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News & Notes from ISAZ



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A Message from ISAZ President - Michelle Szydlowski



Welcome to fall!

Your ISAZ board and administrative team have been hard at work meeting in teams and committees, with our Paris conference hosting team, and as a full board to move the work of the society forward. Speaking of Paris, I am excited that the time for submissions for our 2026 conference are just around the corner! I encourage everyone to submit an abstract for a poster, presentation, workshop, or symposium. What an amazing opportunity to highlight the diverse array of research undertaken by ISAZ members.

Our society's goals include interaction with and support of other anthrozoologically-focused organizations. This newsletter features work done by Philip Tedeschi and the team at the University of Denver's Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection (IASP). This work highlights the need to recognize the sentience and ethical significance of individuals participating in AAS. This rethinking of what really constitutes 'good welfare' for participants from various species was long overdue. This work is vital to the promotion of individual flourishing in AAS through the acknowledgment of the need for choice, expression of agency, and fulfilment of emotional needs.

Lastly, I am pleased to announce that one of our newest board members, Mary Elizabeth Rauktis, has agreed to lead our continuing efforts to increase inclusivity at ISAZ conferences, in our media, and in our membership. We have made strides by expanding our membership categories to better serve early career scholars and retirees, and by offering discounted membership fees for researchers in categories defined by the World Bank ([see our website for details here](#)). Mary Elizabeth is looking for a small team of volunteers to assist her efforts. If you have an interest in promoting inclusion and belonging in ISAZ, please reach out to Mary Elizabeth at mar104@pitt.edu.

Wishing you moments of inspiration and awe,

Michelle Szydlowsk



UNIVERSITY OF DENVER INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL SENTIENCE & PROTECTION

Time for a Paradigm Shift in Animal-Assisted Services? The Imperative for Sentience-Centered Practice

A global initiative is emerging within the field of Animal-Assisted Services (AAS) to protect the human-animal bond and bolster ethical frameworks for effective practice. Arising from a presentation workshop at the 2025 International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) conference, the University of Denver's Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection (IASP) is establishing a formal Declaration of Animal Sentience for the field of AAS in collaboration with IAHAIO. This global declaration advances a paradigm shift toward a relational view of animals and greater sentience awareness in AAS practice. In this article, we outline the rationale, core principles, and implications of this proposed paradigm shift to demonstrate how the evidence-based treatment of animals as sentient beings is both a moral necessity and a core competency for the integrity, efficacy, and long-term sustainability of AAS.

The Rationale: Moving Beyond an Anthropocentric Framework

Historically, the field of AAS has confronted the inherent risk of operating under an anthropocentric model with limited protections for the nonhuman animals involved focused on the 5 Freedoms of Animal Welfare (freedom from hunger/thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain/injury/disease, freedom to express normal behavior, and freedom from fear and distress), which do not adequately provide for the social, intellectual, and full well-being of sentient animals. This led to the adoption of the more comprehensive concept of the Five Domains Model (nutrition, environment, health, behavior, and mental state) as a significant improvement. This model shifts the focus from mere "freedom from" negatives to a more holistic assessment that includes the promotion of positive welfare states. However, its application in AAS remains limited, as it often still functions within a utilitarian paradigm where animals are incorporated into services for human benefit without comprehensive consideration of their needs as sentient beings. As the application of AAS expands into increasingly complex therapeutic contexts, the urgency for a robust, systemic ethical framework that fully operationalizes these advanced welfare concepts becomes paramount.

Concern has emanated around utilitarian practices where animals are incorporated into services for human benefit without comprehensive consideration for their needs as sentient beings. As the application of AAS expands into increasingly complex therapeutic contexts, the urgency for a robust, systemic ethical framework becomes paramount.

The convergence of empirical evidence from cognitive ethology and neuroscience, alongside landmark ethical advancements such as the [New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness \(2024\)](#), provides an incontrovertible case for animal sentience. This scientific consensus, coupled with enduring Indigenous and cultural wisdoms, creates an unprecedented mandate for the field to align its practices with this evidence to maintain professional competency and integrity. The goal is to move beyond a welfare model focused on the mitigation of harm or limited assessments of welfare toward an ethical model predicated on mutual flourishing—a concept powerfully echoed in the latest edition of the Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy (2025 pg 252), which advocates for a code of ethics valuing the well-being of animal participants at least as highly as human benefit.

Core Principles of a Sentience-Centered Framework

The proposed declaration establishes a set of interconnected principles designed to redefine the human-animal relationship within AAS. These principles collectively argue for a foundational reconceptualization of practice.

The framework begins by affirming the capacity for conscious experience in a wide range of species, establishing sentience as the ontological bedrock for all subsequent human-animal interaction. It calls for an ethical structure grounded in the recognition of species-specific entitlements, individual value, and bi-directional wellness to ensure that the well-being of nonhuman participants is centered as a co-equal priority to human gain. A critical operational tenet is the formal recognition of animals as active participants in AAS, which necessitates respecting their agency. This mandates that professionals engage in ongoing assessment of an animal’s willingness to work, providing clear opportunities for assent or withdrawal from interactions. Ultimately, the framework endorses the view that animals possess complex cognitive and emotional lives, and the goal of AAS must be to transcend minimum welfare standards to actively nurture an animal’s capacity for joy, engagement, and a life of fulfillment beyond their working role.

