



SJDAWC NEWS

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SIR JAMES DUNN ANIMAL WELFARE CENTRE *Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island*



PROMOTING ANIMAL WELFARE THROUGH RESEARCH, SERVICE, AND EDUCATION



UNIVERSITY
of Prince Edward
ISLAND



ANIMAL WELFARE IN PRACTICE SYMPOSIUM: THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF ANIMAL WELFARE FALL 2024



For our 19th Animal Welfare in Practice symposium, we will invite speakers to discuss the human dimension of animal welfare. People play a critical role in the welfare of animals as they make important decisions for care, housing, management, and many other facets of animal life. In this symposium, we will cover methods used to assess the role of veterinarians and caretakers in animal welfare, as well as strategies to enhance client communication about these issues. The symposium will be open to all, with a focus on veterinary students, veterinary technicians, and practicing veterinarians. Stay tuned!



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The snow has melted in Prince Edward Island, and we are looking forward to summer being just around the corner. We have a lot of exciting news to share with you, including a big congratulations to all the students who participated in the 2023 Animal Welfare Assessment Contest for bringing home five awards.

We were also thrilled to host Dr. Karen Overall again for a webinar series dedicated to discussing post-pandemic issues in veterinary behavioural medicine. This series is always popular and attracts attendees from across the globe.

This year, we awarded funding to three excellent projects through our grant competition that will focus on improving the welfare of donkeys in Kenya, beef cattle, and homeless animals in Atlantic Canada.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact us at animalwelfare@upei.ca to receive the newsletter (in full colour) by email and to be added to our email list for occasional upcoming events.

To learn how you can support the Centre, please go to awc.upei.ca

or write to:

The Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre
Atlantic Veterinary College
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Avenue
Charlottetown, PEI, Canada C1A 4P3

All donations are tax deductible.

2024 WEBINAR SERIES

For the 9th year of our annual webinar series, the SJDAWC hosted Dr. Karen Overall, MB, VMD, PhD, DACV, who discussed topics related to post-pandemic issues in veterinary behavioural medicine. The series attracted veterinarians, technicians, and students from around the world to learn about this important topic.



Check out Dr. Overall's interview about this topic on CBC Radio:

www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-30-island-morning/clip/16048842-how-pets-managing-post-pandemic-world

MARCH 12 | WEBINAR 1

EARLY EXPOSURE AND EXPERIENCE IN DOGS: SORTING THROUGH MYTH TO SEE WHAT MATTERS

In the first webinar, Dr. Overall described research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on dogs and their owners. For example, many dog owners reported behavioural changes in their dogs that were consistent with stress, but dogs with pre-existing behavioural problems were the most negatively affected.



Surprisingly, many of the studies reported an overall decline in behavioural problems in dogs during the pandemic. One reason for this is that dog owners were able to spend more time with and provide more attention to their pets, reducing common behavioural issues such as separation-related behaviours.

However, one important problem that arose during the pandemic was an increase in dog bites. The number of children presenting with dog bites rose during the pandemic, possibly due to heightened emotions, decreased exercise, and increased closeness between dogs and their owners. Dr. Overall strongly recommends that children are always supervised when they are with dogs, especially when they are in close quarters.

MARCH 19 | WEBINAR 2

WHAT CAN BEHAVIOURAL TESTING TELL US ABOUT NEUROBEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT IN HOMELESS KITTENS?

In the second webinar, Dr. Overall focused on the effects of the pandemic on cats. She described several research studies that suggested cats fared slightly better than dogs during the pandemic, likely because they received more attention from their owners and were already accustomed to spending most of their time indoors.

The studies also revealed that owners realized they benefited from interacting with their cats, and that the cats sought more attention (and benefited from it). Interestingly, cats seemed to fare best if they had other cats to live with, suggesting that social companionship with other cats is important.

MARCH 26 | WEBINAR 3

WHAT'S NEW AND HOT IN VETERINARY BEHAVIOUR LITERATURE

In the final webinar, Dr. Overall reviewed some of the latest literature in veterinary behavioural medicine, including the following highlights:

- **Surveys or videos?** Researchers often use surveys to pet owners to ask about behavioural problems. A recent study compared cat behaviours reported by owners to actual videos of the cats and found that some behaviours were consistent, but many of the behaviours captured in videos were not picked up by owners.¹
- **Citizen science.** A novel way of collecting data for research projects is to involve people outside of science. For example, researchers gave pet owners instructions on how to video record their own cats during two tasks: playing with a wand and feeding. Behavioural data from the cats were then coded by the researchers and used for their study.²
- **Pet ownership and well-being?** Researchers studied how pet owners reported their perceived stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, pet ownership seems to have positive effects on well-being during the pandemic, although cat owners consistently report higher stress levels than dog owners.³

