0.59$), systolic blood pressure ($k=14$, $g=-0.01$; $p=0.93$), or cortisol ($k=9$, $g=-0.03$; $p=0.49$). No significant moderators were identified for any outcomes.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: These results suggest that dogs may have a modest impact on reducing heart rate and self-reported stress during an acute stressor, providing evidence for the stress-buffering role of dogs. Further research is needed to explore the mechanisms underlying these effects.

4 Why is Fido stressed? Crossover of Employees' Job Stress to their Dogs

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Introduction. Job stress can have well-being consequences for employees' loved ones through crossover: the transference of work-related stress from an employee to their family members (Westman, 2001). Given prior support for dogs' abilities to absorb a human's emotions via emotional contagion, pet dogs – who most Americans view as family members – may also be susceptible to their owner's job stress. We proposed that more job-stressed owners have pet dogs who are more stressed, specifically due to ruminating about work.

Methodology. Participants ($N=85$) filled out an online self-report survey. They reported their typical levels of job stress, home stress, and engagement in work-related rumination. Dog stress was measured in two ways: Participants reported their perception of their dog's stress level via a visual analog scale (from 0-100). They also completed a behavioral measure comprised of 11 common indicators of stress in dogs (from "Never"=1 to "All the time"=5). General linear

modeling tested the direct effect from job stress to dog stress and path analysis with bootstrapping tested the indirect effect through work-related rumination.

Main Results. Owner perceptions of their dog's stress was only moderately correlated with the behavioral measure of dog stress ($r=.335$, $p=.002$). Controlling for home stress, owners' job stress related to more behaviorally indicated dog stress ($\gamma=.101$, $SE=.040$, $p=.011$) but not perceived dog stress ($\gamma=-1.186$, $SE=2.140$, $p=.579$). Work-related rumination served as the link between job stress and behavioral dog stress ($\gamma=.088$, $SE=.037$, $p=.019$).

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field. This study unites companion animal welfare with organizational research and supports the presence of stress crossover in the dog-owner bond, as well as emotional contagion at home. Employed dog owners might benefit from avoiding thinking about work when at home to protect the well-being of their pet dogs.

References: Westman, M. (2001). Stress and strain crossover. *Human relations*, 54(6), 717-751.

33 Human Enjoyment in Tactile Interactions with Horses and Dogs: A Comparative Study
Amir Sarrafchi¹, Elodie Lassalette², Natassja de Zwaan³, Maya Tucker¹, Dr. Katrina Merkies¹

¹University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. ²Agrosup Dijon, Dijon, France. ³University of Guelph, Guelph, Canada

Introduction: Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) benefit mental and physical health, with touch interactions as a common feature. This study assessed how animal choice during touch interactions influences human cardiac and emotional responses, hypothesizing that forced touch increases cardiac arousal and lowers positive emotions, while free-choice touch decreases cardiac arousal and enhances positive emotional responses.

Methodology: Two separate studies with therapy horses ($n=10$) and dogs ($n=18$) assessed the impact of forced touch (animals were restrained and required to interact) or free-choice touch (animals voluntarily chose to interact) on human heart rate variability (HRV) and positive emotional responses through the Positive Affect Scale (PAS) survey. The horse study also explored how participants' horse experience affected these variables. Forty-nine participants interacted with horses (four/participant), and 44 participants interacted with dogs (1-4/participant) individually. Immediately after each treatment, participants completed the PAS, ranking feelings associated with three categories – activated, relaxed and safe – on a scale of 1-5 (1=did not feel this way at all, 5=felt this way very much).

Results: A GLIMMIX model with repeated measures revealed that forced touch with horses led to lower HRV ($p=.0065$) compared to free-choice touch. Previous horse experience did not affect human HRV ($p=.1366$) but experienced participants reported lower "activated" (3.48 ± 0.92 , $p=.0058$) and higher "relaxed" (4.40 ± 0.73 , $p=.0275$) and "safe" (4.45 ± 0.63 , $p=.0343$) PAS scores than less experienced participants (3.69 ± 1.11 , 4.23 ± 0.85 and 4.25 ± 0.81 ,

respectively). In the dog study, HRV ($p=.1691$) did not differ between touch treatments. Touch treatment did not influence PAS scores in both studies (all $p>.0953$).

Implications: Providing horses with the choice to interact with humans can reduce human cardiac arousal, whereas no such effect was observed during human-dog interactions, suggesting that the influence of animal choice on human response may vary depending on the species. Understanding species-specific variations seems essential for maximizing the success and effectiveness of AAI.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Saying Goodbye & Retirement

10:10 - 11:10am Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

89 Before Goodbye: Anticipatory Grief and Burden of Care in Guardians Caring for Dogs with Canine Cognitive Dysfunction

Ms Tracey L Taylor, Dr Jonathan Tuke, Associate Professor Susan Hazel
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Introduction

Older dogs are cherished companions, but their care can come with challenges, particularly if they suffer from Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD). This study examines the relationship between anticipatory grief (AG) and burden of care among guardians of older dogs with and without CCD, hypothesizing that both would be higher in dogs with CCD.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with Australian caregivers of dogs aged 8+ years. Validated tools were used to measure CCD, burden of care (ZBI), AG, emotional closeness and costs of ownership (subscales of MDORS), and satisfaction with their veterinarian, combined with demographic and free text questions. The correlation between CCD, ZBI and AG was measured, and linear models developed with dependent variables of ZBI and AG. A p -value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

A total of 347 complete responses were analysed. Median CCD score was 10 (range 0-85), with 17% (58/347) of dogs with moderate and 9% (32/347) dogs with severe CCD. Clinically significant burden of care was present in 32% (112/347) of guardians and mean AG score was 3.4 (range 1.3-5.0).

Two-way correlations showed ZBI score ($p=0.012$) was the best predictor of AG with CCD score non-significant ($p=0.55$). When predicting burden of care, an interaction between CCD and AG scores was significant ($p=0.003$). In the linear models, AG was associated with ZBI score and perceived emotional closeness (both $p<0.0001$). Factors associated with ZBI score were CCD ($p<0.0001$), perceived costs ($p<0.0001$), number of times they had seen a veterinarian in the last year ($p=0.0003$), satisfaction with the cost of veterinary care ($p<0.01$), a veterinary diagnosis of CCD ($p=0.006$) and mean AG score ($p<0.0001$).

Conclusions and implications

While higher AG is associated with higher ZBI scores, CCD was associated with ZBI but not AG. Both AG and burden of care are likely to negatively impact guardians' wellbeing. Veterinarians should assess and address AG and burden of care to better support dog guardians.

15 Understanding Grief Experiences of Pet Loss Among African Americans

Michele L Whitney

Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Disenfranchised grief responses and associated stigma from pet loss have been documented among researchers; however, the unique lived experiences of African American adults facing pet bereavement have been underrepresented in research. This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to deepen the understanding of grief responses after pet loss, specifically focusing on African Americans' experiences of human–pet bereavement. Grounded in the dual process model of coping with bereavement, which emphasizes the oscillation between loss- and restoration-oriented coping strategies, this study explored how African American pet owners experience and make meaning of grief following pet loss. A phenomenological design was employed with a purposeful sample of 23 African American adults in the Midwest United States who had lost a pet during adulthood. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, which reflected the lived experiences of participants through eight primary themes: (a) familial bonds and pet relationships, (b) anticipatory grief, (c) disenfranchised grief, (d) grief confrontation, (e) grief avoidance, (f) post-loss social support, (g) grief inequities, and (h) spiritual and emotional growth. Findings from this study can inform human services researchers and professionals in developing culturally relevant public health policies, programs, and practices. Such contributions not only enhance support systems within diverse cultural contexts but also have significant implications for positive social change by addressing inequities in bereavement care and fostering inclusive approaches to grief support.

58 Preparing for Assistance Dog Retirement: Insights and Recommendations for Enhancing Human-Dog Partnerships

Dr Nieky van Veggel¹, Miss Sophia Gray², Miss Zoe Thomson², Mr Blend Reka¹, Miss Debbie Emmerson², Dr Hilary Engward¹

¹Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, United Kingdom. ²Anglia Ruskin University, Writtle, United Kingdom

Introduction Assistance dogs are crucial support systems for individuals with physical and mental health challenges, with over 7,000 active partnerships in the UK alone. Despite their increasing prevalence, there is limited research on structured retirement practices and their emotional impact on users and families. This study aimed to examine users' lived experiences during assistance dog retirement, identify systemic challenges, and develop evidence-based recommendations using a OneWelfare framework.

Methodology This project employed a three-phase mixed-methods qualitative approach: 1) scoping review of 15 peer-reviewed articles using Arksey & O'Malley's framework; 2) Two facilitated Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) workshops with purposively sampled stakeholders (n=10 assistance dog users with retirement experience, n=6 provider organisation representatives); and 3) systematic analysis of publicly available retirement resources from 25 international assistance dog organisations. Qualitative descriptive analysis using the OneWelfare framework as a theoretical lens was conducted independently for each phase before integration through framework analysis.

Main Results/Findings Analysis revealed five significant themes: emotional impact on users (particularly anticipatory grief and identity disruption), dog welfare concerns (including behavioural changes), lack of evidence-based guidelines, successor dog integration challenges, and socioeconomic barriers. Public domain analysis showed significant information gaps, with only 6 of 25 reviewed resources providing specific retirement guidance. PPIE data highlighted consistent patterns of anticipatory grief beginning up to two years before retirement, with prolonged isolation during transitions.

Principal Conclusions and Implications The findings demonstrate a critical need for standardised retirement protocols and enhanced support systems. Key recommendations include developing evidence-based guidelines, implementing structured emotional support programmes starting pre-retirement, and creating centralised information resources. These findings have immediate implications for organisations' policy development and user support services. Future research should focus on evaluating different retirement approaches and interventions.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Perceptions of Dogs & Human-Canine Relationships

10:10 - 10:50am Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

Sponsored by:



32 Wild or Domestic? The Role of Ideological Frameworks in Shaping Owner Care Practices for New Guinea singing dogs (NGSDs)

Molly H Sumridge

University of Exeter, Exeter, United Kingdom

Introduction. Ideological frameworks significantly influence how humans perceive and interact with non-human animals, potentially shaping the care practices and welfare strategies employed. This study examines the impact of ideological beliefs regarding the classification of New Guinea singing dogs (NGSDs) as "wild" or "domestic."

Methodology. This study adopted qualitative methods, including remote digital multispecies ethnography and discourse analysis of publicly accessible information about NGSDs. 19 owners of NGSDs residing in North America contributed 29 interviews and over 300 diary videos which were analyzed to ascertain how owner beliefs are reflected in the care and relationships they have with their dogs. Analysis of their Facebook community explored discursive strategies of community members that influence owner perspectives. Discourse analysis of websites, scientific papers, and media articles, aided in identifying dominant narratives about NGSD classification and care frequently repeated by participants.

Main Results. NGSD owners exhibit divisions in their ideological beliefs. Some reinforce their dog's wild status through care, housing, and relationship dynamics, while others focus on their dog's domestic traits integrating them into the household like any other domestic dog. Differences in beliefs surrounding classifications appear to be influenced by both publicly accessible information and through social interactions with online community members, especially those with perceived expertise.

Principal Conclusions, Implications for Field. This research underscores the profound influence of ideology on human-animal interactions, demonstrating that beliefs about wildness and domestication are not merely academic or theoretical but have tangible impacts on animal care practices. These findings highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the wild-domestic continuum, particularly in the context of rare animals like NGSDs. This study contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of cultural narratives in shaping animal welfare. It also makes practical suggestions for policymakers, advocating for care strategies that balance ideological diversity with the well-being of animals.

41 "Leashed Methodology:" A Transdisciplinary and Transspecies Approach to Reciprocal Recognition in Contemporary Indigenous Depictions of Dogs

Raven Moffett

University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

Introduction: Popular media reflects and produces culturally constructed expectations of dog-human relations. Rejecting dominant Euro-American ethological conceptions, this paper

introduces a transdisciplinary "leashed methodology" that integrates lived experiences of walking with dogs alongside analysis of Indigenous contemporary media to examine depictions of dogs as agential beings. This methodology challenges conventional ethological frameworks through the case studies of *Ancestor Approved*, a short story anthology, and the short film *Dead Bird Hearts*.

Methodology: Rooted in Indigenous methods of caretaking and movement (Daigle 2023; Allen 2012) and inspired by kinaesthetic empathy (Shapiro 1990), "leashed methodology" synthesizes personal and relational experiences through dog walking as an interspecies site of knowledge production. Complimenting this analysis are multimedia creative reflections and personal stories that function as relational grounding in feminist reflexive practice. Content, narrative, and theory-driven arts-based analysis are performed through a writing process of interspecies collaboration.

Main Results: Analysis reveals that contemporary Indigenous popular media portrays dogs as autonomous persons through freedom of movement and representational refusal, departing from Euro-American media's tendency to reduce dogs to allegorical tools for human character development. These representations align with long-standing cultural protocols regarding interspecies wellness but cannot speak authoritatively for any particular tribal worldview.

Principle Implications: These findings demonstrate that viewing dogs primarily as human tools reflects cultural bias rather than biological reality. Incorporating diverse, place-based teachings about dog-human relationships through this "leashed methodology" offers a way for researchers to navigate the complexities of cultural bias through an ethical, relational, reciprocal recognition with dogs that challenges applied animal behavior paradigms, particularly concepts of normative behavior and anthropocentric measures of canine cognition. Future research will expand this analysis to Indigenous media production globally.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Sanctuaries & Zoos

10:10 - 10:50am Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

73 Euthanasia Decision-Making in Korean Public Zoos: Ethical and Emotional Challenges for Veterinarians

Eugene Choi, Myung-Sun Chun

Research Institute for Veterinary Science, College of Veterinary Medicine Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea, Republic of

Introduction. Euthanasia is a critical procedure in veterinary medicine aimed at alleviating unavoidable animal suffering. However, zoo veterinarians face unique challenges due to the tension between their professional responsibilities and the emotional bonds they form with animals in their care (Choi & Chun, 2023). This study explores the perspectives of public zoo

veterinarians in Korea regarding their decision-making authority in euthanasia cases and examines how these perceptions impact animals' welfare.

Methodology. We conducted semi-structured interviews with eight public zoo veterinarians, each with 2 to 30 years of experience. Questions focused on end-of-life decision-making processes, the ethical dilemmas they face, and their perceptions of euthanasia. Thematic analysis using MAXQDA revealed key insights into their experiences.

Main Results. All participants noted that while treatment requests may originate from zookeepers, the final authority rests with zoo veterinarians. Unlike companion animal veterinarians who perform euthanasia based on owner's demands and consent, participants viewed euthanasia in the zoo setting as a more deliberate act of killing. Zoo veterinarians often assume the dual roles of both medical professionals and owners, which complicates their ability to make euthanasia decisions. Furthermore, abundant resources in public zoos can allow for a postponement of such decisions. When treatment is deemed futile, participants prioritizing palliative care over euthanasia. Experienced veterinarians opted for additional interventions with animals they had formed bonds with. Newer veterinarians often feel overwhelmed by responsibilities beyond their experience, highlighting the need for a formal process regarding end-of-life care and euthanasia for zoo animals.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field. Our findings highlight the complex ethical and emotional dimensions of euthanasia in zoos, underscoring the need for standardized decision-making frameworks and support systems. By addressing these challenges, zoos can better ensure the quality of life and welfare of animals, while supporting veterinarians in their professional and emotional roles.

References: Choi, Y. & Chun, M-S. (2023). Clinical decision-making of public zoo Veterinarians in Korea: An exploratory study. *Proceedings of Veterinary Ethics Conference 2023* (pp.134-136). Vienna, Austria

Funding Source: This work was supported by a grant (no. 2021R1I1A2047656) from the National Research Foundation of Korea(NRF), Republic of Korea.

44 Factors Influencing Human Recognition of Emotional Valence and Arousal in Zoo Animals
Phd Researcher Laura Hiisivuori, Katri Alavalkama, PhD Helena Telkänranta, PhD Emma Vitikainen, PhD Sonja E. Koski
University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Cross-species recognition of emotions is essential for animal welfare, yet the factors influencing this ability are not well understood. This study investigates how empathy towards animals (AES), social dominance orientation (SDO), and speciesism (SPEC) influence humans' capacity to recognize emotional valence and arousal in non-human species, specifically Barbary macaques, Siberian tigers, and Markhors.

Visitors at Helsinki Zoo, Finland, assessed the emotional states of the animals through short video clips devoid of contextual information. Participants also completed questionnaires that captured demographic information along with measures of AES, SDO, and SPEC. A total of 447 visitors in 2021 and 669 visitors in 2022 provided 5,307 ratings across five video clips per species, which were compared to expert assessments to evaluate recognition accuracy.

Results indicated that participants recognized emotional arousal more accurately than valence across all species, with Barbary macaques' emotions being identified more accurately than those of Siberian tigers. Notably, empathy towards animals did not enhance the accuracy of emotional assessments, suggesting that while empathy may exist, it does not contribute to a deeper cognitive understanding of animal emotions, particularly for unfamiliar species. This study was probably the first to examine the influences of SDO and SPEC on the recognition of animal emotions. However, neither demonstrated significant effects on recognition abilities.

These findings emphasize the complexities involved in recognizing emotions in non-human species and underscore the need for improved education regarding animal emotions. Enhancing the recognition of animal emotions is vital for advancing animal welfare practices and fostering responsible human-animal interactions.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Secondary Impacts of AAS

11:25am - 12:30pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

130 The Effect of Animal-Assisted Services on Caregivers: A Systematic Scoping Review

Matthew Knight¹, Dr. Zenithson Ng², Jeanine Williamson³

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Introduction: Research on animal-assisted services (AAS) for children is expanding, yet there is limited knowledge about their effect on caregivers, who play a key role in permitting participation. This systematic scoping review examines caregivers' perceptions and experiences of AAS for their children.

Methodology: Six library databases and Google Scholar were utilized to search for published manuscripts through October 2024, using search terms related to animal-assisted therapy, parents/caregivers, and children. 358 records were recovered after deduplication in EndNote, Covidence, and manually. Two team members screened the titles and abstracts of these records with set inclusion and exclusion criteria in Covidence. 34 records proceeded to full-text review and data extraction. These studies spanned 13 countries and were conducted in various settings, including pediatric hospitals, schools, and therapy centers.

Main Results/Findings: Caregivers reported positive effects of AAS in 33 out of 34 studies, such as behavioral improvements in children and reductions in parental stress. However, 13 studies documented caregivers' negative concerns, with a recurring theme of the desire for longer and more frequent sessions. Additionally, four studies reported that some caregivers declined enrollment, primarily due to concerns about potentially worsening their child's health condition, while many did not specify a reason.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: Caregivers have positive perceptions and attitudes toward AAS for their children, as reported in these studies. Ultimately, caregivers provide initial consent for children's participation in AAS. Therefore, understanding their perspectives and experiences is vital to improving the implementation and effectiveness of these approaches. Furthermore, selection biases may inherently influence study participation, as caregivers with positive attitudes toward animals may be likelier to enroll and report favorable benefits. This limitation emphasizes the need for future studies to document caregiver feedback systematically and incorporate objective measures beyond self-reported data.

