



Centre for Veterinary Epidemiological Research  
Annual General Meeting  
15 April 2026, 12:30 pm -2:30 pm

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Attendees:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Dr. Caroline Ritter                | Dr. John VanLeeuwen                                  |
| Dr. Henrik Stryhn                  | Dr. Krishna Thakur                                   |
| Dr. Beibei Jia                     | Dr. Sonja Saksida                                    |
| Dr. Jason Stull                    | Dr. Algomir Hossain                                  |
| Dr. Katie Koralesky                | Holly Burnley  |
| Dr. Ian Dohoo                      |  |
| W. Campbell McKinnon<br>(Recorder) | Regrets:<br>Dr. Javier Sanchez<br>Dr. Katy Proudfoot |

Additional Contributions:

Javier Sanchez submitted slides for review by the group.  
Katy Proudfoot provided a prerecorded presentation update.

Welcome:

The CVER Director, C. Ritter, welcomed attendees.

## 1 Approvals

### 1.1 Agenda and Minutes

The agenda was unanimously approved, as were the minutes from the previous AGM (09 December 2024).

## 2 CVER Elections

### 2.1 CVER Director

Javier Sanchez was elected by acclamation for the CVER Director position.

### 2.2 CVER Steering Committee

Sonja Saksida, Jason Stull, and Shawn McKenna were nominated and unanimously approved for

the Steering Committee position

### **3 Updates on Centres, Groups, and Projects**

#### **3.1 Presenter Update – Jason Stull**

The presenter provided updates related to new appointments, student supervision, research activities, and ongoing One Health and infection prevention initiatives.

- The presenter confirmed the establishment of a joint appointment with the Faculty of Medicine, which began in February 2026. Additional adjunct affiliation processes with Memorial University are currently underway. The presenter noted that while the long-term goal remains development as a stand-alone school, the Faculty of Medicine currently operates under Memorial University.
- Through funding from the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, the presenter has begun supervising a graduate student project focused on diarrheic and non-diarrheic beef calves. The research evaluates calf welfare alongside metagenomic microbiome analyses to examine relationships between calf health, welfare indicators, and microbiome composition.
- The presenter explained that a key objective of the project is to determine whether metagenomic approaches can serve as useful tools for assessing or monitoring calf welfare status.
- The presenter also reported supervision of a student funded through an NSERC Undergraduate Summer Student Research Award. This project focuses on multidrug-resistant organisms, particularly carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE), and involves collaboration with other veterinary colleges across Canada.
- Additional ongoing activities include:
  - scoping reviews examining control of zoonotic infections among veterinary personnel;
  - reviews focused on occupational hazards faced by clinically practicing veterinary professionals in North America; and
  - several miscellaneous collaborative projects.
- The presenter also noted recent scholarly contributions, including co-authorship on nine peer-reviewed publications and ongoing development of three book chapters.

#### **3.2 Presenter Update – John VanLeeuwen**

The presenter provided an overview of ongoing international livestock health, welfare, nutrition, and One Health initiatives involving extensive collaborations with Canadian and international partners, graduate students, and funding agencies.

- The presenter highlighted the continued work of the International Livestock Research Group, which includes collaborations with faculty and researchers from multiple

institutions, including the University of Nairobi, University of Calgary, University of Saskatchewan, ILRI, Kenyatta University, and other Canadian and international partners.

- Greg Keefe recently travelled to Kenya with the presenter and has been supporting new collaborative projects involving graduate student Mercy Njoroge and University of Nairobi supervisor Joshua Onono.

### **Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship Program**

- The Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship program remains active and is expected to conclude by the end of next year. The four-year initiative focuses on improving livelihoods, building research capacity, and supporting global citizenship training.
- Current graduate student projects under the program include:
  - Essau Serem (PhD), whose research examines the benefits and costs of zero-grazing practices on disease and livestock productivity;
  - Glory Karimi (MSc – Nutrition), who is studying the impacts of school nutrition training programs;
  - Mercy Njoroge (MSc – Epidemiology), who began in 2025 and is investigating the prevalence, risk factors, and impacts of *Brucella melitensis* in sheep and goats in Kenya; and
  - Shahleen Jemesis (MSc – Nutrition), expected to come to UPEI in September, whose work will focus on Community Health Promoter training programs.
- Several veterinary and nutrition student interns continue to support these projects through field and research activities.