¹ Van Belle et al. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* (2023);

² Fukimoto et al. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* (2023);

³ Ogata et al. *PLOS One* (2023)



Sir James Dunn
Animal Welfare Centre
2024 WEBINARS

Post-Pandemic Issues in
**VETERINARY
BEHAVIOUR**

WITH DR. KAREN OVERALL

www.awc.upei.ca/webinars



To view previous webinars, please
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or visit their website:
awc.upei.ca/behavioural-medicine/

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SJDAWC

STUDENTS PRESENT AT HUMANE CANADA SUMMIT



L-R: Dr. Katy Proudfoot, Dr. Jenn Vernick, Megan Ross, and Sherry Khoddami

The 2024 Humane Canada Summit took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from May 5–7. Three AVC students gave presentations during a session focused on research funded through the SJDAWC.

Dr. Jenn Vernick, a current resident at the AVC Behavioural Medicine Program under the supervision of Dr. Karen Overall, started the session by presenting her research on homeless kittens on Prince Edward Island. Jenn's research identified the negative effects of maternal

deprivation, poor nutrition, and early exposure to stress on kittens, which will likely affect their behaviour as adults.

Next to present was Megan Ross, a PhD student under the supervision of Dr. Caroline Ritter. Megan's research has used social science to understand animal welfare challenges for horses on Prince Edward Island. One theme that has arisen from her work is that many horse owners may not recognize animal welfare issues with their horses. For example, many owners see overweight horses as being happy and having a good life when these horses may be at high risk of painful conditions.

Sherry Khoddami, a master's student with Dr. Katy Proudfoot, ended the session with a presentation on her research exploring the relationship between the well-being of veterinary students and the quality of life of animals used in veterinary education. Through a series of focus groups with fourth-year veterinary students, Sherry identified that the welfare of animals used in education was closely tied to students' well-being and their ability to learn new concepts effectively.



Dr. Obianuju Joy Eze

Dr. Obianuju Joy Eze is a graduate of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu state, Nigeria. She is from the Igbo tribe in the southeastern part of Nigeria, West Africa.

SJDAWC WELCOMES NEW GRADUATE STUDENT

Joy enrolled in the Animal Welfare MSc program in the AVC Department of Health Management and is supervised by Dr. Micheal Cockram, Chair in Animal Welfare. Her research aims to identify potential welfare issues in Nigeria and approaches to enhance animal welfare in Nigeria.

During her experience as a veterinarian in Nigeria, Joy observed cases of inadequate feeding, poor health care, and mistreatment of animals. There is low understanding of animal welfare in Nigeria and poor implementation of all

aspects of animal care. Many aspects of animal husbandry and welfare in Nigeria differ from those in Canada.

Joy's research will investigate the types, severity, and prevalence of some of the main animal welfare issues in Nigeria. Methods to evaluate animal welfare infrastructure, practice, and issues at a national level will be developed and then reported upon for Nigeria. Potential strategies to enhance animal welfare appropriate for implementation in Nigeria will be researched and discussed, and proposals developed.

PROJECTS FUNDED IN 2024

Each year the SJDAWC provides funding to support research, integrated, and service projects that aim to improve the lives of animals in Prince Edward Island and abroad. For the 2024 cycle, we funded three projects covering diverse topics related to animal welfare. To learn more about this funding opportunity, visit our website at awc.upei.ca/grant-competition/

IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF WORKING DONKEY HARNESS IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA, THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

M. Mellish, C. Ritter, J. VanLeeuwen



The goal of this new research project is to decrease pain and breathlessness in draft donkeys in Kenya through the development and trial of a novel harness. To reach this goal, the researchers will identify challenges and motivations of donkey drivers to the use of a more welfare-friendly harness; develop a method to easily construct the harness through a template and sourcing local materials; support the use of the harness; and foster improved recognition of donkeys as sentient beings by donkey drivers.

BEHAVIOURAL EVALUATION OF BULLS DURING BREEDING SOUNDNESS EXAMS

B. Crane, K. Proudfoot, S. McKenna



This new research project aims to understand how different options for breeding soundness exams affect pain and aversion in bulls used in the beef industry. This project will determine if common procedures used in the beef industry, such as electric stimulation, are aversive and painful to bulls compared to less invasive methods. Facial images of bulls before and during their breeding soundness exams will be compared to determine if facial expression can provide insight into the bulls' experience during these exams.