134 Bridging the bond in occupational therapy practice: a qualitative study to understand professional reasoning in situations involving older adults and animal companions

Natasa Obradovic¹, Pre Véronique Provencher^{1,2}, Pre Marjorie Désormeaux-Moreau¹

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Introduction. Most older adults consider the animal companions in their daily lives as family members and research suggests that human-animal relationships are beneficial for health and well-being. Although healthcare professionals may increasingly encounter such multispecies families during their work, little is known about how they consider human-animal relationships when providing services. Yet, studies suggest that older adults and animal companions face unique challenges in the context of healthcare services and that healthcare organizations may play a role in supporting multispecies families.

Methodology. This two-phase qualitative study aimed to understand occupational therapists' professional reasoning regarding multispecies families encountered during professional practices. Interviews using the explication method were conducted with eight occupational therapists, in which 12 situations involving older adults and animal companions were explored. Grounded theory analysis and a framework of shared activities was used to analyze data.

Results. Findings from the first phase suggest that occupational therapists 1) recognized the importance of human-animal relationships in their practices with older adults and animals; 2) witnessed both positive and negative impacts of shared activities on human and animal well-being. Ethical dilemmas and tensions with older adults regarding the best course of action were reported, especially in situations that were considered urgent and high-stakes consequences (e.g. relocation that might separate older adults and animals). Multispecies families with many

health needs and a limited social network were considered particularly vulnerable. Workplace constraints and a lack of resources were named as limiting occupational therapists' ability to fully address both human and animal welfare. Despite these barriers, most participants expressed that shared activities between older adults and animals may be relevant to assess during their practices. Findings from the second phase are under analysis.

Implications for Field. This study supports further research into supporting healthcare professionals who wish to include and address human and animal wellness considerations into their practices.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Benefits & Challenges of Pet Ownership

11:25am - 12:30pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

43 "It's all worth it." The joys, challenges and life lessons from rescuing chickens.

Dr. Ashley J. McFalls, Olivia A. Tassou, Louis J. Bertone

Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA, USA

Introduction:

In this study, we examined the impact of rescuing chickens on perceptions of non-human animal sentience, dietary ethos, sense of purpose and belonging in the broader culture.

Methodology:

Participants comprised 159 people who identified as farmed animal sanctuary founders, workers or volunteers, ex-commercial hen rescue workers or adopters.

We collected quantitative and qualitative data on dietary habits and values since being involved in rescue, perceptions of animal sentience, sense of belonging, and how rescuing chickens has impacted their lives.

Thematic analysis was applied to open-ended questions. We used chi-square and t-tests to compare rescuers with backyard chicken keepers. ANOVAs were used to evaluate sense of belonging based on the nature of rescue work and dietary identity.

Main results/findings:

Rescuing chickens was associated with a shift to plant-based eating ($\chi^2(1)=140.3$, $p<0.001$) with ethical concerns being the top reason for the change. Response themes regarding the impact of rescuing chickens included: chickens bringing joy, wellbeing and a sense of purpose, greater awareness of commercial farming, recognizing sentience in all animals, and chickens teaching

compassion, resilience and joy in the moment. Chicken rescuers were less likely than backyard chicken keepers to believe that humans are superior to animals ($p<0.001$, $d=2.3$).

Overall, sense of belonging was low across groups with adopters of ex-commercial hens having the highest sense of belonging ($p<0.05$, $f=0.31$) and vegans having the lowest ($p<0.01$, $f=0.47$). Belonging themes included: experiencing a lack of respect regarding caring for chickens, feeling that societal values of compassion and kindness do not extend towards animals – especially regarding cultural norms, and a sense of family with people also involved in rescue.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field:

Perspective shifts from rescuing chickens paradoxically bring joy and a greater sense of purpose, but also sadness and decreased belonging. This effect is magnified in those with the greatest exposure to the commercial farming sector.

126 Assistance, Planning, and Unmet Needs: Factors Shaping Older Adults' Pet Care Behaviors in the United States

Dr. Jess Bibbo, Sarah Nicolay, Dr. Samantha E Tuft
Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Introduction: While assistance with pet care is often conceptualized as being only required by the “elderly”, evidence is emerging that adults of all ages receive and benefit from help with pet care and planning. This study surveyed a sample of adults in the US ages 50 and older on the assistance they received with pet care, whether they had gone without any necessities to provide for their pet, and whether they had plans in place for their pet in case of emergencies or major life events.

Methodology: Participants ($N=1,039$) were enrolled in Foresight 50+, a representative omnibus survey funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were analyzed using SPSS and R. Descriptive statistics determined the proportion of adults living with pets who had received assistance, gone without a necessity, or planned, along with specific types of assistance, necessity, and planning. A series of multivariate logistic regressions were conducted to identify associations between demographics and having assistance, going without, and planning.

Main Results: Fifty-six percent of the sample lived with pets ($n=584$). Most pet owners (72.4%) had some type of help with pet care, 18.8% had gone without at least one necessity to provide for their pet, and 23.7% had at least one plan in place for their pet. Larger household size was associated with having assistance ($OR=1.96$, $p=.026$). Lower income ($OR=1.20$, $p=.024$) and younger age ($OR=1.06$, $p=.038$) were associated with going without a necessity. Being female ($OR=4.54$, $p=.003$), smaller household size ($OR=1.77$, $p=.036$), and older age ($OR=1.06$, $p=.010$) were associated with having at least one plan in place.

Principle Conclusions and Implications for the Field: Available resources and personal characteristics significantly impact pet care behaviors. Understanding the associations between resources, needs, and services will allow for better support for people and pets age in place.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Perceptions of Animals

2:40 - 3:45pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

98 Eye Size Affects Perceived Suitability of Laboratory Rats: Evidence for Baby Schema Effects in Animal Research

Maël Theubet¹, Nawar Allabban², Kamila Babayeva², Nerea-Isabel Carbonell Munõz², Marianna Krikeli², Eleni-Aline Rizou², Lorenzo Taschin², Prof. Christine Mohr¹

¹University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland. ²EPFL, Lausanne, Switzerland

Introduction

Infantile body features (baby schema), such as a round head and big eyes, can trigger innate protective and nurturing behaviour. This effect was observed for animal perception. Yet, most studies relied on companion animals or did not directly control the features at stake. Also, most studies only assessed cuteness or preference, not moral decisions. We investigated whether the baby schema effect could modulate attitudes towards the use of rats in medical experiments.

Methodology

We manipulated eye size in 15 rat pictures by making them smaller, larger, or keeping normal size. Online, 150 participants randomly viewed each picture and rated rat's suitability for medical experiments on a 6-point Likert scale. Using hierarchical linear mixed modelling, we examined how eye size influenced ratings while controlling for individual differences (education, age, gender, study field, diet, nature connection, and weekly nature time).

Main Results

Model comparison including individual differences showed the best model fit ($\chi^2(11) = 36.189$, $p < .001$). Eye size added substantial explanatory power ($\chi^2(2) = 59.748$, $p < .001$) with rats with large eyes being rated as less suitable for experiments compared to those with normal eyes ($\beta = -0.22$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$), while rats with smaller eyes being rated as slightly more suitable ($\beta = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .045$). Then, males as compared to female gave higher suitability ratings overall ($\beta = 0.773$, $SE = 0.259$, $p = .003$), as did older as compared to younger participants ($\beta = 0.462$, $SE = 0.116$, $p < .001$).

Conclusions

Eye size influenced judgments about animal research, with larger eyes reducing perceived suitability for experiments. Age and gender emerged as important factors, with older participants and males giving higher suitability ratings. Results show how morphology can affect attitudes toward animal research and inform ethical considerations in animal experimentation.

132 Co-Creating with Bears: Visual Storytelling, Multispecies Entanglements, and the Making of Bears in Hot Tubs

Claire Musser

Falmouth University, Falmouth, United Kingdom

Bears in Hot Tubs is a short visual multispecies ethnography, due for release in Spring 2025, that reimagines human-black bear relationships through an innovative approach to wildlife filmmaking. Rather than depicting black bears (*Ursus americanus*) as passive subjects or “nuisances,” this project frames them as co-participants in the storytelling process, shaping the film’s narrative through their behaviors and interactions with the suburban environment. Drawing on lively ethnography (van Dooren & Rose, 2016) and egomorphism (Milton, 2005), this research explores how other-than-human perspectives can be incorporated into visual storytelling to foster empathy, disrupt anthropocentric framings of wildlife, and promote coexistence-based conservation. Specifically, the film asks: How can visual storytelling redefine public perceptions of black bears, and how does the filmmaking process itself become an act of multispecies collaboration?

Methodology: The filmmaking process spanned six months, using non-intrusive remote trail cameras, interviews, and post-production techniques designed to approximate a bear’s sensory world. Cameras were placed in Monrovia, LA where bears were known to frequent, focusing on their interactions with pools, hot tubs, and human structures. The editing process involved sound and image manipulation to simulate the bear’s heightened olfactory and nocturnal perception, creating an immersive experience for the audience.

Findings: The film embodies compassionate conservation, capturing a range of black bear behaviors that challenge traditional human-wildlife conflict narratives. The footage highlights curiosity, playfulness, and adaptability, showing bears cooling off in hot tubs and skillfully navigating urban landscapes. These portrayals frame the bears as co-creators and encourage audiences to reconsider human-bear relationships, shifting the focus from conflict to coexistence. By emphasizing bear personhood and individuality, the film fosters a deeper understanding of bears as sentient beings with unique experiences rather than as generic wildlife or nuisances.

Conclusions: *Bears in Hot Tubs* illustrates how filmmaking can reshape human-wildlife relations by centering the agency and subjectivity of other-than-human participants. By incorporating egomorphism rather than anthropomorphism, the film invites audiences to see bears as adaptive, self-driven beings rather than as threats. Future research should explore how similar methodologies can further integrate visual storytelling into conservation efforts, influencing both public perception and policy.

5 All Paws On Board: An Analysis of the Concept of the Total Institution and Dog Mascots on Naval Vessels during the 20th Century

Kaylie Rogers

Department of Archaeology, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

Introduction: This work examines the role of dog mascots aboard 20th-century naval vessels through the lens of total institutions. Although the total institution in maritime and naval settings have been readily studied, there is a lack of scholarly work in how non-human actors, such as animals, can affect and modify these heavily regulated and restricted environments. This work will attempt to analyze and understand how these mascots were relied upon by their crews and what roles they filled while on board.

Methodology: The review synthesizes evidence from historical photographs, personal accounts, material culture, and official naval documentation from Western naval fleets during the World Wars. Analysis is framed through multiple theoretical perspectives, primarily Goffman's total institutions and corresponding research on total institutions in maritime and naval settings that has been published since to interpret the social and psychological impact of mascots within naval environments.

Main Findings: Analysis reveals that dog mascots significantly influenced naval institutional life through three primary mechanisms: (1) facilitating social interactions across hierarchical boundaries, (2) providing legitimate outlets for emotional expression within hypermasculine environments, and (3) creating spaces where institutional boundaries could soften without compromising operational effectiveness. Documentary evidence shows that some mascots received official recognition through service numbers and rank designations, indicating institutional acknowledgment of their positive influence on crew morale and cohesion.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field: This work challenges traditional interpretations of total institutions by demonstrating how non-human actors, such as animals, can humanize rigid institutional environments while supporting operational goals. The findings suggest that incorporating elements that facilitate emotional support and social connection may improve conditions within total institutions without compromising their effectiveness. Future research should explore how these insights might be applied to contemporary military and institutional settings to enhance member welfare while maintaining organizational objectives.

Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Human-Equine Interactions

2:40 - 3:45pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations integrated with a related community & personal experience presentation each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

Talk 1: Standard Oral Presentation

Talk 2: Community & Personal Experience Presentation

Talk 3: Standard Oral Presentation

122 Cultivating consensus about the impact of horse experiences on youth development: A Delphi study

Caitlin Lunzmann, Dr. Jennifer Applebaum, Dr. Nicole Stedman
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA

Introduction. Despite growing support for equine assisted learning, empirical evidence regarding the leadership and social skills developed through interactions with horses is limited. The aim of this study was to build consensus among experienced horse professionals regarding the impacts of horses on youth development.

Methodology. This study used the Delphi method, a consensus building tool which uses multiple rounds of feedback through surveys. Purposive and snowball sampling recruited a panel of 15 experts, each with relevant experience in the horse industry, working with youth programs, and teaching. Participants completed three rounds of surveys. The initial instrument was open-ended gathering insights on the leadership skills, social skills, and emotional intelligence developed through youth horse experiences. Qualitative data was condensed to create a list of unique items. Subsequent rounds used Likert-style questions to determine whether participants agreed that youth developed each skill represented in the items through their horse experiences. Items achieved consensus when at least 10 of the 15 participants (66.7%) responded with either “agree” or “strongly agree”.

Main Results. In Round One, expert panelists identified 95 unique items. In Round Two, 88 items achieved consensus and were retained. The same 88 items achieved consensus again in Round Three, finalizing the list. Skills identified were related to communication, discipline, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking. They emphasized emotional intelligence attributes such as regulating emotions, processing feelings, identifying and regulating body language, and identifying others’ emotions.

Conclusions and Implications. These findings suggest specific leadership and social skills that youth develop through experiences with horses. The connection to emotional intelligence supports previous literature that horses are a powerful tool for youth and leadership development. Identifying these skills could be instrumental in creating, updating, and recruiting for youth horse programs, providing support for using horse experiences for youth to gain leadership and social skills.

160 Retraining Horse Leaders in Therapeutic Riding to be Equine Advocates: Preliminary Concepts in Practice

Dr Emily Kieson¹, Dr Helen Sabolek Consiglio², Anna Nolan³, Dr Laura Ryan⁴

¹Equine International, Boston, MA, USA. ²Regis College, Weston, MA, USA. ³Advocates, Framingham, MA, USA. ⁴Breezy Hill Farm, Holliston, MA, USA

Equine-assisted services (EAS) that utilize mounted work including therapeutic/adaptive riding and the provision of treatment by allied health professionals (OT, PT, SLP), often incorporate horses into programs in a way that aligns with tool use or instrumentalization as defined by Fine (2019). Many current practices of therapeutic riding include exercises and interactions based in horsemanship and equitation that are focused on operant conditioning, behavioral shaping, and negative reinforcement which may contribute to some of the behavioral problems seen in horses within these programs. To improve equine welfare and wellbeing in EAS, new programs are applying existing research in comparative and trans-species psychology, interspecies relational theories, neurobiology and neuroscience to reimagine equine-human interactions through the lens of mutual well-being and One Welfare. The authors propose restructuring the role of the horse leader in therapeutic riding environments to serve as an advocate for the equine and include interactions to provide social-emotional support for the horse during times of psychological discomfort during sessions. Horse leaders should be responsible for recognizing stress signals, but also be trained to recognize individual horses' behaviors that indicate a need for social support before, during, and after sessions. Research in affiliative interactions with preferred friends within equine social groups provides a foundation for understanding equine communication for social needs during stress and the presentation will include emerging research of horses using similar behaviors with known humans. This new approach aims to improve social-emotional support for equines in therapeutic riding environments and eliminate common practices of positive and negative punishment when horses' behaviors fall outside of trained practice. The goal is to improve safety and equine welfare and wellbeing during therapeutic riding activities where horses often have limited choice.

79 "I get it, but you're also scaring me": A multispecies ethnographic account of the relationship between dressage rider emotions, horse behaviour and coach-rider communication
Megan Ross¹, Gabrielle Doiron¹, Dr. Kathryn Proudfoot^{1,2}, Dr. Katrina Merckies^{3,4}, Dr. Charlotte Lundgren⁵, Dr. Caroline Ritter¹

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³University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, Canada. ⁴Campbell Centre for the Study of Animal Welfare, Guelph, ON, Canada. ⁵Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

Introduction: Evidence suggests that dressage training may compromise horses' physical and emotional well-being. Being the primary decision makers for horses, humans are at the forefront of horse welfare. Therefore, exploring the coach-rider-horse relationship will be pivotal for improving dressage horse welfare. This study sought to explore the relationship between dressage coaches, riders and horses during lessons with the objectives to explore: 1) how dressage coaches and riders interpret, respond to, and elicit specific horse behaviours, and 2) how these interactions relate to perceived horse behaviour and the learning process between coaches and riders.

Methodology: Using a multispecies ethnographic case study design, M.R. spent 2 to 6 weeks with participating Equestrian Canada certified dressage coaches (n=4) and their student riders (n=19), ranging in skill from training to 3rd level. Data collection included direct observations, recording field notes, conducting interviews with each coach and rider, and videoing 30 dressage lessons with a Pivo device and a GoPro camera strapped to the rider's chest. Data were analysed using methods derived from reflexive thematic and interaction analysis.

Results: Three key themes were developed from the data. First, equestrian coaches and riders believed they interpreted horse behaviour in nuanced and contextual ways that guided their application of dressage training methods. The second theme highlights that rider emotions may affect their ability to implement instruction from the coach. For example, when horse behaviour instilled fear in riders, they expressed difficulty communicating with their horse. The third theme underscores the lack of actionable language used during dressage lessons which may hinder communication and the learning process between coach and rider, contributing to potentially negative affective states for the horse.

Conclusions: Overall, findings suggest a need to reassess training approaches in equestrian contexts, emphasizing the integration of rider emotions and redefining the constituents of a successful human-horse relationship.

Thematic Oral Presentation Session: Quality of Life, Health & Behavior

4:00 - 5:05pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

35 Look at me, please! Human auditory attention-getting devices in dog-human play
Dr. Robert W. Mitchell, Ms. Emily Howard, Ms. Mahala Saylor, Mr. Landon Minor
Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, USA

Humans use a variety of attention-getting sounds when playing with dogs, but whether these sounds influence dogs to attend is unknown. We examined sounds used as attention-getting devices (AGDs) from videotapes of interspecies interactions between familiar and unfamiliar humans ($n = 24$) and dogs ($n = 24$) in which each human invited the dog to play. Twenty-three dogs played with their owner, and 17 dogs played with the unfamiliar person. Coders coded nonverbal AGDs (e.g., whistles and claps) as well as one verbal AGD—calling the dog's name—from all videotapes, as well as whether or not dogs were attending to and playing with the human before and after the AGDs. (Play and other activities had been previously coded in other research.) Humans called the dog's name most frequently, and among nonverbal AGDs, clapping was the most frequent, followed by whistling and slapping one's thigh. Humans more often called the dog's name or used nonverbal AGDs when dogs were not attending to them than when they were attending. For both familiar and unfamiliar humans, dogs tended not to attend to the human following name calls, and were about equally likely to attend or not following other AGDs. When dogs (infrequently) changed in their attention from before to after

their name was called or an AGD was used, they were more likely to change from not attending to attending to the human, rather than the reverse. Calling the dog's name and using AGDs were not particularly effective in inducing a dog to play: dogs continued to play, or not play, as they had been doing before the name calling or AGD. These findings are similar to those from other research showing that dogs generally tend not to respond to non-play activities of humans when playing with them.