### **Graduate Student and Research Updates**

- Three former graduate students are continuing to publish their thesis chapters during the past year:
  - Daniel Muasya (PhD),
  - Julie Oyoo (MSc), and
  - Peter Kimeli (PhD).
- Ongoing graduate student projects include:
  - Emmanuel Muunda (PhD), who is conducting economic and motivational assessments related to cow comfort practices on Kenyan smallholder dairy farms;
  - Wilson Kuria (MSc), whose research adapts accelerometer technology previously used in dairy cattle to assess lying and sleeping behavior in working donkeys;
  - Josphat Matara (MSc), supervised by Martha Mellish, examining donkey cart welfare; and
  - Joy Eze (MSc), whose work focuses on animal welfare knowledge, attitudes, and practices among slaughterhouse and transport workers in Nigeria.

### **Funding and Partnership Initiatives**

- The presenter discussed several major collaborative funding initiatives, including support from FHF and Veterinarians Without Borders (VWB).
- FHF-supported projects involving collaborations with multiple universities and focus on One Health priorities, including:
  - rabies,

- anthrax,
- brucellosis,
- salmonella,
- gender-responsive One Health approaches, and
- livestock productivity and environmental sustainability.
- Additional project activities include evaluation research components and development of antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance (AMU/AMR) assessment tools in Kenya.
- Ongoing partnerships with Veterinarians Without Borders continue to support international student training opportunities, including upcoming student placements in Kenya scheduled for May.

### **3.3 Presenter Update- Krishna Thakur**

The presenter provided updates on several ongoing and recently completed student and research activities.

- Work on the original project transitioned from Svenja Koepper to Sitang Arkanit after Svenja's involvement concluded approximately two years ago. Although the project officially ended in March, Sitang continues work related to her PhD and is expected to finish between late fall 2027 and the end of 2027.
- Sitang has:
  - analyzed juvenile lobster settlement patterns across Nova Scotia and published the findings;
  - conducted comparative microbiome work on diseased and healthy lobsters, with a manuscript currently under review;
  - collected samples from Thailand last summer, which have been sequenced and are currently being analyzed.
- Sumit defended his PhD last month and began a postdoctoral position with Javier Sanchez. His work focused on evaluating publicly available datasets, including their usefulness, limitations, and gaps for research applications. His funding came from project savings and a Discovery Grant.
- Two graduate students are studying aspects of infectious salmon anemia virus management in Atlantic Canada and globally.
  - Ahsan defended last week and is expected to complete revisions within approximately one month.
  - Persia completed her comprehensive exam before beginning maternity leave earlier this year. She has completed two systematic/scoping reviews currently in final drafting stages. Additional data analysis was completed on her behalf to satisfy funding agency requirements.
- Under the Atlantic initiative, two PhD students and one postdoctoral researcher worked collaboratively on systematic and scoping reviews.
- The presenter also mentioned another graduate student currently on extended leave of absence. Communication has been limited, and while withdrawal from the program had previously been suggested, no formal withdrawal has been confirmed.

### **3.4 Presenter Update – Sonja Saksida**

The presenter provided updates on several major research, training, and collaborative initiatives, many of which are currently nearing completion.