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL CARE OF HOMELESS SMALL ANIMALS

A. Ogilvie, P. Foley, R. Macdonald, R. MacLean, M. MacLean



This renewed service project will see hundreds of homeless cats and dogs every year with injuries or illnesses requiring veterinary care. These animals are found wandering at large and brought in by good Samaritans, shelter staff, or volunteers. They may also be surrendered by owners who can no longer care for their pets for a variety of reasons. The animals could also be seized because of animal welfare investigations. This project is also supported by the PEI Humane Society.

For more information about previously funded projects, please visit our website: awc.upei.ca/list-of-all-funded-projects/

AVC STUDENTS WIN BIG AT THE 2023 AVMA ANIMAL WELFARE ASSESSMENT CONTEST

Veterinary students from AVC won five awards at the 2023 American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Animal Welfare Assessment Contest.

The contest took place at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls on November 18, with 232 registrants representing 24 universities from across North America and Europe. AVC sent two teams of five students each to the competition. Samantha Shute, Kyra Norton, Abigail Penney-Wiseman, Sinead Riordon, and Madison King comprised the first-year team, and Catherine LeBlond, Gabrielle Doiron, Veronica Sohasky, Tsukasa Iwamoto, and Lillie Black the second-year team. Also included was Kalya Dalpe, an undergraduate student at UPEI, which is the first time a non-veterinary UPEI student competed.

The contest consisted of individual student and team assessments. The individual assessments included farmed bison, cage-free laying hens, and tortoises in a zoo. The team assessment included a visit to a laboratory animal facility. “We were able to gain



Back row (L-R): Lillie Black, Samantha Shute, Kyra Norton, Abigail Penney-Wiseman, Sinead Riordon, and Madison King

Front row (L-R): Catherine LeBlond, Gabrielle Doiron, Veronica Sohasky, Tsukasa Iwamoto, and Kayla Dalpe

experience with animals that we were not familiar with,” said Gabrielle, Class of 2026. “It’s a fun way to learn a lot about species that we have not been able to work with in our normal veterinary curriculum.”

“It was a great opportunity to put into practice what we were learning in our animal behavior and welfare class,” said Abigail, Class of 2027.

The AVC teams placed first and fifth place overall, as well as

first place in the team scenario. In the overall individual student scenario, Catherine took second, and Abigail finished third. Congratulations to all the AVC team members.

Funding for the students to participate was made possible by the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (SJDAWC), the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.

“ The contest provided a unique chance to connect with like-minded students and be able to speak to experts in the field who had great advice for us about careers in animal welfare. ”

—Kyra Norton, Class of 2027

AWARDS

2024 SJDAWC VETERINARY SUMMER RESEARCH AWARD

Congratulations to Hannah Kennedy, AVC Class of 2026, for receiving the 2024 SJDAWC Veterinary Summer Research Award. Hannah will work under the supervision of Dr. Shivani Ojha, assistant professor in molecular clinical bacteriology, Department of Pathology and Microbiology, on a study to treat skin infections in dogs. The outcome of this research will help in developing a new treatment option for these difficult-to-treat infections with the hopes of relieving pain and discomfort in our dog patients. Hannah is honoured to have received this award and looks forward to start working on this project.



Hannah Kennedy

ANIMAL WELFARE ROTATION AWARDS

Two students have been awarded \$1,000 each to assist them with travel for an external rotation related to animal welfare during their fourth year.



“This rotation will allow me to have a better perspective on relevant topics facing the bovine veterinarian in regard to animal welfare.”

— *Casey Whitehouse,*
Class of 2025

Casey Whitehouse will travel to the University of Minnesota’s John Fetrow Center for Dairy Excellence. The rotation will involve learning the veterinarian’s role in animal welfare, food safety and security, clinical care, and treatment discussions surrounding individual cows and calves.



“I want to develop a mission that provides veterinary education, patient care, and training to remote communities in need.”

— *Jillian Lawless,*
Class of 2025

Jillian Lawless is excited to secure a three-week rotation in Meru, Kenya. She plans to partner with Kenyan farmers using her experience to focus on strategies that allow animals to express natural behaviour, improve stall comfort, and develop preventative disease measures.



THANK-YOU TO THE CHRISTOFOR AND THE SIR JAMES DUNN FOUNDATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge the sustained financial support of **The Christofor and The Sir James Dunn Foundations**, without which the SJDAWC would not exist.

We also thank Dr. Eric Butler and Ms. Suzanne Rocca-Butler, and the many generous organizations, individuals, veterinary hospitals, and other businesses—too numerous to mention—that have made donations in memory of a beloved pet. You can find a list of our donors on our webpage: awc.upei.ca/supporting-the-centre/

To learn how you can support the Centre, please check out our website.

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