20 Dog owners' health and nutrition risk perception concerning four different diets
Andrea Knörr, Angela Bearth, Xiao Zhou, Michael Siegrist
ETH, Zurich, Switzerland

Introduction:

The trend toward “natural” dog feeding is increasing, with more owners choosing raw homemade over commercial diets. However, these diets pose two major risks: pathogens on raw meat can directly or indirectly infect humans, and an incorrect nutrient balance in homemade diets can affect dog health. Despite this, many raw feeders feel confident about the safety of their diets. Research has highlighted knowledge gaps regarding pathogens and hygiene practices, and misunderstandings regarding the risks of commercial cooked vs. raw diets. Specific insights into owners' risk awareness and perceptions, needed to design targeted risk communication and prevention measures, are limited. For this reason, the present study aimed to analyse dog owners' risk perceptions of different dog diets.

Methodology:

This mixed method study included qualitative interviews with experts ($N = 6$) and raw-feeding dog owners ($N = 10$), followed by a quantitative survey among Swiss dog owners ($N = 601$). A market research company recruited a representative sample of dog owners, with raw-feeding dog owners oversampled separately. The survey focused on the owners' perceptions of seven microbiological and nutritional risks across four diets (commercial dry and wet, ready-made, and self-composed raw). Subjective and objective knowledge concerning nutrition and health were assessed.

Results:

Raw feeders were aware of the health risks of raw meat, but to a lesser extent than non-raw feeders, while simultaneously exhibiting lower knowledge about microbiological hazards. Raw feeders, but not non-raw feeders, perceived commercial dry diets to be nutritionally riskier than raw diets. Their nutritional knowledge might help them mitigate some, but not all, of the risks associated with incorrect feed composition.

Conclusion:

Effective risk communication should emphasize microbiological facts, the complexities of formulating balanced raw diets, and the nutritional safety of commercial diets. Collaboration of dog owners with nutrition experts can support safer feeding practices and address misconceptions among raw feeders.

19 Regulatory practices of canine citizenship and the social situatedness of dogs

Maura M Beste

University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

Introduction: This paper combines influences from canine behavior and psychology, human-animal interaction, feminist theory, and dog training to explore different expectations of canine performance and its implications for human-canine relating. Informed by an evolutionary biological perspective that conceptualizes early human-canine relationships as cooperative rather than competitive due to their mutual highly evolved social skills, I argue that contemporary attitudes about what canine behaviors are proper, exemplified by temperament testing, are beginning to squander the complex and powerful traits that made *Canis lupus* and *Homo sapien* partners to start with and reveal a new canine social situatedness.

Methodology: I contrast the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test with two other behavioral assessment tools: the Canine Behavioral Assessment and Research Questionnaire (C-BARQ) and the Begleithund test (BH). I consider what canine work each test aims to prepare and evaluate the dog for and identify similarities and differences in the itemized expectations of each test according to their sociocultural niches.

Main results: These comparisons highlight how canines are positioned within distinct sociocultural niches, revealing the limitations of universalized standards for behavior and performance. While the CGC test shapes dogs into regulatory standards of canine presence in public spaces, the C-BARQ and BH are focused primarily on temperamental stability and handler-focused interactions. The BH test uniquely addresses how dogs manage independence, environmental stressors, and conflict, suggesting a greater capacity for individual canine discernment and agency.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field: By situating these differences within feminist theoretical frameworks that critique normative assumptions about bodies and personhood, this paper underscores the need to view canine work and service as multifaceted, context-dependent, and resistant to simplistic mappings onto dominant ideals of human-canine flourishing.

Thematic Oral/Community & Personal Experience Presentation Session: Equine-Assisted Services

4:00 - 4:45pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session to feature oral presentations integrated with a related community & personal experience presentation each 15-minutes in length followed by 5-minutes of Q&As.

Talk 1: Standard Oral Presentation

Talk 2: Community & Personal Experience Presentation

Talk 3: Standard Oral Presentation

26 Assessing the Influence of Equine Assisted Services on the Biopsychosocial Responses of Both Human and Equine Participants

Dr. Nicole Lorig, Nicole Pickard, Christina Adams, Dr. Kimberly Cole

The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Introduction

Equine-assisted services (EAS) are increasingly being used as complementary interventions for a variety of client populations. However, few studies utilize a multifaceted approach to assess outcomes. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of equine assisted interactions (EAI) on the biopsychosocial responses of both human and equine participants.

Methodology

Participants (n = 36) interacted with the same equine (n = 10) across four consecutive, weekly 30-min EAI sessions. Biological measures included heart rate (HR), heart rate variability (HRV), and salivary analytes oxytocin (OT), TNF- α , IL-1 β , IL-6, and IL-8. Human psychological assessments included measures of perceived quality of life, momentary anxiety, and psychological distress. EAI sessions were video recorded to assess behavioral responses (standing, locomotion, acceptance, avoidance, and physical contact) via scan sampling. Data were analyzed using PROC MIXED and PROC CORR in SAS v 9.4.

Results

Human biological responses evaluated in this study did not differ within or across sessions except for IL-8 which increased within sessions ($p < 0.01$) but decreased across sessions ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, equine biological responses did not differ within or across sessions. Participants perceived quality of life nor psychological distress differed within or across sessions; however, momentary anxiety decreased significantly within each session ($p < 0.05$). Both human and equine locomotion varied across sessions ($p < 0.01$). Physical contact was positively correlated with acceptance behavior ($r = 0.42$; $p < 0.01$).

Conclusions

EAS may positively influence human participant outcomes, depending on the response measured, thus highlighting the complexity of human responses to EAI and necessity of implementing comprehensive approaches in future studies. Participation in EAS did not

negatively impact the equine participants in this study and the use of a biobehavioral approach enabled a greater and more comprehensive understanding of the equine experience during EAI.

77 Mission Transition: An Equine Facilitated Learning Project
Professor of Communication Studies Robin Bisha, Stephanie Freeman
Texas Lutheran University, Seguin, Texas, USA

Veterans and their families encounter challenges during the transition from military to civilian life, including strained relationships, communication breakdowns, isolation, and stress. While Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) has shown promise in supporting veterans, research on EFL is sparse. Bisha, Freeman, community veterans, three donkeys, a mule, and a mini horse explored the impact of EFL on veterans and their families as they navigate this transition.

Veterans, families, and equines faced several challenges along with corresponding opportunities.

- Challenge: Military service can strain family relationships.

EFL Opportunity: EFL programs involving family members promote mutual understanding and improve communication. Activities with equine can mirror family dynamics, offering insights and opportunities to address underlying issues in a safe, guided setting.

- Challenge: Many veterans struggle to reintegrate with family.

EFL Opportunity: Working with equine in a group setting fosters communication, teamwork, and social interaction. It provides a supportive community environment, helping veterans to reconnect with others and develop a sense of belonging.

- Challenge: Veterans and their families often struggle with managing stress and emotions.

• EFL Opportunity: The calming effect of interacting with equine helps in emotional regulation. Equines provide immediate feedback on emotional states, allowing individuals to practice mindfulness, patience, and stress management techniques in real-time.

- Challenge: Equine socialization

• EFL Opportunity: Equines are introduced to strangers who then become habitual visitors, allowing them to connect and develop cross-species friendships.

- Challenge: Equine health

• EFL Opportunity: Veterans are keen observers of the situation and can help to alert about health issues and also provide observations that lead to diagnosis.

To see the impact of this series of interactions on this human-equine community, observers need to hear our stories. Our personal stories, photos, and videos show how our project benefited veterans, families, and equines.

Symposia

From Virtual Reality to Genetics: Technology's Influence on Human-Animal Interactions

4:00 - 5:15pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

The symposium features a 5-minute introduction, three 15-minutes oral presentations, a 10-minute discussant presentation, and then followed by Q&As.

Chair: Nikki E Bennett, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, USA

Presenter 1: Dr. Marie-Claire Pagano, University of Liverpool, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Department of Livestock and One Health, Neston, UK

Presenter 2: Dr. Jack O'Sullivan, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

Presenter 3: Nikki E. Bennett, M.S., Department of Anthropology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, United States

Discussant: John-Tyler Binfet, University of British Columbia, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

This symposium explores how advancements in technology are reshaping multiple interfaces of human-animal interactions (HAI). Presentations highlight innovative technological applications across companion and agricultural animal contexts, revealing shared challenges and insights.

Pagano investigates human perceptions of canine behavior using virtual reality. This study leverages the Dog Assisted Virtual Environment to examine how a dog's physical appearance, behaviors associated with the canine ladder of aggression, and participant demographics influence interactions with the virtual dog. Findings have applications in providing insights for training programs to improve safety around dogs and ultimately, reduce dog bites and improve dog welfare.

O'Sullivan explores the role of AI in addressing animal welfare challenges in poultry production. By examining a machine learning system that detects behavioral anomalies in the absence of stockpersons, this research highlights the potential role of these technologies in proactive welfare management in agricultural settings and across many other diverse HAI contexts.

Bennett examines how dog owners interpret and apply the results of commercial genetic tests. This research evaluates how these technologies shape owners' perceptions of breed and behavior, and how such perceptions influence decisions related to veterinary care, training practices, and long-term pet management.

The symposium's discussant, Dr. Binfet, is the Director and Founder of "Building Academic Retention through K9s" (B.A.R.K.) at University of British Columbia. His research applies quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate HAI in both in-person and virtual

settings. Dr. Binfet will provide a unique perspective on the broader implications of these studies.

Together, these presentations showcase the intersection of technology and HAI, demonstrating how research across species, contexts, and methodologies can inform one another. This cross-disciplinary exchange fosters innovative applications of technology in animal welfare, training, and human-animal relationships. Discussions will touch on the novel insights different technologies afford, while also exploring the challenges and ethical considerations.

Presenter 1 Abstract

Dr. Marie-Claire Pagano, University of Liverpool, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences,
Department of Livestock and One Health, Neston, UK

Introduction: Misinterpretation of dog behaviour can result in injuries and stress to both humans and dogs. Dogs often show subtle appeasement signals during stressful situations (e.g., lip-licking) which can easily be missed. It is challenging to assess how people interact with dogs outside of self-report. The Dog Assisted Virtual Environment (DAVE) offers a novel method to study these interactions in a safe, controlled, immersive environment.

Methods: Using DAVE, we examined how participants interacted with a virtual Labrador displaying stress-related behaviours in response to participant movements. Participant responses to the virtual dog were compared to their self-reported understanding of the dog's behaviour. Participants explored the virtual reality (VR) environment for 1-minute while their 3D proximity to the dog was measured. We ran GLMM models to assess whether factors such as gender and dog coat colour (randomly allocated as yellow/black) influenced how closely participants approached the dog and the maximum aggression level reached. A t-test compared proximity to dog between participants who noticed lip-licking behaviour and those that did not.

Results: Forty-six female and 30 male participants, who mostly identified as dog owners (89%), participated. Most (75%) reported noticing the dog staring at them, while only 47% noticed lip-licking behaviour, suggesting this subtle sign is often missed. Participants who did not notice lip-licking approached the dog more closely than those that did ($t = -2.48$, $df = 74$, $p\text{-value} = 0.015$). Approach distance did not differ by participant gender or dog coat colour.

Conclusion: There was no evidence that dog coat colour or participant gender was associated with proximity to the VR dog but proximity may be impacted by whether subtle behaviours are noticed. This study demonstrates the potential of VR tools to uncover gaps in how humans interpret and respond to canine behavior. Findings can guide educational interventions to foster safer interactions between people and dogs.

Presenter 2 Abstract

Dr. Jack O’Sullivan, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

Introduction: Commercial poultry production, with its large flock sizes and limited ability to observe individuals, presents unique challenges for animal welfare monitoring. Aberrant behaviors, such as “Piling”, often occur when stock persons are not present and can result in significant losses. This study explores how AI technology could address these challenges by automating their detection and discussing the potential of these technologies for proactive welfare management. In doing so we contribute to the broader dialogue on the future of Precision Livestock Farming. We highlight both the potential benefits and challenges when integrating technology to improve animal welfare in agricultural settings.

Methods: Video data were recorded for 12 flocks of free-range laying hens over 3 weeks, between 8am and 8pm. Frames were extracted every 30 seconds and labeled as "Piling" (defined as "at least 30 birds aggregated in the closest possible proximity (overlapping body outlines) for at least 1 minute while performing no other discernible behaviors, excepting locomotion") or "Non-piling", resulting in 49,908 frames (33,669 "Piling", 16,239 "Non-piling"). The frame data of 2 of the flocks were withheld from the training dataset for use in final validation. A ResNet 18 Convolutional Neural Network was trained using a transfer learning approach.

Results: The model achieved a peak validation accuracy of 0.93 during training. When applied to the withheld data the accuracy was 0.87. In the validation data 5.56% of non-piling frames were misclassified as piling, whereas 19.76% of piling frames were misclassified. Misclassifications were analyzed through visual inspection to explore potential causes.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates the potential of a relatively low-complexity computer vision model for continuous monitoring of aberrant behaviors in poultry. While not replacing human assessment, this technology offers a valuable tool to enhance welfare monitoring, particularly where/when in-person observation is limited.

Presenter 3 Abstract

Nikki E. Bennett, M.S., Department of Anthropology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, United States

Introduction: Genetic Options Theory (GOT; Roth & Ivemark, 2018) explains the psychosocial mechanisms by which genetic test-users formulate geneticized identities for themselves. This study evaluated GOT’s relevance to how breed genetic test results influence human-animal relationships. Specifically, it investigated how dog owners incorporate genetic test results into their dog’s breed identity and whether genetic testing transforms participants’ relationships with their dogs. It was hypothesized that participants would employ GOT psychosocial

mechanisms to construct socially acceptable breed identities that reinforced their relationship with their dog

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants before and after their dog was genetically tested. Transcripts were analyzed in ATLAS.ti using a combined deductive and inductive qualitative approach to identify themes related to breed identity and the human-animal bond. Pre-test interviews focused on participants' expectations about their dog's breed, while post-test interviews examined responses to genetic test results

Results: Pre-test interviews revealed participants' expectations about their dog's breed centered around their dog's acquisition source, appearance, and behavior. Post-test interviews showed participants processed genetic results through personal interpretations and social feedback, revealing an interplay between genetic data, individual perspectives, and external influences. Beyond GOT's psychosocial mechanisms, participants also used their dog's physical and behavioral traits to construct breed identities

Conclusions: Genetic test results are tools for breed identity construction through mechanisms explained by GOT, in which participants used their personal understandings of breed ("private regard") and social feedback ("public regard"). However, this study introduces "pet regard," a novel concept where the tested dog is incorporated into interpretations of genetic data. This updated framework, termed Breed Options Theory, offers a culturally and psychologically relevant lens for understanding how genetic testing shapes human-animal relationships

References: Roth & Ivemark (2018). Genetic options: The impact of genetic ancestry testing on consumers' racial and ethnic identities. <https://doi.org/10.1086/697487>

Symposium: Pets and Human Mental Health and Wellbeing: Embracing complexity, context, and collaboration through an innovative HAI research program

2:40 - 4:10pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

The symposium features a 10-minute introduction, four 10-minute oral presentations, a 10-minute discussant presentation, a 30-minute panel discussion and Q&As.

Sponsored by:  **WALTHAM**
Petcare Science Institute

Chair: Dr Vanessa Ashall, Waltham Petcare Science Institute, Leicester, United Kingdom

Presenter 1: Dr. Megan K. Mueller, Center for Animals & Public Policy, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, Massachusetts, United States

Presenter 2: Dr. Lauren Powell, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, United States

Presenter 3: Dr. Emily E. Bray, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, United States

Presenter 4: Dr. Becky Smith, Waltham Petcare Science Institute, Leicester, United Kingdom

Discussant: Dr. Colleen Dell, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

The Pets and Wellbeing Study (PAWS) program is a long-term commitment to conduct innovative and robust research in Human-Animal interaction (HAI) and human mental health and wellbeing, at a scale and depth that has previously been challenging to achieve.

This symposium introduces the program, present early results, demonstrate the feasibility of applying innovative and robust methods across diverse naturalistic settings, and explore a novel collaborative research approach.

Presentation #1 reports on electrodermal activity and ecological momentary assessment (EMA) measures to determine how interactions with pet dogs influence peripheral physiology and affect for 100 adolescents with social anxiety. This presentation demonstrates that the presence of a dog may improve negative affect and that use of an EMA protocol is feasible with good adherence.

Presentation #2 also assesses the feasibility of longitudinal HAI research methods, using validated scales of affect, loneliness, perceived stress, anxiety and depression. The study identifies several promising mental health indicators and identifies a requirement to boost retention of low-income participants in studies of HAI.

Presentation #3 builds on previous presentations of validated mental health measurements to consider instead the mechanisms through which HAI may enhance the well-being of both parties, using The Electronically Activated Recorder to uncover the nuances of pet-owner vocal interactions.

Finally, presentation #4 encourages us to think across each of the previous three presentations and proposes an innovative multispecies collaborative ethnographic methodology. Such an approach may add value across each of the existing EMA studies through generating new theoretical and empirical insights, enriching interpretation of results and enabling collaborative analysis.

Together, the presentations showcase a commitment to embracing complexity and context in HAI research and demonstrate the role of innovative, collaborative and mixed method approaches for characterizing the impacts of pets on human mental health and wellbeing.

Presenter 1 Abstract

Exploring the role of dog companionship on affect and psychophysiology in adolescents with social anxiety: An ecological momentary assessment approach

Megan Mueller,¹ Jordanne Brown¹, Eric Anderson², Jasmine Mote³, Siyu Zhang,⁴ Erin King¹

¹Tufts University, ²MaineHealth Research Institute, ³Boston University, ⁴Tufts University School of Medicine

Introduction: Social anxiety is common among adolescents and linked to maladaptive outcomes. Dog companionship may support adaptive coping with anxiety, including the reduction of physiological arousal. However, the mechanisms underpinning the relationship between social and physiological processes in youth-dog relationships have not been explored extensively in real-life settings. Because social anxiety is often context-dependent, an idiographic approach is needed to clarify how dogs may confer physiological and affect-related benefits. The objective of this study is to determine how interactions with a pet dog influence peripheral physiology and affect for adolescents with social anxiety in their daily lives using ecological momentary assessment (EMA).

Methodology: To determine how interactions with a pet dogs influence peripheral physiology as an indicator of anxious arousal, we are collecting continuous electrodermal activity (EDA) using the Empatica Embrace wristband, combined with EMA of emotions using validated self-report measures. Data are being collected during week-long sampling periods from 100 youth over 5 years. Preliminary data were analyzed using paired samples t-tests.

Main Results/Findings: Results from 23 participants indicate good levels of response to the prompts, with an average of 70% adherence across sessions. Participants were with their dog during 27% of all sessions. When with their dogs, participants reported significantly lower levels of negative affect; $t(20)=-2.08$, $p<.05$, Cohen's $d=0.5$; there were no statistically significant differences for positive affect. EDA data were successfully collected in a real-world setting with an average of 15 hours/day of usable data (participants did not have to wear the wristband while sleeping).

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: Preliminary findings suggest that the EMA protocol is feasible with good adherence. Initial results indicate that the presence of a dog may lower negative affect. Identifying when and how adolescents with anxiety seek out dog contact and the physiological consequences will inform intervention recommendations.

