

MEDIA RELEASE
ATLANTIC VETERINARY COLLEGE AT UPEI

Projects to benefit companion animals, horses and wildlife announced: AVC's Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre funds eight projects this year

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (July 10, 2008): Eight projects that will benefit companion animals, horses, and wildlife recently received funding through the 2008 competition of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (SJDAWC) at UPEI's Atlantic Veterinary College. More than 110 projects representing \$2.8 million in funding have been supported by the Centre since it was established in 1994.

"We are very grateful to the Friends of the Christofor Foundation for their ongoing support of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College," says Dr. Alice Crook, the centre's coordinator. "This year's research projects include a review of euthanasia procedures in Canadian animal shelters with the hope of assisting shelters with recommendations in best practices, as well as a study looking at a possible association between obesity and kidney disease in dogs. Service projects receiving funding this year include renewed support for the Chinook Project which enables AVC to provide veterinary care to isolated communities in the Canadian North, a financial aid program to help pet owners with low incomes, and health management services for two Island equine sanctuaries."

The projects will be carried out by faculty and students at the Atlantic Veterinary College at UPEI. For information on the Centre, please visit the web site at: www.upei.ca/awc.

Information is provided below on projects funded through this year's competition.

1. Survey of euthanasia practices in animal shelters in Canada to identify ways of incorporating 'best practices' into guidelines for humane euthanasia (Dr. Michael Cockram, Chair, Animal Welfare, AVC)

Euthanasia is an unavoidable and unfortunate reality for most animal shelters and humane societies across Canada. Regardless of the reason or the setting, all animals are entitled to a humane death, i.e., one without pain and distress. Factors that are likely to have a significant impact on the humaneness of euthanasia include the method used, the availability of drugs, the knowledge, training, and experience of staff, the equipment, the environment, and the circumstances.

This study will establish a baseline of knowledge of current euthanasia practices in Canadian animal shelters. One component of the study will be a literature review of euthanasia practices for companion animals and wildlife to look at aspects such as drug options, chemical and physical restraint, animal handling procedures, environmental conditions, and current legislation and guidelines. The second component will consist of a mail survey to identify and describe euthanasia practices and protocols in animal shelters across Canada, with a view to identifying what aspects require improvement and what aspects may require further research.

2. Is there an association between obesity and kidney disease in dogs? (Dr. Darcy Shaw, Chair, Companion Animals, AVC)

The health consequences of obesity in people, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease, are well-known. Many of these complications have direct harmful effects on the kidney. However, obese and overweight patients without diabetes or high blood pressure also have an increased risk of developing chronic kidney disease, which is preceded by a condition called obesity-related glomerulonephropathy (ORG). This condition can be reversed with weight loss.

Obesity is a common and significant health problem in dogs. Changes similar to those in ORG have been seen in the kidneys of obese dogs, but the correlations with protein loss in the urine or other markers of kidney injury have not been assessed. The purpose of this study is to determine if otherwise healthy, obese dogs have evidence of kidney injury and if the degree of injury corresponds with the severity of obesity. If there is obesity-related kidney disease in dogs that can be reversed through weight loss, this will provide important new information about both the health risks of canine obesity and the treatment of kidney disease in overweight dogs.

3. Chinook Project - providing veterinary care to Nunavut communities (Dr. Lisa Miller, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, AVC)

Veterinary care is unavailable in many communities in the Canadian North. This project is a renewal of the 2006-funded SJDAWC project which provided basic veterinary care to communities in Nunavut, specifically Kimmirut in 2006 and Cambridge Bay in 2007. The Chinook Project teams were very warmly received in both communities.

This year the AVC team will return to Kimmirut, an isolated community on the south shore of Baffin Island. The community has a population of approximately 400, many of whom maintain a traditional lifestyle involving hunting, fishing, and several sled dog teams. For one week in July, a volunteer team of two veterinarians and four veterinary students will provide medical and surgical care to sled and homebound dogs. Such care will include vaccinations, examinations and treatment for parasites, neutering, and other surgical and medical treatments as necessary (e.g, tumour removal). Community members will be given basic information about first aid, vaccinations, and parasite

prevention; and supplies will be left with them to improve the well-being of their animals. AVC team members will also participate in a cultural exchange to allow them to broaden their understanding of Canadian diversity.

For 2009, the team has been asked to go to Kuglutuk (Copper Mine). Project participants are keeping journals during their time in the communities, from which will be produced a series of creative non-fiction pieces to form a book with the working title "AVC Goes North".

Travel and shipping of supplies to Nunavut are very costly. Besides SJDAWC support, the Chinook project has received very generous reductions on air fares and shipping from First Air, as well as generous assistance from Pfizer, Iam's, Cogsdale Corporation, and Home Hardware (St. Peter's Road).

