



SIR JAMES DUNN ANIMAL WELFARE CENTRE *at the Atlantic Veterinary College*



PROMOTING ANIMAL WELFARE THROUGH RESEARCH, SERVICE, AND EDUCATION

AVC FACULTY MEMBERS RECEIVE ANIMAL WELFARE RESEARCH GRANTS



UNIVERSITY
of Prince Edward
ISLAND

Congratulations

to Dr. Caroline Ritter, Canada Research Chair in Social Epidemiology for Healthy Animals and assistant professor of epidemiology at the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC), and Dr. Katy Proudfoot, associate professor of health management and director of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, for receiving two prestigious animal welfare research grants from the federal government.

Dr. Ritter was awarded funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to study how animal welfare is affected by difficult choices that people often must make about their pets. Pet owners and veterinarians sometimes experience internal conflict about these difficult decisions, such as when to euthanize an animal. The results of this project will help veterinarians and pet owners cope with making these decisions in the future.

Dr. Proudfoot's research, supported by the Natural Sciences and Engineering



(L-R): Dr. Katy Proudfoot and Dr. Caroline Ritter

Research Council of Canada (NSERC), will assess factors that affect animals' ability to sleep and rest comfortably in their environments, and the impact of sleep loss on cognition in young animals.

Sleep is vital for the health and cognitive performance of people, but less is known about the role of sleep in animals. We look forward to seeing the results of these two important and innovative projects!



Dr. Katy Proudfoot

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

We are having a beautiful, colourful fall here on Prince Edward Island, and the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre has been busy over the past few months with several activities and student awards.

In September, we hosted our 18th annual Animal Welfare in Practice symposium on end-of-life decisions for animals. The symposium was well attended despite a hurricane passing nearby.

We also provided support for students pursuing summer research projects as well as travel during their fourth-year rotations. This fall, we awarded two students the Christofor Award in Animal Welfare and the Dr. Tom A. W. Taylor Scholarship (see page 7 for more information).

We welcome your feedback. Please contact us at animalwelfare@upe.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 upe.ca/awc 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.

ANIMAL WELFARE IN PRACTICE SYMPOSIUM

The 18th annual Animal Welfare in Practice symposium was presented on Friday, September 15, and Saturday, September 16, with a focus on end-of-life care for animals. The symposium was funded by the SJDAWC in partnership with the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada. This was the first symposium to be held in-person since 2019 and included a virtual option for participants.

DR. PETER FOLEY



Dr. Peter Foley, associate professor of small animal internal medicine at AVC, kicked off the symposium on

Friday with a presentation on “*End-of-life care for dogs and cats: Decision-making and options*,” Dr. Foley began with a description of different emotions pet owners feel when they are delivered bad news about one of their pets, such as that the animal may need to be euthanized. He shared that it is often difficult for people to make decisions about when to euthanize their pet as they do not want to take this step too soon or too late. He stressed that there is no “magic hour” to make this decision and encouraged owners not to stress over finding the perfect time.

To help owners make this difficult decision, Dr. Foley recommended that they count the good days and bad days for their pet using a calendar, as well as get advice and clarity from friends, family, and their veterinarian about making end-of-life decisions for their pets.

DR. PATRICIA TURNER



Dr. Patricia Turner, professor emeritus at the University of Guelph, was the first speaker

to present via Zoom at the symposium on Saturday, focusing on “*Animal welfare at the end of life: Decision-making and communications*.” Dr. Turner began her presentation by talking about how to assess the “quality of life” of animals, which can help veterinarians and pet owners with end-of-life decisions. These assessments vary between individual animals but often include factors such as social companionship, mental stimulation, health, food consumption, stress, and choice or control over their environment.

Dr. Turner encouraged continued training in veterinary ethics and quality-of-life assessments for veterinarians to equip them with the skills they need to provide guidance to their clients about making timely euthanasia decisions. She concluded with a call for the veterinary profession to “do better” by advocating for their patients and taking a family-centred approach.





DR. MICHAEL COCKRAM



To provide a perspective for farm animals, Dr. Michael Cockram, Chair in Animal Welfare and professor at AVC,

presented “*Welfare implications of end-of-life options for farm animals.*” Dr. Cockram began his presentation by describing different end-of-life options for farm animals, including slaughter, culling, and on-farm euthanasia. He then detailed several different animal welfare concerns with each of these options, including those associated with the method using for killing, the handling and transport of the animals, and an animal’s “fitness” or ability to withstand the stressors associated with transport. For on-farm euthanasia, Dr. Cockram recommended the use of “euthanasia action plans” or protocols that include decision trees to help producers make these decisions in a timely manner.