- The Genome Canada Complex Gill Disease (CGD) initiative, conducted in collaboration with Beibei Jia and led overall by Mark Fast, is in its final stages. The project focused on identifying risk factors associated with Complex Gill Disease. Current efforts are focused on completing analyses and final reporting.
- The Ocean Frontier Institute (OFI) antimicrobial use (AMU) project in aquaculture, conducted with co-lead J McClure and postdoctoral researcher Kristen Reynolds, examined antimicrobial dosing practices and microbiome changes in aquaculture systems. The project funding concluded, and the team is currently preparing publications and final reports.
- The Atlantic Fisheries Fund (AFF) project on harmonizing fish health management practices across Atlantic Canada is also being finalized. The presenter noted the project involved substantial coordination and oversight, supported by Holly Burnley and Wendy Campbell McKinnon. The initiative consisted of eight work packages focused on developing recommendations for regulatory and farm-level fish health management practices across the four Atlantic provinces.
- The presenter highlighted that one shellfish-related component may align well with future work by a potential new shellfish specialist hire.
- Additional work included participation in Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) systematic mapping initiatives focused on sea lice management in British Columbia and impacts on wild fish populations. The work involved international experts collaborating to develop consensus approaches and identify knowledge gaps.
- The presenter also participated in a smaller international collaboration involving partners in New Zealand, Māori communities, and First Nations groups in California. The project explored the potential rematuration and reintroduction of Chinook salmon populations originating from California but transferred to New Zealand more than a century ago. Activities included wild fish surveillance and coordination with regulatory agencies.
- Since Jeff Davidson's departure, the presenter has assumed responsibility for coordinating several fourth-year fish health rotations, including the local EcoHealth rotation and co-ordination of the Thailand rotation with Megan Jones. The presenter also developed a new fourth-year elective course in fish surgery, scheduled to launch in the fall.
- Finally, the presenter reported involvement as co-lead on a sturgeon welfare project focused on developing non-invasive methods to assess fish stress and welfare, particularly in closed containment systems. Research activities include evaluating cortisol measurements in feces and water, as well as investigating genetic markers associated with stress responses.

### **3.5 Presenter Update – Henrik Stryhn**

The presenter provided an overview of recent activities related to graduate student supervision, statistical modelling projects, and collaborative research initiatives.

- Ongoing graduate student co-supervision includes a master’s project involving Bayesian latent variable modelling with student Junshi (Paul) Dong. The presenter noted that the modelling work is complex and progressing gradually. Communication has been somewhat challenging due to the student being based in China, but progress continues.
- The presenter also referenced previous collaborative work supporting Javier’s graduate students, and additional student-related projects including:
  - multivariate modelling of microbiome data;
  - ordinal logistic modelling of MIC datasets; and
  - multilevel modelling approaches applied across several graduate student projects, including recent work with Sumit Jyoti.
- During a six-month sabbatical last year, the presenter spent several months in Sydney collaborating with Charles Caralgie on a diagnostic test systematic review and meta-analysis project. While limited progress has occurred recently, plans are in place to revive and continue the work.
- The presenter also noted the need to finalize a previously discussed project examining emergency room admission patterns before, during, and after Hurricane Fiona.
- Additional collaborative activities include supporting early planning for a potential CREATE network grant application focused on risk analysis research.

### **3.6 Presenter Update – Caroline Ritter**

The presenter provided an overview of current research activities, student supervision, outreach initiatives, and recent funding achievements. Research activities are broadly organized into two focus areas:

1. understanding animal caretaker decision-making and supporting implementation of recommended management practices; and
2. mental well-being within the veterinary profession.

#### **Student Supervision and Training**

- Several students completed their programs in the past year:
  - Megan Ross (PhD) defended approximately one year ago. Her research examined horse housing, horse management, and perceptions surrounding dressage training among owners, riders, and coaches.
  - PsyD students Chaya Seale and Catherine Standage completed research projects focused on mental well-being and mentorship among early-career veterinarians. Their projects were co-supervised with psychology faculty, and both students published their work.
  - Tipsarp (“Minnie”) Kittisiam completed her PhD at the University of Guelph under co-supervision with Dr. Andria Jones. She has since returned to Thailand for a professional position.
- The presenter highlighted Emily Morabito’s recent accomplishments. Emily defended her thesis and developed a cognitive behavioral therapy-based workshop for veterinary students

and early-career veterinarians, which was delivered at veterinary schools across Canada and received strong positive feedback.

- Current graduate students include:
  - Aiman Khattak, who has a psychology background and is transitioning into animal-sector research;
  - Tunmise Faith Ehigbor, who transitioned from a master’s program into a PhD and is studying antimicrobial stewardship on dairy farms, including farmer and veterinarian perceptions; and
  - Havelah Carter, co-supervised with Dave Renauld, whose work also focuses on antimicrobial stewardship and includes development of a “train-the-trainer” education initiative.
- Katie Koralesky began a postdoctoral fellowship in October focused on social housing practices for dairy calves. The project supports industry transition efforts associated with upcoming code-of-practice requirements for calf social housing.