Presenter 2 Abstract

The feasibility of studying animal adoption and its impact on mental health among an economically diverse population

Lauren Powell¹, Chelsea Reinhard¹, James Serpell¹, Heather Klusaritz², Brittany Watson¹

¹School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, ²University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine

Introduction: Social inequities represent a significant risk factor for mental health which has led to a disproportionately high prevalence of mental illness among low-income populations. Pet ownership has vast potential to benefit mental health, yet much of the existing evidence relies on cross-sectional designs and non-representative samples. The goal of this study was to determine the feasibility of recruiting an economically diverse sample of dog and cat adopters for a longitudinal study about mental health. A secondary aim was to identify preliminary indicators of mental health change post-adoption.

Methodology: Between September and December 2024, 16 prospective adopters were recruited from two animal shelters in Pennsylvania. Participants completed validated scales about their affect, loneliness, perceived stress, anxiety and depression prior to adoption. Follow-up surveys were completed one- and three-months later, including additional questions about potential challenges of pet ownership. Demographics and mean outcome scores were explored at each timepoint using descriptive statistics.

Main results/findings: Of 39 eligible participants, 16 completed the baseline survey, 10 initiated but failed to complete the survey, and 13 were uninterested (response rate 41%). The sample included mostly low- and middle-income participants, with 10 of the 16 (62.5%) earning within the lowest two income brackets based on the U.S. census. Only five participants completed both follow-up surveys. Mean positive affect scores appeared higher one- and three-months post-adoption, while negative affect, perceived stress, loneliness, anxiety, and depression seemed to drop from baseline to follow up.

Principle conclusions and implications for the field: Our findings demonstrate the feasibility of recruiting low- and middle-income adopters from animal shelters for studies of mental health. We found a multitude of promising mental health indicators that warrant further exploration. However, high dropout rates limited the final sample size. Future studies must endeavor to boost participant retention over longer study durations, including through reimbursement.

Presenter 3 Abstract

Cross-species conversations: The development of a coding system to capture verbal communication between people and their pets

Dara Jonkoski, Molly Delzio, Amanda Bernal, Matthias Mehl, Kerri Rodriguez, & Emily Bray
College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Arizona, USA

Introduction: Pet ownership may enhance human physical, emotional, and social well-being. However, the mechanisms underlying these benefits are underexplored and existing research relies largely on first-person accounts and data from contrived situations. The Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR), an application which intermittently samples snippets of ambient sounds throughout an individual's daily life, instead uncovers the nuances of daily pet-owner interactions in a naturalistic setting. Using de-identified EAR data, we developed a standardized coding system to quantify how people talk to their pets.

Methodology: Previously collected EAR data was analyzed from a sample of N = 334 pet-owning adults, amounting to 45.17 hours of audio recordings from human-pet interactions.

Development of the coding system consisted of (1) reviewing literature and identifying target variables, (2) isolating common themes by listening to a subset of data, (3) grouping themes into coding categories, (4) implementing the preliminary coding system on a subset of data, (5) testing inter-rater reliability, and (6) revising and finalizing the system.

Main results/findings: The final coding system consisted of 7 major categories. Categories were based on functions of pet ownership (e.g., pets as a catalyst for social interaction), and on the quality (e.g., affectionate or critical) and quantity of pet-owner interactions (e.g., type of owner-pet activity occurring). Subcategories assessed details in the audio files (e.g., sentence structure).

Principal conclusions and implications for the field: This coding system presents the first standardized approach for analyzing audio recordings of daily pet interactions. We created it to be generalizable across diverse contexts and geographical regions, with the hope that wide-ranging research groups can use it to quantify unique human-animal relationships. Ultimately, this system will help capture the subtleties of peoples' daily interactions with their pets and offer insight into the mechanisms through which these interactions may enhance the well-being of both parties.

Presenter 4 Abstract

Exploring mental wellbeing across families through a collaborative multispecies ethnographic approach

Becky Smith, Vanessa Ashall
Waltham Petcare Science Institute

The HAI research field increasingly identifies the need for methods and analyses which pay greater attention to complexity in human-animal interaction. Several recent as well as ongoing studies address this need through investigating HAI across a range of naturalistic settings, using ecological momentary assessment (EMA) methods. This presentation outlines the potential benefits of an innovative methodological approach whereby the findings of several live EMA studies are further enriched and connected through ethnographic research.

Sustained ethnographic engagement across several EMA studies offers the potential to respond to emerging questions across the lifetime of the projects. In using observational methods, ethnography promises to enrich each EMA project and generate unimagined insights as well as avenues for future research. The project will take the 'multispecies family' as the starting point for investigation, capturing lived experiences of both human and non-human family members across the various settings in which EMA methods are utilised. Networks of multispecies relationships will be explored, with concepts of mental 'health' and 'wellbeing' viewed as open-ended, allowing for multiple realities and meanings to be understood. Bringing otherwise

standalone projects together, this study aims to identify key contexts and practices which shape how pet-owner relationships affect mental health and wellbeing as well as peoples' taken-for-granted assumptions about the role and meaning of pets within the family.

A secondary outcome of this work will be to facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration and allow different HAI vantage points to be brought into conversation. Through creating a space where understandings of key concepts in HAI can be drawn out and discussed, this project promises to generate a more holistic account of both mental wellbeing and human-animal relationships. We posit this could offer theoretical advancements in the field of HAI as well as practical insights that would support people and pets.

Lightning Oral Presentations

11:25am - 12:30pm Saturday, 21st June, 2025

Session broken into 2 mini-sessions featuring oral presentations each 5-minutes in length followed by 10-minutes group Q&As.

142 Equine Coworkers: Worth Their Weight in Gold

Ms. Colleen E Winkelman

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

Horses are often described as naturally therapeutic for humans, however there is significant effort dedicated to preparing a horse for therapeutic intervention. Practitioners recognize “good” therapy horses based on temperament and “feel,” a way of knowing that is supported by experience. What makes a good therapy horse?

In my research, there were significant issues with having enough horses to provide services between behavioral and physical issues among the herd. Recent research indicates significant turnover in therapy horses due to burnout, behavioral issues, age, and lameness (Watson et al. 2020; Rankins et al. 2021). How do you keep a good therapy horse “good”?

Methods

I conducted 11 months of participant observation at a collegiate therapeutic riding center in West Texas. I interviewed practitioners, volunteers, and clients about their understandings of horses and horse-human interaction in assisted therapies.

Issues

Given that this is ethnographic research, it is not replicable. More research is needed in other places in the US and other countries to investigate specific cultures and subcultures.

Results

Horse selection was shaped by horse culture in West Texas and the experiential knowledge of practitioners. People understood them as co-workers and their readiness for therapy was framed in terms of trust - a good therapy horse is trustworthy. The social construction of horses as co-workers highlighted horse agency but also obscured power dynamics in ways that contributed to burnout and behavioral issues of therapy horses at the center.

Discussion points

Can/should there be a standardized method of selection? What might that look like?

How can other ways of knowing (“feel”, “trust”) which are relied upon human-animal relationships be used to create best practice?

How can we build cooperation between researchers and practitioners to create better horse-human working relationships?

How can we balance pressure to provide services with the variability of horse needs?

155 Healing Through the Wild: Exploring the Psychosocial Benefits of Human-Dolphin Interactions for Youth with Trauma

Dr. DeAnna Bay-Markins¹, Haley Kurian¹, Sofia Salko¹, Dr. Whitney Dominick²

¹Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, FL, USA. ²H.O.P.E. Research and Development Foundation, Panama City, FL, USA

Prior research indicates that human-wildlife interactions and nature-based programs show promise in enhancing emotional well-being (Guyang et al., 2024; Rosales Chavez et al., 2023). However, less research is available that indicates if human-wildlife interactions can also provide psychosocial benefits in supporting youth with trauma backgrounds, particularly on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This longitudinal study evaluates the potential benefits of human-animal interactions with wild dolphin encounters for youth with trauma histories, aiming to assess whether the goals and outcomes of program participation for these youth include emotional healing, resilience, and connection to nature. Using the qualitative data collected thus far, this study explores the experiences of 10 youth participants ages 9-17 who engaged in a structured wild dolphin encounter program. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and feedback forms, with a focus on capturing the emotional shifts that occurred before, during, and after the encounters. Findings using thematic analysis suggest that interactions with wild dolphins facilitated an increased emotional awareness and a sense of empowerment in the participants. These experiences were further facilitated through awe of nature, interpersonal relationships, and goal setting as key components of the experience. This study highlights the potential of wild dolphin encounters as a tool for improved well-being in youth with trauma, suggesting that nature-based interventions may offer valuable, complementary approaches to traditional trauma-focused psychotherapeutic interventions. Future research will expand the sample size, refine program elements, and continue to assess quantitative and qualitative data on long-term effects on psychosocial health. As the researchers recognize the use of the dolphin's natural habitat to facilitate this experience, the dolphin's autonomy, and their choice to interact with humans (or not) is also being further examined as one of the mechanisms of change due to the potential for the awe-evoking experience.

50 Buzzing with Benefits: Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Bee Houses

Dr. Nicole F Bromfield

East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA

This lightning oral presentation will explore a novel research proposal to investigate the therapeutic potential of honey bees and bee houses for promoting human health and well-

being. While nature-based therapies are well-documented, the sensory and biochemical benefits of therapeutic bee houses, found in the Ukraine, and emerging in other locations, remain an untapped area of research. Beehives emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as pinene, limonene, and eucalyptol, which are known for their antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and calming properties. Combined with the soothing hum and warmth of active hives, these elements may help reduce stress, improve respiratory function, and enhance mental health.

The research focuses on bee houses, purpose-built structures designed to allow safe exposure to hive environments without direct interaction with honey bees. The study proposes to answer three key research questions:

1. How do the VOCs and sensory outputs of beehives influence physiological and psychological health?
2. What design features of bee houses maximize therapeutic benefits while maintaining safety and accessibility?
3. How can this approach broaden human-animal interaction (HAI) frameworks to include insects and their ecosystems?

The proposed methodology includes physiological assessments (e.g., cortisol levels, respiratory function, and heart rate variability), participant surveys, and evaluations of bee house designs. A comparative analysis with other nature-based therapies will highlight the unique contributions of bee therapy.

Anticipated challenges include managing safety concerns, such as allergies or fear of bees, addressing environmental variability, and overcoming skepticism about insect-based interventions. This study will also address ethical and ecological considerations, ensuring that the approach aligns with sustainability and conservation goals.

By proposing this novel direction, the research aims to advance interdisciplinary collaboration, expand the boundaries of HAI research, and establish honey bees as partners in innovative, nature-based therapeutic interventions. Responsible beekeeping supports bee populations by providing stable nesting sites, protecting bees from habitat loss, and ensuring access to diverse floral resources. Beekeepers also manage disease and pests that may reduce colony mortality, promoting overall bee health.

143 Zoosemiotics in Visual Representations of Woodland Caribou

Max Pospisil

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

This short presentation explores an experimental zoosemiotic^[1] framework (Maran et al. 2016) used to identify woodland caribou semiosis in art and artifacts from a community caribou art exhibit that I co-curated with the La Ronge Arts Council in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, in 2019. In this presentation, I first briefly review the role of visual arts methods in human-animal studies and introduce zoosemiotic terminology. Next, I analyze the pieces collected for this exhibit as data that represent woodland caribou semiosis. I call these pieces "nature-images" after Maran's (2007) nature-texts: distinct forms of representation that are intended to invoke real-world nature and rely on or include natural history information that is often derived from scientific and/or local knowledge. References to natural history information are the means through which nature-images have the potential to convey caribou semiosis. I identify caribou agency in the real-life encounters that inspired each art piece. Some of the pieces also function as the artists' direct communication with more-than-physical entities that guide caribou hunting. Reflective examination of my process of understanding these pieces highlights some of the pitfalls that may occur within the translation of zoosemiosis across different worldviews, locations, or life experiences (Maran, 2007, 288-289). I conclude the presentation by reflecting on considerations for intercultural translations of nature representations, especially within conservation contexts.

Maran, Timo. 2007. "Towards an Integrated Methodology of Ecosemiotics: The Concept of Nature-Text." *Sign Systems Studies* 35, no. 1/2: 269-294.

Maran, Timo, Morten Tønnessen, Kadri Tüür, Riin Magnus, Silver Rattasepp, and Nelly Mäekivi. 2016. "Methodology of Zoosemiotics: Concepts, Categorisations, Models." In *Animal Umwelten in a Changing World: Zoosemiotic Perspectives*, edited by Timo Maran, Morten Tønnessen, Kristin Armstrong Oma, et al. University of Tartu Press.

[1] Zoosemiosis is the study of meaning-making in nonhuman animals.

102 The Symbolic Mind of Prehistoric Societies: A Cognitive Archaeology Study on Jomon Animal Figurines

Professor Miki Kakinuma¹, Professor Asami Tsuchida²

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Introduction

Prehistoric people are known for creating symbolic objects such as paintings and sculptures. But what subjects did they choose, and why? This question is crucial when considering the origins of human-animal relationships. From the perspective of cognitive archaeology, material culture provides valuable insights into how prehistoric people perceived and interacted with the world around them. In Japan's Jomon period, people created clay figurines, predominantly depicting female figures. These figurines are possibly broken intentionally, leading researchers to believe they were used in some form of ritual. Although far less common, clay figurines of animals have also been discovered. By applying cognitive archaeological methods, this study

seeks to explore the possible meanings behind these animal representations and their potential ritual significance.

Methodology

This research analyzes animal clay figurines excavated from various Jomon archaeological sites in Japan.

Anticipated Challenges

Interpreting prehistoric artifacts inevitably relies on modern imagination and inference. However, cognitive archaeology provides a framework for understanding past human cognition through material culture, offering insights into how prehistoric people may have perceived and interacted with animals.

Results and Discussion

Among the excavated animal figurines, the most common subject was the wild boar. While dog figurines were also found, they were significantly fewer in number. This is surprising given that dogs were the most closely associated animals in Jomon life—they were used for hunting and were sometimes buried alongside humans. The primary protein sources for Jomon people included seafood, deer, and wild boar. If clay figurines represented animals central to daily life, one would expect more depictions of dogs, yet they were rare. Given the ritualistic destruction of female figurines, it is plausible that the animal figurines, particularly those of wild boars, also held ceremonial significance. Why, then, did people choose to create wild boar figurines over other animals?

Globally, prehistoric societies have left behind animal paintings and sculptures, suggesting that animals played symbolic or ritual roles in various cultures. This study aims to foster a discussion on the roles animals played in prehistoric societies by comparing examples from different regions and exploring potential ritualistic functions of animal representations.

68 Fostering Happy, Healthy Human-Dog Relationships in Education: Building a Sustainable Community of Practice through the National School Dog Alliance.

Dr Helen Lewis, Dr Janet Oostendorp Godfrey, Dr Russell Grigg
Swansea University, Swansea, Wales, United Kingdom

This presentation explores the recent establishment of the ‘National School Dog Alliance’ in the UK. The alliance emphasises the importance of interconnection, striving to highlight sustainable systems of school dog programmes that prioritise the rights and well-being of all participants, while fostering positive educational outcomes. This collaborative network of professionals aims to exemplify best practices in school settings, benefiting children, dogs and the wider community.

The integration of dogs into schools has demonstrated significant benefits for children's health and well-being, including enhanced communication skills, social-emotional development, physical health, and self-regulation. Thoughtfully designed programmes can reduce anxiety, nurture empathy, and support language development (eg Purewal et al., 2017). Recent studies highlight significant gaps in educator preparedness for implementing safe and effective programmes, with challenges including managing incidents, ensuring the welfare of children and dogs, and limited access to high-quality guidance on best practices (Lewis et al., 2023; Mombeck, 2023).

This talk explores how the alliance addresses these challenges, focusing on founding processes, harmonising core values on animal rights across diverse contexts, and respecting dogs' sentience. It also highlights the alliance's potential impact on national policymaking.

This presentation will appeal to professionals working with dogs in educational settings and those interested in developing sustainable, collaborative networks to support safe, ethical, and effective animal-assisted practices.

Lewis, H., Oostendorp Godfrey, J., Knight, C. (2023) Tails of the Unexpected: Teacher's experiences of working with children and dogs in schools. *Human-Animal Interactions* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2023.0040>

Mombeck, M.M., Albers T. (2023) The Impact of a School Dog on Children's Social Inclusion and Social Climate in a School Class. *Eur J Investig Health Psychol Educ.* 14(1):1-17.

Purewal R, Christley R, Kordas K, Joinson C, Meints K, Gee N, Westgarth C. (2017) Companion Animals and Child/Adolescent Development: A Systematic Review of the Evidence. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 27;14(3):234

161 Pet Companionship Among International Students in the U.S.: Motivations and Challenges
Jiaqi Tian, Dr. Megan Mueller, M.S. Seana Dowling-Guyer
Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, North Grafton, MA, USA

Over one million international students from 207 countries study in the United States to pursue their academic goals. Transitioning to an unfamiliar country presents numerous challenges, and existing support structures often fail to fully support international students. Pet companionship may support students in alleviating homesickness and enhancing mental well-being. However, there is a lack of research exploring the experience of international students in the U.S. living with pets, and what unique barriers they face. This quantitative survey recruited 763 international students to explore why they may or may not choose to live with pets while they are in the U.S., and the challenges they face regarding having pets while studying abroad. Participants reported barriers such as financial and housing restrictions as well as concerns

about pet care during travel or vacations, and uncertainty about their future plans, which deter them from committing to long-term pet ownership. However, 68.9% of international students who have experience living with pets or plan to have a pet believe that the benefits of having a pet outweigh the challenges. More than 62% of them committed to keeping their pets permanently, even if they need to move back to their home country or to another foreign country. This research may provide data that inform how to enrich support systems for both international students and animal welfare by highlighting the unique challenges and benefits of human-animal interactions for international students.

28 The Impact of Pet Ownership on Empathy Development in Middle Childhood

Krischanda Bemister

Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON, Canada

Human-animal interactions (HAIs) are increasingly recognized for their potential to influence emotional development in children. While studies suggest pets may foster empathy and prosocial behaviour, the mechanisms underlying these outcomes, particularly during middle childhood (7-12 years), remain underexplored. This research investigates how pet ownership and attachment contribute to the development of empathy over time. Specifically, it examines whether changes in empathy can be attributed to the quality and duration of the human-animal bond, and how factors such as pet attachment, attitudes toward animals, and family dynamics influence these changes. This longitudinal study follows 50 children—half pet owners, half non-pet owners—over six months, with data collected at three intervals: baseline, 3 months, and 6 months. Empathy is assessed using the Bryant Index of Empathy, while pet attachment and attitudes are measured using the Pet Attachment Scale and Companion Animal Bonding Scale. In addition to quantitative measures, pet-owning children will participate in interviews to explore the emotional and social impacts of their bond with pets. Multilevel modeling (MLM) will be used to track changes in empathy, considering individual differences in attachment, attitudes, and pet ownership duration. Challenges may include potential participant dropout, the subjective nature of attachment and empathy, and the confounding influence of external factors like family dynamics or socio-economic status, which may affect both empathy development and pet relationships. This study raises important questions about the role of companion animals in emotional development. How do different aspects of the human-animal bond—such as attachment and attitudes—contribute to empathy? Additionally, how can these findings inform interventions to promote emotional well-being in children, especially in educational or therapeutic settings? Finally, what are the implications for integrating animals into schools or pediatric care to enhance social-emotional learning? Overall, this study aims to examine how human-animal interactions influence empathy development in children, with potential implications for enhancing emotional well-being through pet integration in educational and therapeutic settings.

