



April 2019: Number 38

News and Notes From ISAZ



Early Bird Registration for ISAZ 2019
available until May 20th!



The 2019 ISAZ conference: Animals in the Public Eye: Human Interactions and Perceptions of Animals will take place in Orlando, Florida, between **1-4 July**.

Participants can also register for the pre-conference workshop on Research Methods and Data Analysis and Humane Education Symposium on the **1st of July** and the social event at the Living Seas Salon in Epcot on the **3rd July**.

Students: This year we will also hold a student mixer on the **1st July in the Oasis Bar & Grill** (poolside restaurant at the conference venue) from 5:30. The event is free of charge.

You can register for the conference and the social events [here](#).

On The Student Blog

The April Edition of Becoming an Anthrozoologist: The ISAZ Student Blog will feature work from Kerri E. Rodriguez, who works at the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine. [Check out](#) Kerri's work on the psychological and physical effects of PTSD service dogs: **Psychiatric service dogs affect cortisol in military veterans with PTSD.**



Meet the Anthrozoologist:

James Serpell



For the April edition of Meet the Anthrozoologist, we are excited to have a conversation with Professor James Serpell, Director of the Centre for the Interaction of Animals and Society at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the founding members of ISAZ.

Name: James Serpell, PhD

University: University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine

Location: Philadelphia, USA

Position/ Title: Marie A. Moore Endowed Professor in Animal Ethics and Welfare/ Director of the Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society

How did you start doing research in anthrozoology?

I started working in this field through a series of happy accidents. I was finishing a PhD at the University of Liverpool (UK) looking at parrot behaviour and I was looking at other research topics. As an undergraduate student, I

carried out a library project for the Institute of Archaeology in London exploring reasons for the domestication of dogs. I became intrigued by the subject of human-animal relations. It was really a barren field in 1979- there was no literature on the subject. I arranged a meeting with Patrick Bateson at the Sub-department of Animal Behaviour at the University of Cambridge and explained my interests to him. He said: "That's very weird. Do you know Peter Messent? He was in my office yesterday". At the time, Peter was a researcher at the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition. They were interested in supporting research into human-animal relationships. I later met with Peter and Waltham agreed to support my postdoc at Cambridge.

What was the focus of that research?

I did a lot of interviews with dog owners. It was a kind of sociological, descriptive research. I tended to focus on what was it about the dog that was attracting people, making them invest so much time, energy and in many cases money in their animals.

What are you currently working on?

I collaborate on a lot of projects that are spin-offs of the instrument we developed called C-BARQ (the Canine Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire). This research is going on everywhere: in Australia, Japan, Italy, and other places. It seems to have filled a niche in terms of collecting quantitative data on a large number of dogs from their owners. The C-BARQ and Fe-BARQ (The Feline Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire) are both online, collecting data all the time. I'm using these data myself to study things like breed differences or effects of the household environment on dog behaviour. I'm also exploring the same things with cats. I co-supervise a student in Australia who's developing an E-BARQ for horses. In the meantime, I've been more interested in the history of human-animal relationships and I've been writing about this more recently.

What do you think are your biggest successes to date? What are you most proud of/ happy that you achieved it?

Wow! It'll probably be the C-BARQ. It's being used by many researchers, often in ways I never thought it would be used. There is new genetic work where C-BARQ is used to phenotype dogs. They are finding a really strong relationship between particular areas of the genome and behaviour. It's also used by assistance dog organisations to evaluate their puppies and predict how these dogs will do. A number of shelters are using it to assess animals that are being relinquished. C-BARQ has realised more value than I ever thought it would, which is enormously gratifying.

How do you think the field will develop in the future?

There are hundreds of organisations in the USA doing animal-assisted activities, but the research base to justify this is still limited. The field is gradually catching up with the application. But, practically speaking, animal-assisted activities are hard to study. It is difficult to control for all variables that may confound your results. I gave up this kind of research because I decided it was too difficult.