4. Financial aid to neuter companion animals of owners with low incomes (Dr. Peter Foley, Assistant Professor, Companion Animals, AVC)

Many dogs, cats and rabbits are surrendered to the PEI Humane Society every year because their owners can not provide homes for them. Pet over-population is particularly difficult to address in families that are unable to afford to have their pets neutered.

SpayAid PEI is a new volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to reducing companion animal over-population by creating and maintaining a spay/neuter assistance programme targeted to aid Islanders most in financial need. The organization works with participating veterinary clinics using a model that shares the costs of neutering a pet between the owner, the veterinary hospital, and SpayAid, each of whom pays one-third. SpayAid also pays the full cost of the first vaccination appointment three to four weeks prior to surgery.

As one veterinary partner in this initiative, the AVC Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) is supporting two SpayAid sponsored neuters per month. The SJDAWC is supporting the SpayAid programme by covering the organization's portion of the costs for the two neuters at the VTH, which will allow SpayAid to direct its resources towards more neuters. Go to www.spayaidpei.com for more information or an application form.

5. Health management services for the PEI Equine Retirement Society, Inc. (Dr. Wendy Duckett, Associate Professor, Health Management, AVC)

The PEI Equine Retirement Society Inc. (PEIERS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of horses destined to be destroyed or shipped for the meat industry, and to finding new homes for them as pets or pleasure horses. Since its founding in O'Leary in 1996 by Mr. Dale Cameron, the Society has taken in 28 horses, of which 14 have been placed in new homes and six have been euthanized due to intractable health problems. Eight horses are currently at the farm. Through the support of the SJDAWC, AVC has provided preventive medical care to the horses at the Society from the beginning.

Through this year's project, support is continued for two more years. The program includes physical examinations of the horses, a parasite monitoring and control program for the facility, dental work, routine vaccinations, and minor surgical and medical procedures as needed. AVC senior veterinary students, interns, and residents all participate in the care of these horses.

6. Health management services for Handibear Hills Equine Sanctuary, Inc. (Dr. Wendy Duckett, Associate Professor, Health Management AVC)

This project provides preventive medical care to the horses at the Handibear Hills Equine Sanctuary, Inc. For 20 years, this facility owned by Yogi Fell in South Granville, PEI has provided a refuge for horses needing a home. Through programs such as the Trailblazers Club, young people and adults spend time at Handibear Hills learning to ride, groom, and generally care for the horses.

Funding for this project is continued for two more years. The program will provide regular dental care and vaccinations for the 26 horses currently at the Sanctuary, as well as parasite monitoring and control and behavioural advice for conditions that affect the comfort and quality of life of the horses. AVC senior veterinary students, interns and residents all participate in the care of these horses.

7. Medical and surgical care of homeless animals (Dr. Caroline Runyon, Professor, Companion Animals, AVC)

Since first receiving funding in 1994, this project has enabled care for more than 3,000 companion animals, primarily dogs and cats. Funding has been granted to this project for a further two years to continue to address the problems of pet overpopulation and homeless animals in the region. Injured or ill animals brought to the AVC Veterinary Teaching Hospital by the PEI Humane Society or Good Samaritans receive physical examinations, x-rays, and/or other diagnostic procedures, emergency medical care, and continued medical or surgical care (including neutering as required) in consultation with the shelter. Some lost animals are claimed by their owners, while most, once healthy, are placed in homes through standard shelter adoption. Some animals are placed in "special needs" adoptive homes because they

require specific care during recovery. Animals with severe illness or extensive injuries are humanely euthanized. AVC senior veterinary students, interns and residents are extensively involved in the care of these animals.

8. Wildlife rehabilitation (including displaced or orphaned wildlife) (Dr. Hans Gelens, Associate Professor, Companion Animals)

Caring members of the public often bring orphaned or injured wild animals (birds and small mammals) to the AVC. Since 1999, the wildlife rehabilitation project has provided financial support to care for these wild animals, some of which require medical attention and others temporary nursing and supportive care (especially for orphaned wildlife). For some animals, the best option is humane euthanasia.

Funding has been renewed for this project to build upon and improve the level of care for injured or orphaned wildlife at AVC. Typical costs include building materials (cages, perches, environmental enrichment), specialty foods, equipment (heat lamps, special bedding), anesthesia, radiographs, and surgery. The number of raptors cared for through the project has increased and there are additional costs for transportation of these birds to and from Maritime wildlife rehabilitation centres for proper flight training and long term care. The end goal for all patients is successful release back into the wild.

AVC students from all four years participate in the program, which offers a unique opportunity to interact with wildlife and apply principles of veterinary medicine to non-domestic species. The project has been integrated into, and is supported by, the AVC Companion Animal Medicine Service and Student Wildlife Club. The AVC, through this project, is part of a North American network of caretakers and rehabilitators of wildlife.

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