57 Children's Close Relationships with Companion Animals: Considerations in Measuring Attachment, Bond, and Other Nuances

Problem Statement: Various features may define the relationships that children share with their pets, but studies have largely focused on measuring child-pet *attachment* - a specific construct derived from attachment theory. This paper offers a conceptual review of how children's attachment and bonds with their companion animals have been defined and assessed in HAI studies and highlights the need to measure varied aspects of child-pet relationships.

Methodology: We reviewed published studies from 1980 to 2024 regarding child-pet relationships, with a specific focus on how studies define and measure child-pet *attachment*. We identified 29 articles, including original research studies with cross-sectional and longitudinal designs and literature and theoretical reviews. Research articles assessed children aged 6-14 years and focused mostly on dogs and cats.

Results: There is great variability in how child-pet *attachment* and *bonds* are measured. Child-pet *attachment* is often conceptualized and measured as the strength of closeness or affection, which does not account for the four aspects of attachment as traditionally defined (proximity seeking, separation distress, safe haven, and secure base). While some studies measure one or two of these attachment features, they often overlook a *secure base*. Only a few studies clearly differentiate *attachment* from *bonds*, and few studies simultaneously measure other aspects of child-pet relationships (i.e., perceived shared intimacy and support).

Theoretical quandaries: The interchangeable use of child-pet *attachment* and *bond* is confusing and problematic. Moving forward, research might examine nuances in children's relationships with pets, with a focus on: 1) consistency in the measurement of varied aspects, considering differences between *bond* and *attachment*, 2) the perspective of companion animals, or *bidirectional child-pet bonds*, and 3) child-pet *bonds* in the context of one-time and ongoing animal-assisted services. Advancing our understanding about the nuances of child-pet relationships will better elucidate the supportive role of companion animals in children's lives.

Poster Presentations

5:15 - 6:15pm Friday, 20th June, 2025

ID# 1 The relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and human-animal interactions (HAI):
A scoping review

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Introduction. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a global lockdown that closed public spaces and forced people to physically distance themselves from friends, acquaintances, and coworkers. In short, the ways people spent time, as well as with whom they could spend time, were drastically changed. Many people turned to their relationships with animals to fill the new gaps in their social lives. Within weeks of the March 2020 lockdown, news outlets began reporting on an uptick in people adopting new pets or fostering shelter animals, while others chose to spend more time in nature, a “safe” outdoor setting where hobbies such as bird watching and other human interactions with wild animals could flourish. These anecdotal trends led to many research studies about how the pandemic affected HAI, but the results of these studies have yet to be analyzed in aggregate. The purpose of this study is to establish the interrelationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and human-animal interactions, focusing on social, behavioral, or affective measures, as reflected by articles published in research journals.

Methodology. This study is a scoping review, a type of knowledge synthesis that uses a systematic approach to characterize an existing or emerging body of literature on a given topic. As such, this study is exploratory in nature. Multiple databases were searched for articles related to HAIs and COVID-19, and the results were screened for inclusion on the Covidence platform. Analysis was based upon coding of the included studies for: type of HAI studied; demographics of human subjects; animal(s) of interest; aspects of human health/wellbeing or animal health/welfare studied; geographical location; and other variables.

Main findings. Two primary themes emerged. Researchers were quick to address how the human-pet relationship helped people to cope with the pandemic. Researchers also studied how the abrupt changes in human activity during lockdown phases affected animal behavior.

Conclusions. In the event of future social-distancing emergencies, the results of the studies included in this review can inform individuals, health professionals, and policy makers on purposefully leveraging human-animal relationships as a tactic to help people manage the crisis.

ID# 2 Women Companion Animal Guardians’ Contributions Towards Animal Welfare During Pandemic Emergency Response in Vancouver, BC, Canada

Dr. Haorui Wu

Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada

Women's health-specific contributions in the disaster and emergency response stage pertain primarily to family and community-based rescue and support-focused roles. As disasters affect both human beings and their co-inhabitants, comprehensive literature exploring women's contributions towards companion animal welfare in emergency response settings remains sparse. There is a need to engage the gender lens to examine human-animal welfare. COVID-19-triggered public health restrictions (e.g., lockdown and social isolation) caused diverse challenges relating to veterinary medical service access, thus establishing a platform for a nuanced understanding of women companion animal guardian (WCAG) roles in animal health and well-being during the initial COVID-19 emergency response period.

This qualitative research employs a semi-structured interview approach to investigate twelve companion animal guardians' experiences, challenges, unique needs, and lessons learned pertaining to pursuing veterinary medical services during the COVID-19 emergency response in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Eleven of the twelve participants self-identify as women, grounding the thematic analysis in a gender-informed approach to understanding human-animal welfare in emergency response. This research identifies three primary animal welfare-related roles that WCAGs assumed during the emergency response period: 1) Companion animal physical health caregiver, spanning from nuclear to extended families, and to entire communities; 2) Companion animal mental wellness supporter, associated with human-animal interactions in family/household, community, and veterinary clinic settings; 3) Companion animal holistic well-being advocator, utilizing various strategies at family, community, and societal levels. Understanding gender-specific animal welfare contributions in an emergency response setting not only narrows knowledge gaps, but also provides animal welfare-related public, private, and not-for-profit sectors with evidence-based strategies for emergency response planning improvements, supporting healthy and sustainable human-animal bonds in the current COVID-19 pandemic and in future extreme events.

ID# 3 Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Service Dog Teams in Academic Environments
Carson Squair, Dr. Linzi Williamson
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

As service dog teams (handler + service dog) become increasingly visible in public spaces, their presence in university settings has also grown. Despite the importance of fostering accessible and welcoming environments in higher education, research on service dog (SD) use in university settings remains limited in the current literature. While Canadians generally hold positive attitudes toward SD use, SD handlers often report encountering social barriers, suggesting a need for further investigation into perceptions of SD teams in specific settings. Gaining a better understanding of how peers perceive SD teams is crucial, as these perceptions can influence behaviours that shape the experiences and accommodation provided to SD teams in university settings. Thus, the goal of the present study is to explore the overarching attitudes and intended helping behaviours of undergraduate students towards their peers accompanied by SDs. Using a between-subjects vignette design, Canadian undergraduates at a prairie-based institution (N = 135) completed an online questionnaire. Participants were randomly assigned

to read a vignette depicting a SD team and responded to measures assessing their attitudes, emotional reactions, and behavioural intentions toward the described team. Results indicate that undergraduate students generally hold positive attitudes toward SD teams on campus. There is strong agreement that SD use is justified and should be welcomed and accommodated within university settings. However, participants exhibited lower levels of sympathetic feelings towards SD use. The findings suggest that while students generally support the presence of SD teams on campus, efforts may still be needed to enhance understanding and support for SD use.

ID# 4 Eye Contact and Smiles Matter: Canine-Assisted Occupational Therapy for Children on Autism Spectrum Disorder

PhD Mirela de Oliveira Figueiredo, Undergraduate student Fernannda Victorya Moratori de Freitas, Ms. Roberta Giampá Roiz, PhD. Lilian Magalhães
Federal University of São Carlos, São Carlos, São Paulo, Brazil

Introduction: Studies indicate that children on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have limited emotional and social skills, such as making eye contact and smiling. The lack of these skills impairs social interaction, communication, performance, and occupational engagement. This study aimed to analyze the eye contact and smiles of children on ASD during Canine-Assisted Occupational Therapy.

Methodology: collective case study with qualitative and quantitative analysis of pre- and post-intervention with four boys (two 3-year-olds and two 6-year-olds). The mothers responded to the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure pre- and post-intervention and in each session a checklist was completed to assess components of occupational performance and engagement, social and emotional skills, including eye contact and smiling. Weekly sessions, lasting 50 minutes, with activities with intentional incorporation of the dog, led by a Pet Partners registered occupational therapist. The sessions were recorded so that the checklist could be completed by researchers who did not participate in the intervention.

Main Results: From the first session, the children showed eye contact and smiles directed at the dog, which were extended to the therapist in the following sessions. As eye contact and smiles increased, they demonstrated increased engagement components (motivation and perseverance), despite functional difficulties in performance (fine and gross motor coordination, balance, attention, problem solving). They also demonstrated increased positive emotional and social skills such as voluntarily touching the dog, talking to the dog, and staying closer to the dog, which also extended to the therapist.

Main Conclusions and Implications: Based on the biophilia theory, it is concluded that the child-dog bond in the therapeutic environment favored increased eye contact and smiles, which suggests the other changes observed in the interaction with the dog and the therapist, as well as in the components of occupational engagement. Future research is needed to validate eye

contact and smiles as a measure of evaluation of the effectiveness of Canine-Assisted Occupational Therapy for children on ASD.

ID# 5 Fostering Connections in CAIs: Handlers' insights around how to optimize university student-therapy dog interactions.

Dr. Colleen A Dell¹, Ms. Freya L. L. Green², Ms. Alexandria Pavelich¹, Ms. Mikaela L. Dahlman^{2,3}, Dr. John-Tyler Binfet²

¹University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. ²University of British Columbia, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. ³Prescott College, Prescott, Arizona, USA

Research has established that interacting with therapy dogs can elicit improved well-being of clients in a variety of contexts. Despite the growing literature attesting to the benefits of human-canine interactions in canine-assisted interventions (CAIs), little empirical attention has been dedicated to understanding the mechanisms within these interactions. The aim of this study was to gain, through open-ended, qualitative prompts, handlers' insights around how to optimize client-therapy dog interactions. Handlers involved in two Canadian programs ("PAWS your stress" at the University of Saskatchewan and B.A.R.K. at the University of British Columbia; *N* = 62) completed qualitative surveys asking them questions about the bonds observed and connections facilitated between their dogs and the university students they visited with. Responding to the question "Is there something you do to facilitate a connection between your dog and the client they are visiting with?"; participants' responses revealed that handlers utilized a variety of skills or techniques. Prominent themes that emerged were that handlers would: 1) Encourage students to pet their dog and guide these interactions based on the dog's preferences; 2) Allow their therapy dog partners to work intuitively; 3) Encourage and give permission for the dog to approach the client; 4) Introduce their dog and share information about their personality; and 5) Adjust the interaction between dog and client based on the client's familiarity and comfort with dogs. These findings hold implications for volunteer handlers working in therapy dog organizations, as well as program directors or coordinators in charge of post-secondary and others CAIs.

ID# 6 Feasibility of Recruiting Psychiatrically Hospitalized Adults for a Randomized Controlled Trial of an Animal-Assisted Intervention

Dr. Lisa Townsend¹, Dr. Nancy R. Gee¹, Dr. Erika Friedmann², Dr. Megan K. Mueller³, Dr. Tushar P. Thakre¹, Dr. Sandra B. Barker¹

¹Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, USA. ²University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD, USA. ³Tufts University, North Grafton, MA, USA

Introduction: Evaluating the feasibility of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) represents a critical next step for advancing human-animal interaction (HAI) science. This study presents strategies adopted to successfully conduct an RCT comparing a canine-assisted intervention (AAI) with a conversational control (CC; conversation with a volunteer) and treatment as usual (TU) for improving mental health outcomes in psychiatrically hospitalized adults.

Methodology: We recruited participants from an acute-care psychiatric unit at an academic medical center. AAI and CC were delivered by volunteer handlers with and without their registered therapy dogs. Feasibility data included number of recruitment contacts, recruitment rate, and reasons for non-enrollment. We describe recruitment challenges encountered and mitigating strategies for successful study completion. Recruitment challenges included unit closures due to COVID-19, unexpected patient discharge, patients' intensive treatment schedule, and working with a volunteer workforce. Mitigation strategies included adaptable study team staffing and scheduling, flexible inclusion criteria, adjusting intervention timing to fit patient schedules, volunteer capacity building, and the strong appeal of therapy dogs.

Main results: Recruitment occurred over 23 months. A total of 264 patients were referred to the study and 72 enrolled. The sample size goal of $n=60$ usable datasets was achieved by recruiting 72 participants for an overall recruitment rate of 27.30%. A total of 27.30% ($n=72$) declined participation, 4.17% ($n=11$) considered participating but did not decide, 0.76% ($n=2$) failed study screening, 11.74% ($n=31$) were unavailable to discuss the study, 25.76% ($n=68$) were not study appropriate, and 3.03% ($n=8$) represented missed recruitment opportunities. The average number of contacts made to potential participants was 1.97 ($SD=.91$), range 1 to 5.

Conclusions and Implications: AAI may promote inpatient treatment engagement while easing the distress that hampers stabilization. Studies like this strengthen HAI science by providing a roadmap for successful RCTs and offering strategies for implementing these much-needed research designs.

ID# 7 Reevaluating Domestic animals' Role in Human Society: Culture, History, and Ethical Dilemmas

Asami Tsuchid¹, Miki Kakinuma²

¹Tokyo University of Agriculture, Atsugi, Kanagawa, Japan. ²Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University, Musashino, Tokyo, Japan

Research questions: The idea that understanding the role of domestic animals in human society leads to a better understanding of how domestic animals are treated within that society, and the question of whether it is appropriate to apply external standards to animal management despite cultural differences.

Proposed methodology: As a case study, this research examines Japan's history of livestock management, particularly focusing on cattle and horses. The roles of these animals underwent significant transformations with the introduction of Western culture (mid-19th century). Before this shift, cattle and horses were not used for food but were primarily utilized for farming, transportation, and as a source of manure. Ownership was limited to the wealthy, who rented them out to others (ISAZ 2024). However, with the adoption of Western practices, their roles expanded to include food use, cart-pulling, military applications, and horse racing. This transition also influenced breeding priorities where ease of handling was once essential for

agricultural use, larger body size became more desirable for military and dietary purposes. Additionally, the private keeping of dogs became more widespread in Japan following Western influence. These shifts illustrate how human-animal relationships can be dramatically reshaped by external cultural and economic factors.

Anticipated challenges and issues :As the functional roles of domestic animal shift, the qualities valued in them also change. Rapid transitions may lead to gaps in awareness or understanding of these shifting expectations, potentially impacting both animal welfare and human perceptions of domestic animals.

Discussion points: This study invites discussion on the historical use of livestock across different cultures and how these histories shape contemporary perspectives on animal management. It seeks to explore the implications of these historical shifts in the context of Animal-Assisted Interventions and broader ethical considerations regarding the cross-cultural application of animal welfare standards.

ID# 8 Incorporating Diverse Perspectives into the Conservation and Management of the Sturgeon River Plains Bison Herd

Mia Nemeth

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

The Sturgeon River Plains Bison Herd (SRPBH) is one of only two wild, free-ranging, unfenced herds still inhabiting the Plains bison's original Canadian range. The herd primarily occupies the sedge meadows and fescue grasslands in the southwestern corner of Prince Albert National Park (PANP), but seasonally ventures into adjacent agricultural lands, often causing damage to infrastructure and crops. Although various initiatives have sought to minimize the bison's impact outside the park boundaries, their activities continue to be a significant source of local conflict. Local landowners, eager to reduce property damage, enlist members of nearby First Nations communities to hunt the foraging bison. This has fostered a relationship that mitigates bison damage, cultivates social tolerance for the herd, and strengthens Indigenous-bison relations. However, the herd's population has significantly declined over the past decade, and differing views on hunting persist. The future health and sustainability of the SRPBH remain urgent issues, tied to Parks Canada's broader Plains bison conservation efforts. Despite the SRPBH's environmental and sociocultural significance, very little social science research has examined how the diverse stakeholders' perspectives, interests, and concerns intersect and influence bison conservation and management in this context. My research will investigate how the conservation and management of the SRPBH can better incorporate these local perspectives, concerns, and interests. I will employ ethnographic methodology grounded in in-depth interviews and participant observation with First Nations and Indigenous representatives and Elders, conservation staff, landowners, and local residents. These qualitative approaches will be supported by document and grey literature analyses and a broader survey distributed to the relevant areas. Anticipated challenges of this research include time constraints and potentially limited participant availability. Through this Lightning Talk, I hope to gather valuable

feedback and insights from social science scholars and researchers experienced in analyzing conservation initiatives and diverse human-animal interactions.

ID# 9 The Teen & Dog Study: Longitudinal idiographic assessment of adolescent-dog relationships and adaptive coping for youth with social anxiety

Nicole Mason¹, Dr. Linda Charmaraman², Dr. Jasmine Mote³, Dr. Eric C. Anderson⁴, Seana Dowling-Guyer¹, Erin K. King¹, Jordanne Brown¹, Evan C. Mingo¹, Rachael Sabelli¹, Dr. Emily McCobb⁵, Dr. Megan K. Mueller¹

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Introduction: Social anxiety significantly impacts adolescent development, and emerging research suggests that adolescent relationships with pet dogs may support youth adaptive coping skills to reduce symptoms of social anxiety. The Teen & Dog Study is a mixed-methods longitudinal study exploring the association between adolescent adaptive coping with social anxiety and their relationships with their pet dogs. This poster will present the study methodology and descriptives from the first year survey.

Methodology: The study will follow 500 parent youth-dyads across the U.S. over a five-year period, collecting longitudinal assessments of their physiological, emotional, and social well-being. Adolescents are eligible for the study if they are aged 13-17, have high social anxiety, and live with a dog. This study aims to: 1) Assess how youth-dog relationships contribute to coping with social anxiety over time through four annual surveys of both parents and youth; (2) Investigate family-level processes that enhance youth-dog relationships through qualitative interviews; (3) Examine how dog interactions influence adolescents' physiological responses, through ecological momentary assessment and measurement of electrodermal activity over a one-week period repeated 2-3 times annually.

Results: A total of 473 dyads have participated to date, with remaining dyads to be completed by February 2025. Youth primarily identified as female (59.8%); white (81.2%); and non-Hispanic (86.8%). Preliminary results revealed that pet-related affection ($M=22.4$; $SD=3.43$) and nurturance ($M=21.2$; $SD=3.94$) were the highest indicators of relationship quality, and secondary control coping ($M=0.22$, $SD=0.05$) was the most used adaptive strategy.

Conclusions and Implications: This is the first longitudinal study to examine how interactions with dogs can foster adaptive coping in youth with social anxiety. This study will allow us to examine the specific features of adolescent-dog interactions that impact mental health outcomes. Findings from this study will ultimately support the development of evidence-based interventions to support families and their dogs.