DRS. MITCHELL CARR AND KATIE MACDONALD



Drs. Mitchell Carr and Katie MacDonald, both general practice clinicians at AVC, tag-teamed

the next presentation on “*Empathic care in dying.*” The duo began with a definition of “clinical empathy,” which includes the veterinarian’s ability to understand their client’s emotions and beliefs, to communicate understanding back to the client, and to act on that understanding. This framework leads veterinarians to build trust with their clients, which will allow for more open discussions about sensitive topics such as euthanasia. Drs. Carr and MacDonald walked through the steps they recommend when a decision is made to euthanize a pet, including ways to reduce anxiety in the client and the patient, beginning well before the euthanasia procedure.



For example, they recommend “pre-planning” with clients, including pharmacological approaches that would reduce stress in their pets before euthanasia, booking appropriate lengths of times for euthanasia appointments, and creating a dedicated space in the clinic for the procedure.

DR. LIANNA TITCOMBE



To end the symposium, Dr. Lianna Titcombe, international director and instructor for the Companion Animal Euthanasia

Training Academy (CAETA), presented via Zoom on “*When quality-of-life scales aren’t enough: Counselling clients who can’t let go.*” Dr. Titcombe reminded the audience that people may have a strong emotional connection to their pet and may have difficulty saying goodbye. She then provided various communication tools for veterinarians to help guide clients to make timely end-of-life decisions. For example, she suggested that veterinarians start the conversation by asking clients about their pet, actively listening to their thoughts, and letting everyone in the family speak their mind, including children.

To help clients make a timely decision, she often asks, “What makes your pet’s life worth living? And, at what point would life no longer be worth living?” Throughout these difficult conversations, said Dr. Titcombe, she recommends that veterinarians be compassionate and reserve judgement about their clients, while at the same time advocating for the welfare of their pet.



Drs. Carr, MacDonald, and Titcombe (on Zoom) answering questions from the audience.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SJDAWC

STUDENT AWARDED SJDAWC SUMMER STIPEND

Tsukasa Iwamoto, AVC Class of 2026, was awarded an SJDAWC stipend to pursue a research project as part of the 2023 AVC Summer Research and Leadership Program. Tsukasa worked with Dr. Karen Overall, professor of behavioural medicine, and her team on their study on “Understanding when normal and abnormal behaviours diverge: Using physiological and behavioural measures to define developmental trajectories for behaviour.”

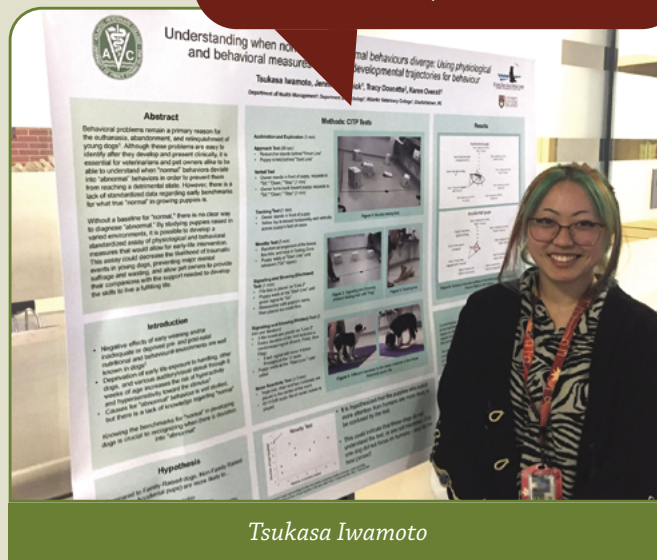
The aim of this study was to define “normal” behaviour in puppies so they could determine when early intervention was necessary to prevent deviation into “abnormal” behaviour. Tsukasa enjoyed

working with puppies and gained an invaluable introduction to the world of veterinary research and behavioural medicine. Having such a great experience so early in her vet school career will undoubtedly influence how she views veterinary medicine.

Tsukasa is thankful to Dr. Overall, Dr. Jennifer Vernick, Dr. Tracy Doucette, Dr. Jasmine Salgiri, and the SJDAWC for their support.