A contribution that has helped to develop a stronger evidence base in this area and has given the research more credibility, is the involvement of the NIH (National Institutes of Health) in the USA and the partnership they developed with Waltham.

What do you see as the biggest challenges ahead of anthrozoology?

The field is under a lot of pressure from groups whose primary interest is to show that all pets are wonderful. The cynic in me says it's not just in response to public pressure-- corporate entities want to promote this belief to monetise it. The public is, however, becoming more sensitive to the notion that vested interest like this can affect the research. We see it in relation to

the pharmaceutical industry. If we are not careful to maintain the distance between the researchers and interest groups, the same could happen to research on human-animal relationships. It could gradually discredit the whole field.

It may be difficult to keep them separate from research, as a lot of resources and data come from these organisations.

Really difficult. If you're a young researcher, you need to develop a track record of getting research funding and a lot of it comes from these organisations. So what do you do when your research shows that having a pet or that this particular animal-assisted intervention is having a negative result? Do you sit on these results or publish and risk losing the support of the funding agency?

Years ago, I was doing research for a pharmaceutical company on an anti-anxiolytic drug for dogs, which was heavily marketed. Our results showed that this drug had only a mild sedative effect, which probably wasn't good for the animal. We sent it off for publication and the company that supported our work tried to block it. They paid for another study to disprove our findings. It's very rare that a researcher wins this kind of battle.

It's also important that the scientific or scholarly study of human-animal relationships maintains a separation from animal advocacy. There are groups that advocate for animals and use the research emerging from our field to support their positions. At some conferences people present research designed to prove that the situation is terrible and we need to do something about it.

Our field isn't necessarily any worse than other fields, but there is a danger of being caught up in these tricky situations.

What were the biggest surprises in anthrozoology for you?

How swiftly the field developed! There was something odd about it, almost like synchronicity. Shortly after my meeting with Peter Messent in 1979, there was a meeting of various individuals in Dundee, Scotland. It was the first ever meeting where we talked about what at the time we were calling the human-animal bond. That was the year that this whole thing happened. Some people attribute it to the findings of Erica Friedman's famous study in which she observed differential survival rates between pet owners and non-owners who had suffered heart attacks, because that work started coming out in 1979.

Even from the get-go, it was a multi-disciplinary field. There were vets, psychiatrists, social workers, and people from all areas. It's like we all stepped onto the elevator at the same time and it suddenly started to rise and pick up steam very, very quickly. A remarkable moment in history.

What (book/paper) have you recently read that made you excited about anthrozoology?

There are so many things! I've just been reviewing a new book by Phil Tedeschi and Molly Jenkins at Denver University. It's a multi-author volume, due to be published soon by Purdue University Press, that focuses on the use of animals and animal-assisted interventions with people suffering from psychological trauma. Much of it is still speculative, however certain theories are starting to crystallise as being very likely in terms of the mechanisms behind the remarkable effects of animals on people. It is also nice to see a strong emphasis on the welfare of the animals that are participating in these activities. I think that's a really important point- just thinking about human benefit in isolation is pointless. You need to consider the emergent characteristic of the relationship and how those contribute to the effects that we observe or don't observe. These relationships with animals are not going to work for everybody, they are going to work better for some than others.

Some individual animals are also going to be better at providing the benefit than other animals. I think the cases when animal-assisted interventions didn't work could tell us a lot about what's missing.

What advice would you give to students just entering the field?

Network! Get to conferences if you can and use them as a source of inspiration. Be receptive to what people are talking about. It will help you to generate your own ideas and think about topics you may want to explore. Get out there and if you have material to present, present it at conferences. I can still remember posters I read at conferences 20-30 years ago- it really made me think 'wow' and it stayed with me. Don't lose heart if your first grant doesn't get supported. Keep working on it, because funding is getting increasingly competitive.

At this point, what keeps you motivated?

There is new research coming out all the time that's changing my views about what's going on in human-animal relationships. I look forward to opening each new issue of Anthrozoos or other journals that publish research in this area. Seeing research in anthrozoology moving into the mainstream and mainstream journals like PLOS One is also really exciting.