ID# 10 The Impact of Human-Dog Interactions on Stress Recovery: Influence of Interaction Methods and Relationship Types

Reina Nishiura¹, Hsin-Yi Weng², Brianna R. Kish³, Yunjie Tong³, Niwako Ogata¹

¹Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA. ²Department of Comparative Pathobiology, College of Veterinary Medicine, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA. ³Weldon School of Biomedical Engineering, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Introduction:

The health benefits of human-dog interactions have attracted growing scientific interest. This study aimed to evaluate not only the effects of human-dog interaction on stress recovery but also how factors such as interaction methods and the human-dog relationship influence these outcomes.

Methodology:

This presentation is part of an ongoing project investigating the human-dog bond. Dog owners aged 18–55 (dogs: 1–12 years) who volunteered to participate were randomly assigned to one of two groups, each experiencing two conditions in random order:

- Group A (Interaction methods): Comparing the two conditions of direct versus indirect interaction with their dog.
- Group B (Relationship types): Comparing the two conditions of indirect interactions with their dog versus an unfamiliar dog.

Participants visited the laboratory twice, with a 3–6 week interval between visits, to complete a laboratory stress test followed by their assigned conditions. Stress responses were measured using subjective stress scores (VAS [0–100%], with higher values indicating greater stress) and salivary cortisol (COR) at three points: before the stressor (T1), after the 10-minute stress induction (T2), and after a 20-minute dog interaction (T3). We hypothesized that VAS would decrease and COR would show no change from T2 to T3, with interaction type and relationship affecting these changes.

Results:

Analysis of 44 pairs revealed no significant differences in VAS and COR measurements between T2 and T3 across conditions. Group A showed a greater VAS reduction compared to Group B (effect size: 0.294 vs. 0.074), suggesting that interaction methods had a stronger effect on stress recovery than relationship types.

Conclusion:

The study analyzed the effects of human-dog interaction methods and relationship types on stress recovery. Preliminary results suggest that interaction methods had a stronger effect. Additional data collection and further detailed analysis will deepen our understanding of how human-dog interactions influence stress recovery.

ID# 11 What's the experience of getting a service dog in Canada?

Aliegha Dixon, Dr. Linzi Williamson

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Service dogs (SDs) are increasingly being trained to assist people living with disabilities. Despite this, the Canadian SD industry is unregulated, resulting in standards and practices that may differ widely between organizations. To date, no research has examined these practices, making it unclear as to whether the needs of both handlers and SDs are being adequately met. We investigated the experience of acquiring a SD for Canadians with disabilities. An online anonymous questionnaire was administered to 261 Canadians who currently work or have previously worked with a SD to aid with a disability. To acquire their most recent SD, 35% of participants self-trained their family pet, 34% received a fully trained SD from an organization, and 17% received their SD from an organization they trained themselves. Most participants (75%) required a referral from a health professional to receive their SD. Over half (59%) of participants did not have to go on a waiting list to receive their newest SD. For those that did, 35% waited less than one year and 37% waited more than 2 years. Most participants (87%) had associated costs for acquiring their SD, which commonly included the cost of the SD itself, veterinarian costs, and training. Over one-third (39%) of participants reported receiving no financial support for training costs. The majority (72%) were either very satisfied or satisfied with their primary organization. This presentation provides insight into the varying experiences of navigating the SD industry in Canada that range in accessibility and cost. These findings identify potential areas of improvement and success for SD providers as well as present the current landscape of the Canadian SD industry for policy makers. We conclude that SD organizations should collect and publish data related to the process of acquiring a SD.

ID# 12 A mixed methods analysis of experiences with a long-standing pets-at-work program

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Introduction: Pets-at-work (PAW) programs may be able to take advantage of the benefits of human-animal interactions to improve employee well-being and satisfaction, but research in this area is limited. Consequently, employers are often hesitant to implement these programs. To expand our understanding and support implementation of these programs, this study addressed the research question "How does a long-standing pets-at-work program influence the well-being of faculty and staff at a large midwestern university?" via a mixed-methods approach.

Methodology: An online survey was distributed to faculty and staff eligible to participate in the PAW program, regardless of actual participation status. The survey included validated measures of mental health and work-related well-being. It also captured qualitative open-ended responses regarding participants' perceptions and experiences with the program and participating dogs. Quantitative responses were analyzed via Welch's t-tests comparing PAW participants to non-PAW participants. Qualitative responses were coded via inductive content analysis.

Results: A total of 88 individuals completed the survey (n=23 PAW participants; n = 65 non-participants). Results demonstrated that PAW participants and non-participants were comparable across nearly all well-being measures, in alignment with population norms. Work-related vigor was higher for PAW participants at a level approaching significance ($p=0.058$). Qualitative coding revealed four themes regarding respondent perceptions and experiences with the PAW program and participating dogs: 1) an increase in social interactions, 2) improvements in mental health, 3) opportunities for physical activity, and 4) recommendations for program logistics.

Conclusions: While quantitative findings are not significant, qualitative findings indicate that employees perceive an impact from the PAW program on their well-being. This incongruency highlights the complexity of how dogs impact the well-being of employees and the need for further research to disentangle differences between participant perceptions and objective measures. Results also highlighted practical opportunities for program improvement, including equitable access and long-term program management needs.

ID# 13 Exploring Cognitive Dissonance of Meat Eaters Who Believe in Animal Sentience: A Phenomenology

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Introduction:

Researchers have identified reams of anthrozoological evidence suggesting deeply intertwined traditions between humans and other animal species, including the history of meat consumption. While meat consumption has been a cornerstone of humanity, contemporary discussions about the ethicality of farming and the meat industry have raised moral concerns about animal welfare. Animal sentience has been defined as belief in an animal's ability to experience emotions and cognition. For individuals who acknowledge animal sentience and consume animal meat, a phenomenon dubbed "cognitive dissonance" can occur—a psychological conflict originating from contradictory beliefs and behaviors. This study aimed to qualitatively explore the lived experiences of meat-eating individuals who believe in animal

sentience and examine themes of how they navigate cognitive dissonance during meat consumption.

Methodology:

Using a qualitative, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews. Participants were at least 18 years of age, residents of the United States, and self-proclaimed meat eaters (non-vegetarian and/or non-vegan) and believers of animal sentience. Researchers explored participants' insights into their meat consumption habits and navigation of cognitive dissonance through transcribed, coded, and analyzed themes.

Results:

Researchers identified several themes and subthemes that captured the behavioral choices, internal processes, emotional experiences, and coping mechanisms regarding participant consumption of meat from animals perceived as sentient. Themes included cognitive, social, and behavioral processes, including rationalization, social meat eating, and choice of ethically-sourced meat.

Conclusions and Implications:

Individuals that eat meat and believe in animal sentience employ a variety of cognitive, social, and behavioral techniques to navigate cognitive dissonance. As belief in and awareness of animal sentience continues to grow, understanding of the mental and emotional aspects of meat consumption will become increasingly pertinent. The thematic findings have implications for animal welfare and ethics, psychology, consumer behavior, and anthrozoological studies.

ID# 14 Human and Canine Behavioral Predictors of Adolescent Anxiety in an Experimental Setting

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Introduction: While the field of mental health interventions involving therapy dogs is growing, little is known about the mechanisms of change behind these interventions and the specific human and animal behaviors within these interventions that may support positive or negative outcomes. This study assessed if adolescent and dog interactive behaviors predicted psychophysiological arousal and self-reported anxiety for youth.

Methods: Data are from a randomized controlled trial examining the outcomes of adolescents aged 13-17 with social anxiety ($n=75$) interacting with therapy dogs in a controlled laboratory stress task. Dog and adolescent stress-linked and affiliative behaviors were coded using an

ethogram demonstrated excellent interrater reliability ($ICC > .90$ across behaviors). Regression models were used to examine the relationship between behaviors and changes in adolescent anxiety assessed through electrodermal activity (EDA) as a measure of psychophysiological arousal and a self-reported anxiety questionnaire (STAI).

Results: Preliminary regression results suggested that dog stress-linked behaviors were not associated with EDA change ($B = -.39, p = .54$) or STAI ($B = -.05, p = .94$) during the stressor. Higher levels of dog stress-linked behaviors were significantly associated with greater EDA recovery after the stressor ($B = -.91, p = .04$) but not with STAI ($B = .88, p = .09$). The final presentation will include full results from all relevant human and dog behaviors.

Conclusions: Findings can offer researchers and practitioners insights into adolescent and dog interactions within mental health interventions that are related to stress behaviors and mutually-beneficial outcomes. Identifying specific behaviors that may be linked to anxiety reduction (either supporting or inhibiting intervention effectiveness) can contribute to successful intervention design, as well as support practices that are mindful of animal well-being.

ID# 15 Investigating the association between trainer ratings and independent assessments of desirable dog behavior

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Introduction: Service dogs are an important aid to people with disabilities, but not all dogs are appropriate for this role. Past research has sought to predict these dogs' outcomes early by identifying problem behaviors. However, predictions of outcome might also improve by capturing desirable behaviors linked to success. We sought to create and validate a survey for service dogs in training that captured elements of sociability. If we successfully crafted the survey questions to capture the intended traits, then we anticipate survey responses will correlate with behavioral measures of the same constructs.

Methodology: Service dogs in training ($N = 394$) at Canine Companions® were tested on the abbreviated Dog Cognitive Developmental Battery (DCDB), which includes measures of interest in humans. We also asked the trainers of all dogs, as the individuals on campus who spend the most time with them, to complete a 5-item sociability survey on dogs' propensity to engage with humans. To prevent bias, trainers were unaware of DCDB results when they rated their dogs.

Main results/findings: Using linear models, we found significant associations between the DCDB Human interest task and two survey measures, "company" ($b = 1.09, se = 0.42, p < 0.01$) and "proximity" ($b = 1.06, se = 0.42, p = 0.01$). No significant associations were found between survey responses and the amount of time a dog spent gazing at a human in any task, all $p > 0.1$. Future work will analyze how survey responses relate to service dog graduation status.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field: Survey questions that correlate with behavioral measures may provide quick, informative metrics that can be implemented at scale. The additional information gained from such tools may then be used to set dogs up for success in a wide range of contexts, ranging from companion to working roles.

ID# 16 Animal-Assisted Learning in the University Curriculum: Canine and Equine Examples
Stephanie Freeman¹, Kate Beyer², Professor Michael Czuchry¹, Professor Robin Bisha¹

¹Texas Lutheran University, Seguin, Texas, USA. ²Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, USA

Introduction

This is a multi-method study that touches on two research paradigms: the paradigm of scientific research from psychology and the constructivist paradigm from ethnographic research.

It follows up an earlier study at TLU suggested that students in a composition class that had regular visits by a therapy dog had improved focus and more positive mood while the dog was in the classroom. In written comments, students reported feeling more comfortable making presentations when the dog was present. Students also reported feeling like the university cared about them because the dog was visiting their class sessions.

Method:

Grounded theory was used to generate a theory on how animal assisted learning courses develop self-efficacy in college students. Written reflections by 21 participants who chose to enroll in Dr. Bisha's animal assisted learning courses were used to analyze and collect relevant information to establish the theory. Quantitative analyses included two one-way MANOVAS, and One-Way Anovas.

Results:

The dependent variables (emotions, cognitive, planning, etc.) were highly correlated. While there was no statistically significant data found as all P values were greater than .05, an isolated effect size was revealed focusing on emotions and was found to be above .06, creating a moderate effect size. With this information is plausible with a larger sample size, a larger effect size could be generated. In this analysis, a visual inspection was conducted of box plots that lead to finding outliers that were removed from the analysis.

Conclusion:

Qualitative data shows how animal assisted courses offered at TLU fosters academic agency by giving the student a positive and meaningful experience, which facilitates development of skills associated with self-efficacy.

Quantitative data showed a difference in effect size between seniors and non-seniors, indicating a positive relationship associated with time and self-efficacy.

ID# 17 Understanding non-zoo visitors' perceptions in Hong Kong and the UK toward zoos
Tsz Ting Fok
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Introduction: There is a lack of studies on how non-zoo visitors perceive zoos and these studies from HK are limited. One of the problematic animal welfare conflicts in zoo management is how to create a balanced relationship between zoos and non-zoo visitors. Considering the major strength of zoos is utilizing the presentation of living animals in a natural context that facilitates human-animal interaction; zoos need to think carefully about the factors influencing public perceptions of zoo animal welfare. This research aims to fill the literature gap by investigating non-zoo visitors' perspectives on zoos.

Methodology: From April 2023 to March 2024, 10 online semi-structured interviews assessed non-zoo visitors' perceptions toward zoo enclosure designs for zoo animals and animal welfare. The primary guides were: 1. Demographics and zoo perceptions, 2. Role of zoos, and 3. Suggestions for zoo further development. Thematic analysis was applied.

Results: All interviewees were self-declared nature and wildlife lovers. Maximum variation sampling for educational background was used for interviews in both regions to ensure a diverse range of non-zoo visitors were included. Interviewees indicated that captivity is the root of the problem that hardly conserves wildlife and educates the public. Nine interviewees shared that they would not visit a zoo in the future.

Conclusions: Our findings partially contrast the previous findings that Chinese perceptions have distinct perspectives from Western, yet Hongkongers and British are concerned about zoo welfare standards. Despite Hongkongers who are Chinese nationals, they may have similar perceptions to those from the UK because of the history of colonization. More wide use of naturalistic designs and environmental enrichment can improve public positive perceptions toward zoos. Demanding transparency from the zoos is necessary. More zoos should participate in the animal welfare concern reporting process and non-zoo visitors should be involved in this communication channel.

ID# 18 Evaluation of dog training with survivors of intimate partner violence to improve well-being
Hallie Shean, Dr. Kristin Snopkowski
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Introduction: Prior research has found that abused dogs show a variety of unwanted behaviors, including increased levels of fear and aggression toward both strangers and dogs, persistent barking, hyperactive behavior, and strange behaviors. These characteristics are often cited by owners as a reason for relinquishing their dog. If these behaviors can be improved, there is potential for the relinquishment rate of abused animals to decrease.

Methodology: Forty IPV survivors and their dogs were randomly assigned to two groups: one group attended a four-week fear-free training program while the other group was the control group. A survey that includes the scales: C-BARQ, Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS), and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) were distributed prior to class, asking about dog behavior in addition to a secure base test administration. The participants went through a four-week training program targeting behaviors that are commonly cited after abuse. After the training program or four weeks, participants filled out another survey, with the three aforementioned scales. Changes in key indicators of dog behavior, general attachment, and well-being are compared across groups using multiple regression modeling.

Results: It is expected that the dogs behavior will improve so that they will be less fearful and aggressive with strangers and other dogs, that general attachment between the survivor and their dog will improve, and that mental well-being of the person will improve as well.

Preliminary results show that half of the participants, prior to the study, had serious problems with their dog's behavior. Participants also noted anxiety around strangers and new situations.

Principal Conclusions: The results of this innovative research project will be disseminated to women's shelters and animal shelters so that the benefits of dog training can be extended to more survivors of IPV, improving not just dog behavior, but also the human-animal bond.

ID# 19 The Relationship between Attachment to Pets and Grief of Pet Loss: The Effect of the Memorial Service

Ph.D Sayoko Hamano

Kyonan, Musashino, Tokyo, Japan

The purpose of this study is to find the association between attachment to pets and grief of pet loss, including the effects of the memorial service on alleviating grief of pet loss. A questionnaire survey was administered to pet owners experienced loss of pet within the last year. The owners were recruited at the memorial hall during the equinoctial ceremony in Tokyo. The research questions of the present study were as follows: The first section is comprised of 10 Items two factors (the emotional support and the nurturance facilitation role) in Companion Animal Attachment Scale (CAAS)(Hamano,2007) each on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), and 12 Items one factor (the depression) in Companion Animal Loss Scale (Hamano,2007) each on a four-point Likert scale ranging from one (disagree) to four (strongly agree). In the second section, there were open-

ended questions about the impacts of pet funerals. SPSS (IBM) was used for the data analysis. 49 pet owners participated in this survey. The two subscales score of CAAS served as the independent variables. The dependent variables were Items of the depression Factor. As a result of Multiple Regression Analysis, 'I can't stop crying when I think of my pet' showed a positive and significant correlation with the Factor of nurturance facilitation role. ($R^2=.58$, $\beta=.77$, $p<.001$). The main results by category analysis of the open-ended responses were; for Changes in feelings due to the funeral, "find closure" ($n=8$), "feeling relieved" ($n=6$). The more owners thought of their pets as children, the more they tended to grieve. This study found out that owners hold funerals for their pets, just like for humans, helps them to alleviate the grief of pet loss. The limitation of this study is that the number of people surveyed was small.

ID# 20 A Cat's Influence on Interpersonal Process in Teletherapy: An Autoethnographic Approach

Sarah Cronin, Angela Fournier

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Introduction. As an emerging field, the interaction between animals in mental health therapy has gained interest, but the specific impact of cats on the therapeutic environment remains underexplored. This poster of an autoethnography explores the role of cats in the therapeutic process, particularly focusing on how a cat's presence influenced a therapist's understanding of interpersonal dynamics in teletherapy sessions.

Methodology. Through personal reflection and narrative analysis, this study examined the nuanced ways in which a client's cat influenced the therapist's interpretation of the client's emotional state, behavior, and communication. The autoethnographic approach draws on both qualitative self-reflection and observations from therapy sessions in which a cat was present, offering an insider perspective on the subtle, yet significant, ways in which the cat's presence affected interpersonal dynamics. Data were collected through journaling and reflective writing of therapy sessions where the cat was included.

Main Results. Key themes emerged around the cat's role in giving clues about the client's emotional state. The cat seemed to be playful and distracted the client whenever the client became emotionally vulnerable. The therapist's history and cultural norms related to cats also influenced their interpretation of the cat's impact on the therapeutic process.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field. Findings suggest that considering the impacts clients' animals, particularly cats, have on interpersonal process in teletherapy could deepen insight into therapeutic practice. This autoethnography suggests that further research into non-human animals in teletherapy could expand therapeutic conceptualization and improve client outcomes.

ID# 21 The Role of “Tsukisoi-ken” for Children Undergoing a Forensic Interview

Ph.D Mariko Yamamoto¹, Kaede Fujihara¹, Lawyer Kei Hida², Dr. Yoko Maruyama³

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Introduction. Courthouse facility dogs originated in the USA and have been introduced in several countries to reduce the burden on children. In Japan, a unique dog program called “Tsukisoi-ken” (Japanese courthouse facility dog) is in operation, adapted to the Japanese legal system and environment. Note that at the time of the study, children could interact with the dogs mainly before and after interviews in Japan. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role that Tsukisoi-kens play for children.

Methodology: A questionnaire survey was administered to 18 staff members of child guidance centers who had experienced the service of Tsukisoi-kens. The questionnaire asked respondents for demographic, and 23 questions pertaining to the impacts of dogs on children and the staff, following the research of Spruin et al. (2020). The questions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (“strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”).

Main Results: 100% of the respondents agreed that the presence of a dog “enables children to feel more relaxed during the interview”, “provides a more comfortable atmosphere for a child”, “enhances the child’s emotional wellbeing”, and “allows the respondent to build a better rapport with the child”. The item with the lowest agreement was the presence of a dog “helps children think logically” with 27.8% agreeing.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: The results indicate that Tsukisoi-kens are very helpful in creating a better and child-friendly interview environment. On the other hand, the influence of the dog on witness credibility was limited, and further research is needed to determine the impact of the dog's presence during the interview as well as before and after the interview.