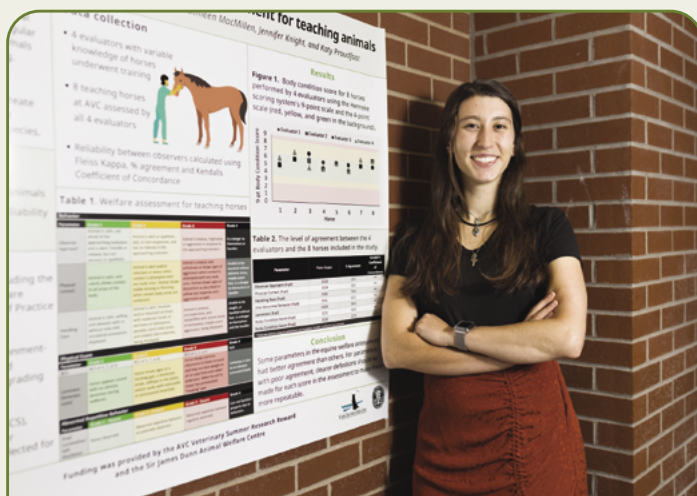
“My possible career paths have expanded, and I have new budding interests that the SJDAWC Veterinary Summer Research Award has helped me make possible!”

Tsukasa Iwamoto, *Class of 2026*



Tsukasa Iwamoto

DEVYN ENWRIGHT PLACES SECOND WITH POSTER



Devyn Enwright

“One thing that is always cool to me about research is the potential impact it could have on the field.”

Devyn Enwright, *Class of 2025*

Congratulations to Devyn Enwright, AVC Class of 2025, for placing second at the 2023 AVC Summer Research and Leadership Program poster presentations. As a result of her success, she was invited to attend the Canadian Emerging Veterinary Scholars Summit, which took place from October 26–28 at the University of Calgary’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Calgary, Alberta.

During the summer, Devyn worked alongside supervisor Dr. Katy Proudfoot and graduate student mentor Sherry Khoddami, along with AVC faculty members Dr. Kathleen MacMillan and Dr. Henrik Stryhn, and technicians Jennifer Knight, and Kindra Stewart on their project, “Development of equine welfare assessment for teaching animals.” The aim of the study was to create an equine welfare assessment for teaching animals and to calculate inter-rater reliability on subjective measurements within the assessment.

To find out how to apply for a 2024 SJDAWC VetSRA (Veterinary Summer Research Award), please visit our website at awc.upei.ca/summer-research

SAMANTHA FROUD BENEFITS FROM TRAVEL AWARD FOR THE CHINOOK PROJECT

Samantha Froud, AVC Class of 2024, was awarded an SJDAWC travel grant for fourth-year students. Samantha used the funding to join the Chinook Project, which is an outreach program that supplies free veterinary care for northern communities in Nunavut and Labrador. This year, the Chinook team set up a temporary veterinary clinic in Sheshatshui, Labrador. The team worked alongside members of the community to provide vaccines, microchipping, deworming, and surgical procedures for both pets and community dogs.

The overall goal of this project was to provide wellness exams to animals who otherwise might not receive regular veterinary care, in addition to population control and herd immunity. During her visit, over 140 animals were treated, including 42 spay or neuter surgeries. Throughout the visit, Samantha was able to communicate and collaborate with members of the community about preventative health and animal welfare.



Samantha Froud

“Although the clinic was busy and overwhelming at times, the experience was truly incredible, and I can walk away knowing that we’ve all made a difference in the welfare of the animals in that community.”

Samantha Froud, Class of 2024

HANNAH SPITZER FINISHES PROJECT ON YOUNG CALF BEHAVIOUR

Hannah Spitzer successfully defended her masters project assessing the hiding behaviour of young dairy calves kept with their dams. Hannah’s project, funded by the SJDAWC and conducted at Dalhousie University’s Ruminant Animal Centre, aimed to determine if dairy calves will use and benefit from a place to hide when their mothers are removed from the pen to be milked. In a natural setting, dairy cows will hide in tall grass or tree cover to give birth, and their newborn calf will stay hidden for several days before being introduced to the herd.

Hannah discovered that, when kept indoors, some calves hide more than others when given the opportunity. There were also some indications that calves benefitted from the presence of a hiding space in the pen

when the dam was removed for milking, including a reduction in physiological indicators of stress.

The results of Hannah’s project were shared with researchers at the International Society for Applied Ethology’s 2023 annual meeting held in Tallin, Estonia, in August and have been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Hannah was supervised by Dr. Katy Proudfoot in collaboration with Dr. Shawn McKenna, professor of ruminant health management at AVC, as well as Drs. Rebecca Meagher and Miriam Gordon from Dalhousie University. Hannah is now a research technician for Transpharmation, an international pharmaceutical company.