### **Knowledge Dissemination and Outreach**

- The presenter reported involvement in approximately 20 peer-reviewed publications since 2025.
- Students and trainees participated extensively in conference presentations and outreach activities:
  - Emily Morabito received an oral presentation student award;
  - Minnie Kittisiam received a poster presentation award; and
  - additional presentations were delivered by current students and trainees at multiple conferences.
- Outreach initiatives included Farmer-to-Farmer Forums conducted in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, focused on dairy calf social housing practices.
- Additional public outreach activities included newsletters and podcasts related to equine culture research and veterinary mental health topics.

### **Funding and Research Initiatives**

- The presenter recently received tenure, and CRC renewal and is involved in a national One Health Research Training Platform funded through CIHR.
- Additional new funding for 2025/2026 includes:
  - support from the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre for Farmer-to-Farmer Forums on social housing for dairy calves;
  - SSHRC Destination Horizon funding supporting international collaboration on moral distress within the veterinary profession; and
  - Mitacs Accelerate funding supporting participatory antimicrobial stewardship initiatives on Canadian dairy farms.

## **3.7 Presenter Update – Javier Sanchez (Submitted in Absence)**

The presenter was unable to attend the AGM but provided an update on ongoing activities in risk analysis, disease modelling, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), graduate training, and course development.

### **Risk Analysis**

- The overarching goal of this program area is to strengthen training and research capacity in risk analysis.
- Current activities include supervision of postdoctoral fellow Sumit Jyoti.
- A PhD candidate is expected to begin in Fall/Winter.
- The team is reviewing and updating risk analysis courses for delivery in both in-person and online formats.
- Collaboration with the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Germany, is being expanded to support training and research development.

### **Disease Modelling**

- Gregor MacEwen recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship focused on agent-based modelling approaches.
- Junshi Dong (MSc) is currently working on Bayesian modelling of spillover dynamics between wild birds and poultry populations.

### **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**

- A proposal to Dairy Farmers of Canada was submitted on April 10, focused on benchmarking antimicrobial use (AMU) in dairy production systems.

### **Graduate Student Progress (AMR-Related Training)**

- Lauren MacNeil successfully defended her MSc thesis on March 10.
- Landon Warder is scheduled to defend his PhD on April 14.

### **Course Development**

- A new epidemiology course has been developed:
  - **VHM 8130 – Applied Regression Models in Epidemiology**
  - This course forms a component of VHM 8120.
  - It is a five-week (2-credit) course that has been approved by the university.
  - The course is scheduled to be offered in Winter 2026.

## **3.8 Presenter Update – Katy Proudfoot (Video Presentation)**

The presenter provided an update on activities and new initiatives from the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (SJDAWC), including staffing changes, funding renewal, research support, student training, and outreach programming.

### **Centre Updates and Funding**

- The presenter announced the appointment of a new administrative assistant, Megan Dewar, who joined the centre in August 2025 following the promotion of the previous administrative assistant.
- The SJDAWC has been awarded renewed funding of approximately \$350,000 per year for the 2025–2030 funding cycle from its trustees.

### **Research Support Activities**

- The centre continues to support veterinary summer students and graduate student research projects, with recent changes expanding support from one to two funded students per year due to increased demand.
- The SJDAWC also covers travel costs for student participation in the Boehringer Ingelheim Veterinary Scholar Symposium, which provides additional research exposure opportunities.
- Faculty research grants remain a key component of the centre’s mandate, with approximately \$160,000 distributed annually.
- In 2025, funded projects included:
  - community perceptions of wildlife welfare;
  - use of artificial intelligence and video analysis in veterinary teaching and animal assessment;
  - impacts of ultrasonic noise in zoological settings; and
  - indicators of problematic behavior in dogs.
- A new call for research proposals is expected in 2026.

### **Student Training and Education**

- The SJDAWC supports student participation in the AVMA Animal Welfare Assessment Contest, which was held at Texas A&M University in 2025.
- Student participation has increased significantly, with 14 students attending in 2025 compared to 6 students in 2024.
- For the first time, graduate students participated as part of a team, expanding engagement opportunities in animal welfare education.
- A new animal welfare rotation with the PEI Humane Society is being developed in collaboration with Anne Marie Carey and will be piloted in the coming year.
- The centre also provides funding for fourth-year student rotations and offers Christopher and Tom Taylor awards to third-year veterinary students.