References: Spruin, E., Dempster, T., & Mozova, K. (2020). Facility dogs as a tool for building rapport and credibility with child witnesses. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 62.

ID# 22 Understanding the Lived Experience of Veterans who Work with Service Dogs

Kathryn Taekema, Dr. Linzi Williamson

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Introduction: An increasingly common complement to PTSD treatment for veterans involves the use of a service dog (SD). There is a lack of regulation surrounding SDs in Canada, which can make it difficult to research SDs as differences in training and access can lead to different outcomes for veteran handlers, and can prevent clear insight into the effect of the SD on their

lives. In this case, focusing on the lived experience of the veteran handlers can allow us to see the benefits of working with a SD, by allowing veterans to share their first-hand knowledge.

Methodology: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as outlined by Smith et al. (2022), was chosen as it is suitable for developing insight into the lived/living experience of the veteran handlers, allowing them to describe and make sense of their personal experiences with their SD and the overall impact on their daily lives.

Results: Veterans feel very close to their SD, expressing sentiments of unconditional love and trust, and close bonds built on mutual respect and care. Although not expressly asked about in the interviews, many veterans have brought up the need for industry standardization for SDs, in terms of training and regulatory protections, across Canada, to ensure that SDs are properly trained and that public access for SDs is protected.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field: Sharing first-hand stories of the beneficial impact of SDs on veterans' lives contributes valuable insights for research on SDs as well as offering hope and practical insights for veterans considering a SD for themselves. These benefits, and the negative impact on veterans from the lack of standardization, points to the need for industry regulation in Canada.

References: Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2022). Interpretative phenomenological analysis : theory, method and research (2nd ed.).

ID# 23 How do older adults in a rural community view the use of non-human animals in research; for consumption and as pets?

Dr. Ranell L Mueller

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Abstract

Introduction: This project aimed to compare older adults' initial attitudes toward the use and role of non-human animals in research, for consumption, and as pets, to their attitudes after having completed a six-week course on these topics. Participants live in a rural environment where farming and agriculture are a way of life.

Methodology: Participants were 11 older adults engaging in an educational course offered by the Flathead Valley Community College and taught by the psychology professor. Participants completed the Attitudes Toward Animals Questionnaire on the initial day of class prior to reading any of the assigned literature or engaging in any class content. Participants then completed the same questionnaire at the completion of the class, six weeks later. Participants were asked to read six literature articles that covered topics from animal rights, pet ownership, aging pet ownership, and animal welfare. They were also asked to read the book *Some we Love, Some we Hate, Some we Eat*. Videos watched in class included a short documentary on *The Night of the Grizzlies* and the entirety of *Food Inc.*

Main Results: A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-class survey results to post-class survey results. A small sample size of five was used due to dropout and non-reporting. Pre-class survey results indicate no significant change ($M= 2.65$) compared to post-class results ($M=2.75$). $t(4) = 1.32, p = .257$.

Principal Conclusions: There was no change in participants' attitudes toward non-human animals used for research; for consumption and as pets after engaging in the six-week course.

ID# 24 Understanding the complexity of pet attachment, social connectedness and loneliness for older adults aging at home in the community

Dr Catherine A Beaupre

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Introduction: North America's population is aging, and many older adults want to remain living at home as they age. Without robust social connections, older adults are vulnerable to loneliness. Loneliness is as detrimental to health as sedentary behaviour and smoking. Pets can provide social support, improving holistic health and reducing loneliness, through the formation of a human-animal bond (HAB). The aim of the study is to determine how pets serve as a meaningful social connection for older adults, and if pets might be protective against loneliness when living alone. Methodology: A One Health, patient-oriented approach, will be used to investigate the HAB, and social connectedness for older adults living at home in urban, rural and remote Saskatchewan and Manitoba contexts. A qualitative, interpretive phenomenological design will be used to characterize the HAB for older adults living alone, without robust social connections. We will be interviewing current pet owners, and non-owners who desire pets. Participants will take part in a 60-minute semi-structured interview. Twenty participants will be recruited for interviews, in alignment with data saturation. Participants will be asked open-ended questions to characterize the HAB, perceived benefits, and the challenges of aging with pets. Interview participants will be invited to return for a 90-minute member checking workshop to discuss interview themes, complete the *Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale*, *Lubben Social Network Scale*, and the *UCLA Loneliness Scale*— Version 3 as a form of triangulation, and to collaborate on group art piece(s) for crystallization. Results will be thematically analyzed in collaboration with participants and community partners as an additional form of member checking. Main Findings: Data collection and interpretation is underway. Principal Conclusions: By focusing on the priorities of older adults desiring to age with pets we aim to improve health and welfare at the human-animal interface.

ID# 25 Addressing the Human-Animal Bond in Generalist Social Work and Human Service Practice

Nicole Lang

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The Human Animal Bond (HAB) and its benefits and the barriers it may pose to pet owners are the subject of an expanding body of research. This presentation comprises a literature review that investigates the assumption that social work practitioners and those working in human services lack a comprehensive understanding of the HAB and veterinary social work concepts. The implications of this knowledge gap on clients are examined. Additionally, it discusses the scarcity of training available to address the HAB in social work practice and social service delivery. This presentation applies critical feminist, ethical leadership, and systems theories to establish a framework that redefines the concept of family to include pets and addresses the implications of the HAB in generalist social work practice, casework, and human services. It incorporates concepts from veterinary social work to develop an understanding of the HAB's impact on a continuum across systems and various client groups. It emphasizes the necessity of ongoing education and training in this field and focuses on the demographics that would most benefit from this conceptual framework. Practice application and strategies to address the HAB from administrative leadership and direct practice perspectives are also highlighted.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of the human-animal bond and how it applies to social work practice and human services.
2. Understand how the human-animal bond can be infused into generalist social work practice and human services at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.
3. Learn tools and strategies to address the human-animal bond in practice settings.

Keywords: Human-Animal Bond, Veterinary Social Work, Generalist Social Work, Casework

ID# 26 Leadership in Human-Animal Interactions and Human Behaviour Change.

Dr Darcy Bornemann

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This session focuses on the human-human aspect of human-animal interaction contexts. The workshop introduces and explores contemporary leadership models and asks delegates to investigate and debate the merits with the aim to form a consensus on approaches to leading the future generations of human-animal interactionists (for themselves, their field, or collectively). Often the focus is on the animal (which is important) with calls for human behaviour change. This sessions takes a step towards considering our own leadership actions in facilitating behaviour change in others.

There is an argument that human-animal conflict is really a human problem (e.g. humans upset with animal damage or human-human conflict) (Peterson et al, 2010; Gross, 2015). Brackzkowski et al. (2023) argue that resolving these conflicts are a pressing issue in global sustainable development. Managing groups of people is full of complexities from power dynamics and motivational strategies towards a goal. Sometimes leaders introduce sweeping legislation for societal conflicts, such as dog breed bans (e.g. UK XL Bully Ban (gov.uk, 2024)), or adopt a combination of activities along with individual community cooperation (e.g Tiger population

growth in India (Jhala et al, 2025)). Each context involved decision making about dangerous animals and protecting human lives but may vary in perception of 'success' of the outcome. It is imperative for human-animal interactionists to understand how to lead other humans, to successfully navigate problem resolution in relation to human- animal conflicts.

NB: This workshop follows a workshop proposal looking at leadership models in our human-horse relationships. They are both about leadership but this is human-human where the other is human-horse. I would like to write up the findings from both and would ask for consent from participants to be acknowledged as co-creators.

ID# 27 Interactions with Therapy Dogs and Child Stress Response: An Experimental Study
Dr Kristen C Jacobson, Isabel Jordan
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

Introduction. Findings on the benefits of interacting with therapy dogs on stress and well being have been mixed. Studies using rigorous controls and standardized measures are needed to better understand the heterogeneity of results across study.

Methods. This presentation reports on preliminary data from 95 children aged 8-14 who participated in an in-lab, experimental study of the effects of petting therapy dogs on mood and stress response. Heart rate (HR) and electrodermal activity (EDA) data were obtained via Empatica(TM) watch from a subsample of 68 youth (M(age)=10.6, SD=1.4, 50% male, 44% minority, 40% dog-owners) from a large urban area who completed 3-minute unstructured interactions with both a therapy dog and a stuffed toy dog. Interaction order was counter-balanced across subjects. Therapy dog interactions were videotaped.

Results. Paired t-tests examined differences in average HR and average EDA across condition. The difference in average HR was not significant ($t(67)=0.08$, $p=.64$). Inspection of raw data showed exactly half of children had higher average HR during the interaction with the therapy dog and half had higher average HR during the interaction with the toy dog. Average EDA levels were significantly higher during interaction with the therapy dog ($t(66)=2.05$, $p=.04$), indicating greater arousal; ~66% of youth had higher average EDA during the therapy dog interaction. Correlational analyses revealed that average HR during therapy dog interaction was associated with greater positive attitudes towards pets ($r=0.28$, $N=68$, $p=.02$) and minority youth had lower average EDA during therapy dog interaction ($r=-0.27$, $N=67$, $p=.02$). Coded child behaviors during therapy dog interaction, including touching, gazing, and talking, were not associated with average HR or EDA in a subsample of 55 youth.

Conclusions. The current study did not support the hypothesis that interacting with therapy dogs would result in lower physiological markers of stress in comparison with a control condition.

ID# 28 Human-Dog Bond Scale: A Pilot Study

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Introduction. Attachment scales, such as the widely recognized Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS), are commonly used to measure the human-animal bond (HAB). However, LAPS has notable conceptual and statistical limitations. Research on HAB underscores the need for more precise assessment tools. This pilot study aims to develop a short scale for measuring the human-dog bond, designed to replace LAPS in this context.

Methodology. A CAWI survey targeted dog owners via Polish Facebook groups. Participants (N=844; 724 females, 112 males, 8 other genders) completed the 23-item LAPS, the 10-item HDBS, and demographic questions. Scales were administered in random order. The sample is not representative. Statistical analyses included EFA, CFA, reliability analysis, and descriptive statistics.

Main Results. The EFA of 10-item HDBS revealed four factors with an exceptional model fit (RMSEA: 0.00520, 90% CI: [0.00, 0.0368]; TLI: 0.999; $\chi^2 = 11.3$, df = 11, p = 0.421), explaining 40.6% of the variance. Strong factor loadings were observed for items I3 (0.84) and I9 (0.73), though items I1 and I2 had high uniqueness or cross-loadings. HDBS demonstrated satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.744$). Since factor 4 accounts for only 3.93% of the variance, a 3-factor scale may be constructed by revising or removing items 1 and 2. CFA results indicated that HDBS had a superior model fit compared to LAPS (HDBS: CFI 0.969, TLI 0.946, RMSEA 0.0472, SRMR 0.0324; LAPS: CFI 0.827, TLI 0.807, RMSEA 0.0734, SRMR 0.0593).

Principal conclusions and implications for the field. This pilot study found HDBS to have a better model fit than LAPS with satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.744$). Despite the need for further refinement due to uniqueness and cross-loading issues, HDBS shows promise as a concise, reliable tool for measuring the human-dog bond, enhancing understanding of this relationship, and demonstrating a good model fit.

ID# 29 Co-creating Launching a Collaborative a Transdisciplinary Effort to Develop a HAB Human-Animal Bond Working Group within the One Health Commission

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One Health addresses the complex interplay between human, animal, and environmental health. However, it has been predominately led by veterinary and medical disciplines, focusing on zoonotic disease—transmission between humans and animals. One Health frequently overlooks social science perspectives, such as values, culture, and wellbeing. To bridge this gap, the One Health Commission established a Social Science working group (SSWG) in 2017. In 2024, the Human-Animal Bond (HAB) working group was introduced within the SSWG to emphasize zooeyia—the positive benefit of animals in human life—as a vital enhancement to One Health principles.

Zooeyia originally focused on companion animals, but can be expanded to working animals, wild animals, peridomestic animals, livestock, farm animals, and animals in captivity (e.g., zoos, laboratories) when the HAB is considered. The significance of the HAB in enhancing the health and wellbeing of both human and non-human animals (hereafter referred to as ‘animals’) is gaining increased recognition, particularly in recent years and notably since the COVID-19 pandemic.

We present a cross-cultural example of the intersection between zoonotic disease and domestic cats as integral family members. Data is emerging worldwide about cats transmitting zoonotic strains of avian influenza. Recognizing zooeyia, and specifically the HAB, is essential to mitigate potential adverse individual and societal responses for both human and animal health. For example, humans must receive clear and thoughtful communication about feline risks of avian influenza that acknowledge the HAB.

In our increasingly globalized, dynamic, and complex world, the HAB offers opportunities for sharing as well as gaining new scientific insights. Integrating the HAB with social science theories, methods, and intersectional analyses (e.g., social, psychological, cultural, economic), alongside mainstream epidemiological approaches, is enabling our working group to comprehensively consider global health risks. As an international and transdisciplinary group, we bring together Western science, Indigenous knowledge, lived and living experiences, as well as geographical, cultural, and more-than-human perspectives and worldviews to better address complex One Health challenges.

ID# 30 A Content Analysis of Canine Therapy on Youth in Juvenile Detention Centers
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Introduction:

Canine Assisted Therapies (CAT) have proven to be an effective intervention for the rehabilitation of adults within correctional facilities, promoting improvements in mental health,

social skills, and self-responsibility. This poster explores how these therapies can apply to incarcerated youth, a demographic faced with unique developmental and rehabilitative challenges. Youth in the justice system often struggle with trauma, emotional dysregulation, and a lack of stability, making innovative interventions critical to their rehabilitation. With over one million youth detained worldwide, there is a pressing need for effective strategies to foster their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Through the evaluation of existing research, this poster examines how youth in correctional facilities respond to CAT, providing evidence of their positive impacts.

Methodology:

Published findings from 2013-2023 on the topic of canine-assisted therapies within correctional facilities were reviewed to evaluate benefits and connections between youth in correctional facilities and CAT. Peer-reviewed articles included self-report studies, quasi-experimental designs, and qualitative research. Key research questions include: How do canine-assisted therapies impact the mental health, social skills, and self-responsibility of incarcerated youth? What factors influence the successful implementation of these programs within juvenile correctional facilities? Key terms included: counseling, animal-assisted therapies within the justice system, animal-assisted therapies in counseling, and counseling within juvenile detention centers.

Main Findings:

The presence of canines within juvenile correctional facilities fosters support, comfort, security, and self-care. Evidence suggests participation in CAT reduces recidivism rates and promotes the development of skills essential for reintegration into society. Training programs involving both youth and canines have shown additional benefits, including responsibility-building and emotional regulation.

Conclusion:

These findings emphasize the relevance of CAT within counseling and juvenile justice. CAT enhances mental health and social outcomes for youth while lowering recidivism rates. Future studies should focus on longitudinal research and cross-cultural applications to optimize these interventions.

ID# 31 The Impact of Therapy Dog Visitation For Emergency Department Patients with Mental Health Concerns

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Introduction. In Canada, emergency departments have a large amount of mental health and substance use patients passing through their doors daily. As such, our research sought to assess

the impact that therapy dog visits had for patients presenting with mental health and/or substance use concerns to a Canadian emergency department, as well as their significance for the staff working within the space.

Methodology. Working alongside an active patient advisory group and community-based therapy dog program volunteers, our mixed method approach utilized ethnography (60 hours institutional observation), surveys, and interviews over a three-month period. Grounded in a One Health framework and inspired by a critical qualitative health methodology, we conducted 28 in-depth interviews with patients and employed an affective coding method to this data, which was then triangulated with, and supported by, the ethnographic and survey data.

Results. Findings showed that therapy dog visitation had a positive impact on both patients and staff, thus improving the overall patient experience. Our study displays how the patient experience was impacted via improved communication; a decrease in agitation or distress; providing a sense of connection from non-judgmental support; an increase in hope and optimism; and a welcomed, calming distraction from local stressors. Further, staff also received benefit in their working conditions where they considered the therapy dog a member of the care team.

Conclusion. This work outlines how including therapy dog visits as a complementary support in existing provisional care provides a more holistic and empathetic approach to mental health and substance use responses in the Canadian context. This is particularly relevant in busy, high-stress emergency department settings. Further research must address the separate impact that the therapy dog handler has over the therapy dog-patient interaction.

*Please note our presenter/first author is a person with lived and situated experience, and a patient partner of the research endeavor.

ID# 32 The Supportive Role of Service Dogs for Canadian Military Veterans Experiencing Suicidality

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It is well-recognized that Veterans are a population at increased risk for suicide, but there are limited meaningful studies on the important role the human-animal bond (HAB) may have in reducing suicidality. Research has increasingly shown the viability of service dogs (SDs) as a complementary approach for military Veterans living with PTSD and substance use harms - two strong indicators for potential suicidality.

An original, exploratory study focused on how SDs supported Canadian Veterans living with PTSD and substance use concerns. Grounded in a social support theoretical framework, 28 in-depth interview transcripts conducted at regular intervals over a 16-month period were examined by employing an affective coding method. From this dataset, a secondary analysis

occurred to explore the experiences of four Veterans identified as being at high risk for suicide. The goal was to understand how SDs may reduce experiences of psychophysiological distress for Veterans.

Findings revealed the interactions that occurred between the Veteran and their SD had an impact on reducing many indicators that increase suicidality: foremost social isolation, hopelessness, and symptoms related to depression, PTSD, and substance use concerns. The SDs were reported by Veterans as the catalyst in reducing self-harm and suicidality, as the HAB provided a necessary form of social support that was distinct compared to what human-human interactions could provide. The SD was explained as the bridge that improved the Veterans' overall quality of life, and acted as an anchor to provide hope and improved optimism.

Our exploratory research examined the significance that SDs can have for Veterans experiencing suicidality which could be critical in helping reduce future suicide risk among military Veterans. Further, in-depth qualitative investigation of suicidality is needed, and the voices and perspectives of Veterans must be prioritized to better understand the role that SDs have in reducing distressing psychophysiological experiences.

****Please note our presenter/first author is a person with lived and situated experience.**

ID# 33 Unleashing Insights: Examining graduate student stress reduction and engagement in canine-assisted interventions

Dr. Christine Kivlen¹, Alexis Chargo¹, Ethan White¹, Dr. John-Tyler Binfet²

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Introduction: Canine-assisted interventions (CAIs) are known to alleviate stress and improve well-being across varied populations, yet few studies examine structured, multi-session CAIs for graduate students. This study evaluated the impact of a six-week CAI on stress reduction, engagement, and participant perceptions, considering demographic influences and observer-participant alignment in engagement ratings.

Methodology: 121 health sciences graduate students participated in six weekly 35-minute therapy dog sessions in groups of 3-5. Self-reported stress levels were measured pre- and post-session. Engagement was assessed through participant self-report and observer ratings of eye contact, physical touch, and proximity to the therapy dog. Spearman correlations were used, evaluating agreement between participant and observer ratings, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests to assess changes in stress levels, and Kruskal-Wallis tests to investigate demographic-based differences in outcomes.