What are you up to when not doing research?

I love cooking! I'm cooking all kinds of things, I'm fairly experimental. Right now I'm going through a phase of cooking a lot of Szechuan Chinese food. I'm also very fond of Italian food.

Meet the Anthrozoologist interviews are edited for length and clarity.

For Students

Are you a student who is interested in anthrozoology? Join the student [Facebook group](#), consider submitting to the [ISAZ Student Blog](#), or join the [ISAZ Student Google Group](#).

Students may be interested in Courses on Animal Welfare Science, Ethics & Law (CAWSEL) 2019. CAWSEL courses will take place in Cambridge UK, between 8-20 September 2019. Check out the details about the [four individual courses](#) here. The organisers welcome participants from all corners of the world and [grants](#) are available to fund attendance. **Early Bird rates and funding applications close on April 30. To book and find out more, visit the [website](#).**



Anthrozoös Featured Articles

[A Systematic Review of Research on Pet Ownership and Animal Interactions among](#)

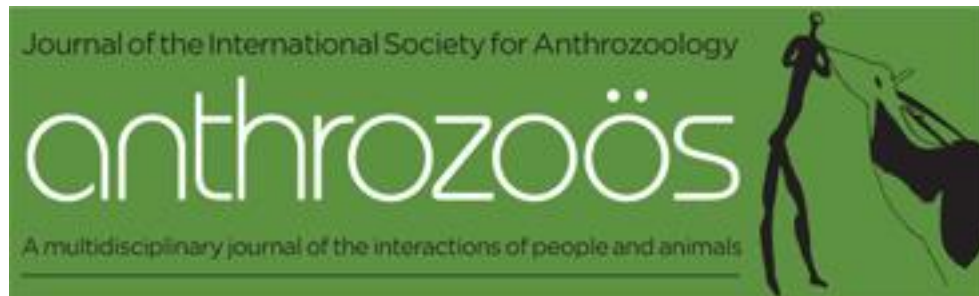
Older Adults

Nancy R. Gee and Megan K. Mueller

The study presents a systematic review of 145 publications on pet ownership and animal-assisted interventions for older adults. The review evaluates the quality of the evidence and reports that the evidence base in this area is stronger for interaction studies than for pet ownership studies. According to the authors this is not surprising because we can randomly assign participants to different interventions, but people prefer to select their own pet to own. Generally the results indicate that pet ownership or interaction appear to improve the physical and mental health of older adults. Further research is however required to develop a better understanding of the complexity of these relationships and help to explain why they may not work in all contexts.

The article and other articles in the themes issue of *Anthrozoös* "Human–Animal Interaction and Healthy Human Aging" are available as OPEN ACCESS sponsored by WALTHAM.





Opportunities and Resources

- Nestlé Purina Petcare Company 2020 Sponsorship For Human-Animal Bond Studies research is now open. To find out more and apply for funding, please go [here](#). Deadline for applications is **15th May 2019**.
- Postdoctoral researcher position: "Moving Animals: A History" at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, History Department, Maastricht University. Find out more and apply [here](#). Deadline: **7th May 2019**
- Finally, see [here](#) for a list of additional upcoming HAI Funding Opportunities.

Become an ISAZ Member!

Not an ISAZ member? Find [applications for membership](#) on the ISAZ website:
<http://www.isaz.net/isaz/membership/>.



Membership benefits include:

- Six (6) issues per year (starting 2018) of *Anthrozoös*; the leading journal on human-animal interactions and relationships;
- Online access to the full back catalog of *Anthrozoös*;
- Eligibility for membership in the ISAZ listserv;
- Access to the Society's annual membership directory;
- Substantially reduced registration fees for all ISAZ conferences; and
- A 30% discount on books published by Routledge.

Follow us on social media!



Twitter: [@ISAZOfficial](https://twitter.com/ISAZOfficial)

Facebook: [ISAZ International Society for Anthrozoology](#) and
[ISAZ Student Members](#)