Implications for Practice

The adoption of a sentience-centered practice framework carries profound implications for the entire AAS ecosystem. Academic institutions must integrate the science of animal sentience and cognition into curricula to prepare future professionals. Research agendas must expand to investigate the impacts of sentience-informed practices on both human and animal outcomes. For practitioners and organizations, implementation requires concrete changes: redesigning intervention protocols to incorporate animal choice, educating human participants on animal needs for healthy interactions, developing rigorous tools to monitor well-being, and establishing clear policies on work schedules and lifelong care.

This declaration represents a pivotal moment for Human-Animal Interaction (HAI). It invites stakeholders to co-create a future for AAS that is ethically consistent, scientifically informed, and just for all sentient beings involved. Centering sentience in AAS can elevate therapeutic value for humans and, as indicated by the new science on AAS and interpersonal neurobiology, is in fact, a foundational necessity for the human-animal bond (Tedeschi, Jenkins 2019 Transforming Trauma: Resiliency and Healing Through our Connection with Animals. See Bio-affiliative and Neuroceptive Safety), ensuring safety, respect, and reciprocity in professional practice.

Review the [full declaration](#) and consider adding your support.

Philip Tedeschi

On Behaf of the IASP Sentience Working Group

Global Participation Enlivens Mentor–Mentee Program

Building on the success of last year’s initiative, the Mentor–Mentee Program was held once again at ISAZ 2025. On Saturday, June 21, the “Mentor–Mentee Meet-Up” took place during the lunch break.

This year’s 25 mentees represented a global community of researchers and graduate students—not only from Canada, but also from Spain, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, and the United States—ranging in age from their twenties to sixties. Many were new to this research field, and for first-time attendees or those with few

acquaintances, the opportunity to connect with mentors and fellow mentees in advance was particularly meaningful. Participants who were unable to attend in person could also register for mentoring via mail. Notably, one mentee from last year returned this year as a mentor, reflecting the program's growing continuity and sense of academic community.

During the lunch session, several board members joined spontaneously, exchanging ideas with participants and further energizing the atmosphere. Attendees shared comments such as, "I was happy to have contacted my mentor beforehand," "I am thrilled to have this honor," and "It was wonderful to talk in such a relaxed atmosphere."

Some participants suggested holding the meet-up on the first day of next year's conference to promote early networking. Recruitment for the 2026 program will begin around March, and we warmly welcome your participation in this expanding global community.

ISAZ 2026 Conference Updates



ISAZ 2026 CONFERENCE

JULY 1-3, 2026

Paris, France

CONFERENCE WEBSITE,
CALL FOR ABSTRACTS, ISAZ AWARDS,
& FELLOWS NOMINATIONS
COMING **DECEMBER 1!**

Are You Interested in Hosting a Future Conference?

Are you interested in hosting a future ISAZ conference? We'd love to hear from you to schedule an exploratory discussion! Reach out to Abbey Thigpen, adm.manager@isaz.net, to start the conversation

Journal of the International Society for Anthrozoology

Anthrozoös

A multidisciplinary journal of the interactions
between people and other animals

Featured Articles

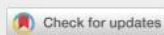
Research Articles

Parents' Experiences and Challenges in Communicating Pet Loss to Their Children

Ciro De Vincenzo , Erika Iacona, Matteo Rigo , Margherita Golia, Elena Uda, Marta Brscic  & ...show all

Pages 915-932 | Published online: 05 Aug 2025

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2025.2537510>



Research Articles

Challenges and Benefits of Cat Fostering: A Focus Group Study With Volunteer Cat Fosterers in Aotearoa New Zealand

Christine Roseveare , Ágnes Szabó, Ann Weatherall, Chelsey Gardiner, Charm Phear & Anne M. Haase

Pages 779-794 | Published online: 02 Apr 2025

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2025.2476294>



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Interested in submitting your work to Anthrozoös? [Click here.](#)

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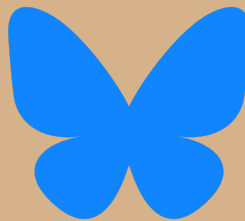


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 - Online access to the full back catalog of Anthrozoös
 - Eligibility for membership in the ISAZ listserv
 - Access to the Society's annual membership directory
 - Substantially reduced registration fees for all ISAZ conferences
 - A 30% discount on books published by Routledge
-

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For your safety and privacy, please remember to avoid sharing any personal information, such as addresses, phone numbers, or financial details, unless you have verified the recipient's identity. It's always best to exercise caution and ensure that you are communicating with trusted individuals or entities before exchanging any sensitive information.

Thank you for helping to keep our community secure!

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