Main Results/findings: Results revealed a weak agreement between participant and observer ratings for eye contact ($p < .01$) and moderate to strong agreement for proximity and touch respectively (all p 's $< .001$). Higher engagement in all domains, as reported by both participant

and observers, was associated with lower stress upon completion of the intervention (all p 's < .01). Graduate students' stress was significantly lower after completing the 35-minute intervention than before ($z = 9.45, p < .001$). Considering participant demographics - there was a significant difference in stress based on gender and race of participants (all p 's < .05), but not education level. Moreover, engagement via eye contact and physical touch, but not proximity, differed only by race (all p 's < .05).

Principal Conclusions and Implications for Field: This study demonstrated the efficacy of CAIs in reducing stress among graduate students, with engagement levels playing a central role. The importance of aligning self- and observer-reported engagement to optimize consistency is discussed. Findings are situated within the broader context of human-animal interactions and student well-being.

ID# 34 Claw and Disorder: Psychopathic Traits and the Human-Feline Bond

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Colloquially, cats are often regarded as having many traits indicative of psychopathy (e.g., arrogance, manipulateness, and selfishness; Shreve & Udell, 2015), but little is known about how these traits interact with owner characteristics to influence the human-animal bond. This study examined the relationship between owner and cat psychopathy levels and their impact on attachment and relationship quality. A large sample ($N = 1,411$) of cat owners from 57 countries completed measures assessing their own psychopathic traits (Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale, Short Dark Triad), their cats' psychopathic traits (Cat Triarchic+ Questionnaire), pet attachment (Pet Attachment Questionnaire), and relationship quality (Cat Owner Relationship Scale). Multiple regression analyses revealed that both human and feline psychopathy significantly predicted pet attachment patterns. Specifically, owner primary and secondary psychopathy, cat meanness, and cat human-unfriendliness emerged as significant predictors of pet attachment ($F(10,934) = 19.48, p < .000$). Interestingly, cat disinhibition positively predicted perceived emotional closeness, while cat meanness showed a negative association. Gender-stratified analyses showed women's attachment being predicted by multiple factors including secondary psychopathy and cat meanness, while men's attachment was only significantly predicted by cat unfriendliness. These findings suggest a complex interplay between human and feline personality traits in shaping the pet-owner relationship (Dong & Huang, 2023). The study provides novel insights into how psychopathic traits on both sides of the human-animal bond may influence relationship dynamics, with implications for understanding pet retention and welfare.

DEIB Posters

Key Findings from the Pet Education Partnership's Children and Pets Survey 2025

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Introduction:

This study, commissioned by the Pet Education Partnership (PEP) and carried out by YouGov, represents the UK's first nationally representative research into children's experiences, knowledge and attitudes toward pets and animal welfare. With limited prior data in this area, the study aimed to uncover how children aged 7–11 understand pet welfare, identify trusted information sources, and assess how lived experiences influence empathy and care behaviours.

Methodology:

A total of 1,024 children participated via YouGov's online panel between 7–29 November 2024. The sample was representative across UK regions, socioeconomic status and pet ownership. Children responded to structured survey questions covering pet welfare needs, perceptions of animal sentience, trusted knowledge sources, and previous pet-related experiences. Quantitative data were analysed for statistical significance.

Example Findings:

The majority of children demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of the Five Welfare Needs, with 95% agreeing pets need a safe and comfortable space. Pet owners were significantly more likely to view all welfare needs as important. Children with pets were also more likely to attribute sentience and communicative ability to animals, especially less common species like lizards and snakes. Key trusted sources included vets (53%) and parents (40%), though only 21% cited teachers. Notably, pet ownership correlated with greater empathy and willingness to help animals in distress. Approximately 1 in 5 children (21%) reported having been bitten by a pet, with dogs accounting for 44% of those incidents. Of these, 63% sought medical attention, and 7% required hospitalisation. The most common scenarios preceding a bite involved close contact, such as playing with, feeding, or hugging the dog - situations often perceived by children as affectionate, but potentially overwhelming or threatening to the animal. Interestingly, children with pets were more likely to have experienced bites.

Conclusions and Implications:

These findings offer foundational insights into children's animal welfare perceptions, revealing clear differences based on pet ownership, gender, and socioeconomic background. The data will inform targeted education strategies and policy advocacy within the sector, enabling the

development of evidence-based resources that promote lifelong empathy and responsible pet care in children.

Shared Care, Shared Space: Student Reflections on Mutual Healing and the Welfare of Campus Animals in the Philippines

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Introduction: Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI) in universities have largely focused on trained therapy animals, often overlooking the presence and potential of campus-dwelling or free-roaming animals. Commonly referred to as “strays,” these animals interact daily with students, faculty, and staff and are increasingly seen as informal members of the university community. In some Philippine universities, cats and dogs are embedded in the student life (Llaneta, 2018; Paul & Javier, 2014; Glorioso, 2025). However, their contributions to the mental health and well-being of students remain underexplored in formal programs. This study explored how students perceive these animals’ roles in supporting campus mental health and well-being, alongside the importance of ensuring their care and safety.

Methodology: This study was drawn from a larger qualitative study on the role of pets in the mental health and well-being among emotionally vulnerable students at the University of the Philippines Diliman. Eleven students (8 undergraduate, 3 graduate) participated in online semi-structured Zoom interviews. The researcher analyzed the transcripts using reflexive thematic analysis and applied a reflexivity framework to account for their positionality. Ethical clearance (CSSPERB_2024-034) was secured for this study.

Main Results: Two key themes were identified. First, students described campus animals as emotionally grounding co-inhabitants whose presence provided comfort, routine, and relief, often framing their relationships with these animals as mutual and healing. Second, participants proposed inclusive, welfare-centered interventions, envisioning structured programs that integrate campus animals into psychosocial support, provided ethical safeguards are in place. Across interviews, animals were viewed not as tools but as co-participants in a shared ecology of care.

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field: This study highlights the emotional significance of campus-dwelling animals in student well-being and affirms their potential role as co-participants in inclusive AAI programs. Rather than treating free-roaming cats and dogs as risks or nuisances, institutions are encouraged to recognize their therapeutic potential, provided welfare and safety measures are in place. Formalizing these relationships through culturally grounded, low-barrier support programs, especially in campuses where animals are already embedded in daily life, offers a context-sensitive model for interspecies care and mutual healing in university settings.

Navigating Climate & Culture Change: The 3C Pathway to Resilient Animal Care in a Shifting World

Shirley Ferber

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Introduction

Animal care professionals are increasingly challenged to provide welfare-focused practices amidst Climatic and Cultural diversity. These challenges require integrating environmental stressors and sociocultural constraints through the 3C Pathway framework, which was developed to empower meaningful adaptations, drawing on experiences in equine care in Israel, with resource availability, legislation, cultural perception, and communication barriers compounding diverse climatic stressors. This framework equips veterinary and animal care practitioners with effective, resilient strategies to navigate environmental and social changes.

Methodology

The 3C framework integrates animal welfare based on the Five Domains Model⁽¹⁾ and social diversities in perception, communication, and ethics through the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF), leading to overlapping resources and economics based on the APEASE criteria⁽²⁾. It identifies Climatic and Cultural stressors contributing to behavioural barriers (healthcare-nutrition, training, technology, and infrastructure), which are strategically addressed guided by the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW)⁽²⁾ to enhance caregiver Capability, Opportunity and Motivation.

Results

The 3C Pathway (Fig. 1) highlights the interconnected climate and culture challenges that impact animal welfare and socioeconomic factors through six stages. It promotes flexible strategies to enhance caregivers' capabilities, opportunities, and motivation for positive change. This framework empowers veterinary and animal care professionals to tackle expected and emerging stressors through evidence-based decision-making across all sectors, including companion animals, working equids, farm animals, and wildlife.

Conclusions and Implications

Integrating animal welfare with human behaviour models provides a strong framework to enhance resilience in animal care amidst climate change and sociopolitical shifts. The 3C framework promotes ethical, evidence-based, and environmentally conscious strategies for sustainable animal welfare in a changing world.

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Taming the Risk Narrative: A Species-Centred Model for Handling Wild Equids

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Introduction:

Across two decades of equid care, from domestic settings to conservation and zoological contexts, I observed a persistent emphasis on compliance within human–horse interactions. Even well-meaning practices prioritised behavioural outcomes over the equid's lived experience. This led to the development of the Holistic Equid Learning Plan (HELP) Model, exploring the central question: what might equine care look like if we shifted from compliance to collaboration?

Methodology:

The HELP Model was developed through iterative analysis of three equid case studies: a zoo-kept takhi (*Equus ferus przewalskii*), a free-living conservation grazing pony, and a domestic gelding (both *Equus caballus*). All interactions were guided by a horse-led approach grounded in structured observation, voluntary participation, and attunement to emotional and behavioural cues. Data included video footage, written observations, and collaborative session planning. The emergent themes of safety, trust, communication, and autonomy, were formalised into the Four Pillars of the HELP Model and operationalised through the HELP Wheel tool.

Main Results/Findings:

Across all three cases, equids demonstrated increased willingness to engage, clearer communicative signals, and reduced avoidance behaviours. Outcomes included microchipping without sedation or restraint, unrestrained hoof trimming, and voluntary human contact. The approach was effective across diverse environments and handling teams. Though qualitative in nature, consistent behavioural shifts, such as reduced tension, increased proximity, and exploratory engagement, indicated enhanced welfare outcomes aligned with the Five Domains Model (Domain 4c: human–animal interaction).

Principal Conclusions and Implications for the Field:

This study provides an innovative, context-sensitive framework for equid handling that centres the animal's emotional experience. The HELP Model contributes to welfare science by offering a practical, ethical alternative to conventional compliance-based methods. It invites broader application and further study as a tool for promoting relational, welfare-centred practices across domestic, conservation, and zoological settings.

Quality of Life in Cats and Dogs – Pathway to developing a standardized Questionnaire
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Introduction

Assessing quality of life is a critical practice in both human medicine and psychology, where it plays a pivotal role in guiding treatment decisions (e.g., Kane, 2006). This approach is equally relevant in veterinary medicine. However, the development of reliable tools for scientific and practical use in this field remains underexplored. From a psychological perspective, it is crucial for veterinary decisions to rely on valid and transparent benchmarks that are accessible to animal caretakers. To effectively apply the concept of quality of life to animals, a multidimensional framework is required.

Methodology

Building upon an instrument initially developed by veterinarians to assess the quality of life in pets, additional psychologically relevant dimensions were incorporated to expand its scope. Following two pretest analyses, the items were methodically evaluated and re-categorized. A factor analysis was then conducted on a full set of items (n=93) to identify underlying dimensions of the construct.

Results

The factor analysis uncovered distinct dimensions of quality of life in pets. Two solutions emerged: the first, based on 93 items, identified two broad factors, while the second, a refined 28-item model, revealed three factors. These were: (1) Interaction, Activity, Physical Health, Comfort Behavior (e.g., personal care), Posture, and Psychological Health; (2) Mobility and Physical Health; and (3) Psychological Health. Reliability analyses confirmed the consistency and robustness of the factors.

Principal conclusions and implications for the field

This study underscores the importance of a multidimensional approach to assessing quality of life in pets. The identified factors provide a reliable framework for evaluating physical and psychological aspects. These findings support the development of validated tools, aiding veterinary decision-making and improving animal welfare through scientifically grounded assessments.

Primate Anthrozoology in Action: Inclusive, Multisectoral Conservation and Knowledge Co-production in Brazil's Atlantic Forest.

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The critically endangered southern murequi (*Brachyteles arachnoides*) offers a compelling case for decolonial and multisectoral conservation and research. This work presents the institutional experience of the ProMuriqui Institute, a Brazilian NGO co-led by university-affiliated researchers and long-term local partners, combining academic rigor and inclusive conservation, in the largest remaining fragment of the Atlantic Forest.

We summarized 25 years of conservation and research strategies, funding records, and stakeholder collaborations. The analysis was organized around six operational pillars: (1) Long-term research; (2) Forest protection; (3) Educational outreach; (4) Capacity-building with local actors; (5) Policy making; and (6) National and international institutional partnerships.

Our model integrates different spheres. (1) Decades of longitudinal monitoring and research on wild murequi populations. Recently, we co-launched the Primate Anthrozoology Research Program (PARP) to foster global dialogue and comparative research on human–primate relations. (2) Habitat expansion via land acquisition supported by diverse funding (i.e., corporate, governmental, and philanthropic). The Institute owns 102 hectares of forested land—known as the Muriqui Ecopark—which functions as a green corridor for multiple species. (3) Educational activities—including guided responsible primate-watching, lectures, appearances on TV shows, and student involvement—promote awareness while generating revenue. (4) Capacity building through cross-institutional training, volunteer programs, and scientific dissemination. Local field assistants are employed long-term to preserve place-based ecological knowledge. (5) ProMuriqui contributes to strategic species action plans (e.g., National Action Plans), and (6) it collaborates with Carlos Botelho State Park to align NGO efforts with public policy, while key researchers hold academic appointments at Brazilian and international universities. Our next step is planning participatory eco-monitoring with neighboring Indigenous communities (Tupi-Guarani Mbyá).

Our experience highlights the role of locally embedded NGOs and diverse collaboration models in shaping international research and policy frameworks, especially in biodiversity hotspots where human and nonhuman lives are deeply intertwined.

The impact of sensory gardens on dogs

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Introduction

Sensory gardens (SGs), introduced in 1949 for visually impaired individuals, have evolved into therapeutic inclusive spaces near clinics and public areas. Designed to engage the five senses: touch/taste/smell/hearing/vision, SGs use vegetation, textured surfaces, and outdoor/indoor features to promote movement, play, and human-dog interaction. They may also support canine-assisted therapy, education, and recreational activities.

This study aims to identify sensory features in SGs that stimulate a dog's senses, examine their effects on canine behaviour and human-dog interactions, and assess potential hazards and safety concerns.

Methodology

A literature search conducted in March 2025 using Harzing's Publish or Perish (sourced from Google Scholar and PubMed) with the keyword string "sensory garden and dog" did not yield peer-reviewed publications.

A supplementary Google search analyzed the top 30 ranked results (4 Websites, 19 YouTube Videos, 7 TikTok Videos). They showed 17 (56.67%) public projects, 8 (26.67%) private projects and 5 (16.67%) demonstration gardens. These projects were for shelter dogs (23.33%), for disabled/elderly dogs (10%), pet dogs (23.33%) and for all dogs (43.33%). One SG was indoor and 29 outdoors. In 30% of SGs, dogs were leashed, one SG allowed both on/off leash..

Results

Popular features found in SGs were: 100% varying surface texture (93.33% grass, 56.66% sand, 50% wood chips, 36.66% pebbles, 16.66% stones or rocks), 90% features/furniture, (50% sandpits, 40% swimming pools, 40% wind-chimes, 36.66% water fountains, 33.33% wood blocks, 30% elevated platforms, 16.66% chairs), 43.33% dog toys, 70% shrubs, 33% trees, 73.33% herbs, 60% flowers and 26.66% cookies. Frequent dog behaviours observed were: sniffing (93.33%), running (96.66%), digging (73.33%), drinking (40%), swimming/splashing (30%), eating (20%). Three SGs displayed warnings about potential risks, and the need for supervision.

Conclusions

This study identifies the need for further research to explore the benefits and risks of SGs for dog behavior and wellbeing

Personal experience with animals, but not religious belief predicts the perception of animal mind and consciousness among Turkish university students

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Introduction: Belief in animal mind (BAM), consciousness (BAC) and human-animal psychological similarity (BHAPS) are central to how humans relate to nonhuman animals as they influence our attitudes and behaviours towards them. While beliefs about animal cognition vary, experiences such as experience with animals, dietary habits and religious beliefs are thought to shape these perceptions.

Methodology: We collected data from 136 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at a privately funded university in Turkey using the Qualtrics online survey platform. Alongside demographic information, participants evaluated three aspects of animal mental life: (a) beliefs about animal minds (BAM), (b) beliefs about animal consciousness, and (c) beliefs about human-animal psychological similarity (BHAPS) on a scale from 1 to 10. Linear regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive value of sociodemographic variables on BAM, BAC, and BHAPS scores.

Main results/findings: Across species, mammals were rated the highest in perceived mental capacity and consciousness, followed by birds and reptiles, while invertebrates had the lowest ratings. BAM ($M = 7.9$, $SD = 2.3$) and BAC ($M = 7.1$, $SD = 2.7$) scores were generally high, and participants had a moderate agreement on BHAPS ($M = 6.1$, $SD = 2.2$). Controlling for sex, experience with animals, and belief; the only significant predictor for higher BAM scores was experience with animals ($B = 1.380$, $p = 0.031$). For BAC scores, diet was the sole significant predictor ($B = 1.513$, $p = 0.029$). Nevertheless, no predictors significantly explained BHAPS scores ($p = 0.389$).

Principal conclusion and implications for the field: Our study provides preliminary evidence that human perceptions of animal mind and consciousness are influenced by socio-demographic factors in the Turkish context. The findings have implications for animal welfare policy and suggest future research to look into how cultural factors shape attitudes toward animals.

Social determinants of human and companion canine health in Los Angeles County: results from an NICHD-funded adolescent obesity research study during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction: We conducted an NICHD-funded R21 study on overweight and obesity among dog-owning adolescents in Los Angeles County during the COVID-19 pandemic. We focused on the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) affecting the adolescents and their family dogs.

Methodology: 149 adolescents participated with their dogs in a randomized controlled trial that evaluated an adapted health literacy Body Works intervention, with a canine health literacy module added for the intervention group, to increase physical activity among overweight adolescents by leveraging their attachment to the dogs. Adolescents and dogs wore FitBits and FitBarks, respectively, to record their physical activity. The human cohort's demographics were: White 8.9%, African American 3.4%, Hispanic 69.9%, Asian 6.8%, Other 11.0%. Among parents, 70.8% had high school diploma or below. 75% of the families had annual incomes “very low” or “extremely low” for LA County. The canine cohort was 46.5% unaltered, 57.7% male; small 40.1%, medium 37.5%, large 22.4%; mean age was 4 years (SD 3.4).

Findings: Adolescents: Pre- and post-self-efficacy on the dogs' daily nutritional needs for the intervention group increased from 61.8% to 76.4% (14.6%); vs. the control group that increased from 64.3% to 74.2% (9.9%); on dogs' physical activity needs for the intervention group increased from 74.5% to 81.8% (7.3%); for the control group from 71.4% to 80.7% (9.3%). The results indicated that for canine nutrition, the canine health literacy module had an effect while for physical activity, FitBark had a stronger measurement effect than the canine health literacy module. Parents: Most parents had concerns about their jobs, food insecurity, access to childcare, and safety of the schools. Limited access to veterinary care exacerbated challenges of dog ownership. A lack of Spanish-speaking veterinarians made veterinary care inaccessible for the monolingual Latino families. 46.5 % of the dogs were unaltered and unlicensed because most families could not afford to pay for the procedure and license.

Conclusions and implications for the field: A SDoH framework is useful for identifying factors contributing to inequities in health for human and companion animal populations, with COVID-19 pandemic revealing the interplay of these factors and their role in sub-optimal health outcomes.