A dairy calf in a hiding space

Information about all our graduate students can be found on our website at awc.upei.ca/graduate-students



SJDAWC PROJECT SPOTLIGHT ON NASOGASTRIC INTUBATION SIMULATOR

Dr. Ben Stoughton, associate professor of large animal internal medicine at AVC, received an SJDAWC research grant to develop an equine nasogastric intubation simulator for teaching at the AVC. Dr. Stoughton collaborated with Dr. Nadja Bressen, assistant professor, UPEI Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering, and her graduate student, Eagan Boire.

The long-term goal of this project is for veterinary students to practice their skills on a model before using a live animal. Several steps needed to be completed to form the model, beginning with taking Computed Tomography (CT) scans of a horse's nasal passages. The scans were then transformed into a 3D model. A silicone mold was then created from the 3D model to simulate a natural feel for students practicing their skills.

To create a realistic model, the team used 3D images of horse muzzles to make a life-like silicone mold. These separate parts were then combined with a plastic horse head model into a single simulator. The team is now working on mounting the model onto a stand and testing the simulator with AVC students and faculty. The team hopes to create at least two more simulators to serve as aids or alternatives to the use of animals in teaching.



Different parts used to create a horse simulator for nasogastric intubation for veterinary students



The final horse model

SHOUT OUT TO THE BEHAVIOURAL MEDICINE PROGRAM

The SJDAWC would like to congratulate the AVC Behavioural Medicine Program, led by Dr. Karen Overall, professor of behavioural medicine, for their inaugural "Behaviour at the Beach" course held this summer.

Forty-five veterinarians came together from all over the world to attend this week-long, intensive course focused on companion animal behaviour taught by Dr. Overall, Dr. Kersti Seksel of Australia, and Dr. Goncalo Pereira of Portugal.

Information about the 2024 course can be found at awc.upei.ca/behaviour-at-the-beach/



Behaviour at the Beach attendees



2023 CHRISTOFOR AWARD IN ANIMAL WELFARE

Jamie Kennedy, AVC Class of 2024, received the 2023 Christofor Award in Animal Welfare for her long-standing interest in improving the welfare of animals. During her undergraduate degree program, she began volunteering with the Nova Scotia SPCA as a member of the dog care team. She soon realized she had a calling beyond volunteering, so she applied and was accepted to the veterinary medicine program at the AVC.

As an AVC student, Jamie joined both the Shelter Medicine Club

and the Animal Enrichment Club. During her third year, she became a full-time volunteer for Helpaws, a rescue organization in Saint Lucia focused on rescue, adoption, and high-volume spay and neuter clinics. As part of this organization, Jamie became a foster support person and animal wellness advisor. Her role included being a direct contact for more than 20 foster families at a time with concerns about the health and wellness of their foster dogs.

Jamie hopes to someday visit Saint Lucia as a veterinarian.



Jamie Kennedy

2023 DR. TOM A. W. TAYLOR SCHOLARSHIP

The 2023 Dr. Tom A. W. Taylor Scholarship was awarded to Tessa McBurney, AVC Class of 2025. Established in memory of Dr. Tom A. W. Taylor, this award is given to a student who is well rounded and academically proficient and has demonstrated initiative and interest in research activities.

Tessa is currently pursuing her veterinary degree in addition to a master's project. Her areas of interest include wildlife health, zoonoses, One Health principles, preventative medicine, feline medicine, and animal welfare. Her master's research is focused on an endangered wild bat species, the little brown myotis, and zoonotic pathogens.

After completing her veterinary and master's degrees, Tessa plans to pursue a PhD and apply to be a member of the Preventive

American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. Her career aspiration is to work in conservation medicine with a focus on One Health and wildlife zoonoses.



Tessa McBurney



A little brown bat.

OUR SUPPORTERS ARE PURRFECT!

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

We also thank the following organizations and individuals who have supported the SJDABC in the last year:

- Eric Butler and Suzanne Rocca-Butler
- Atlantic Veterinary College
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- Victoria City Kennel Club
- Mission Kitty Inc.
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- Les and Holly Burrige
- SAVMA-AVC Chapter
- Sensor Health Insurance-Veterinary Sciences
- Alice Crook
- Anonymous

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550 University Avenue
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4P3

Website
awc.upei.ca