### **Outreach and Knowledge Translation**

- The SJDAWC continues to deliver an annual three-part webinar series. The 2025 series focused on animal welfare issues in small companion mammals, including rodents, rabbits, and similar species. Selected recordings are available through the SJDAWC YouTube channel.
- The centre is transitioning from its traditional in-person symposium model to a new animal welfare “hackathon” format planned for Fall 2026.
  - The hackathon will bring together interdisciplinary student teams from veterinary medicine, business, engineering, biology, and computer science.
  - Teams will work with industry partners and practicing veterinarians to develop innovative, practical solutions to animal welfare challenges.

## **Communications**

- The SJDAWC continues to publish a biannual newsletter, distributed through faculty email channels, providing updates on research, funding opportunities, and centre activities.

## **4 – Alomgir Hossain – Effective Utilization Discussion**

The presenter introduced himself and provided an overview of his background and current involvement in multiple research projects, followed by a discussion on statistical support roles and research collaboration practices within graduate student projects.

### **Background and Role**

- The presenter joined the department as a Research Associate in August 2025.
- He has a background in biostatistics and epidemiology, with previous academic and teaching experience at the University of Ottawa.
- His experience includes:
  - teaching biostatistics and epidemiology;
  - supervising PhD students and postdoctoral researchers; and
  - working extensively with large human health datasets.
- He noted that his current work focuses primarily on animal health data, which represents a new area of application for him.

### **Research Involvement**

- The presenter is currently involved in multiple collaborative projects, including work with Dr. Krishna Thakur and several other faculty members.
- His contributions across these projects include:
  - statistical analysis and study design support;
  - assistance with methodological development;
  - support for manuscript and abstract preparation; and
  - involvement in grant applications.
- He reported that one funding application in which he participated was successfully awarded.

- He also noted involvement in a range of additional projects, including data cleaning, analysis, and review of research outputs prior to publication submission.

### **Discussion on Statistical Collaboration and Authorship**

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the role of statisticians in graduate student research, particularly regarding data ownership, thesis contributions, and authorship.

- The presenter explained his general approach to collaboration, based on previous institutional experience:
  - If he performs full data analysis and works directly with datasets, co-authorship is typically expected;
  - If he provides statistical consultation only, acknowledgement may be sufficient;
  - If he reviews outputs and provides suggestions without directly handling data, authorship decisions depend on level of contribution.
- He emphasized that authorship and contribution expectations are typically clarified through discussion with the supervising faculty member at the start of a project.
- In the discussion, concerns were raised about situations where:
  - statistical analysis is fully completed by a statistician, but results are incorporated directly into a student’s thesis without clear attribution; and
  - students may not be fully involved in the analytical process due to lack of training, time, or technical capacity.
- He noted that expectations regarding thesis ownership, analytical responsibility, and attribution vary across institutions and are not always consistently defined.
- Faculty members discussed the broader challenge of defining intellectual contribution in statistical analysis versus other technical support roles.
- Concerns were raised about ensuring transparency in student theses and publications, particularly regarding who conducted analyses and how contributions are acknowledged.
- The possibility of formal contribution statements within theses (similar to practices in some European institutions) was suggested as a potential way to improve clarity and transparency.
- The importance of maintaining student ownership of thesis work and ensuring students are able to defend their analyses was emphasized.

## **5 Epi on the Island Courses in Future Years**

- It was noted that any individuals who previously offered these courses have either retired or are nearing retirement. As a group, it was agreed that the key question is: “What is the future of Epi on the Island?” Given the significance and scope of this topic, it was suggested that it would be best addressed as a primary discussion item at a future CVER Coffee meeting.

## **6 Graduate Students – Increasing numbers at CVER and Inclusion of graduate students in CVER activities**

- The group had a discussion on declining numbers over the past 20 years within CVER. A conversation was initiated on the challenges facing recruiting grad students and pathways to improve on. Funding was discussed as a large barrier. Recommended stipends remain a complicated issue and a priority in finding a way to be fair to the student while also acknowledging the needs of faculty.
- A small discussion followed on the possibility of targeting students early on to potentially identify them.
- An alumni network was thought to be beneficial, and a previous database was mentioned with the concern being that many UPEI email addresses may not exist anymore.
- LinkedIn was brought forward to make student connections as well as the DVM program.
- Possible opportunities were identified with the VetSRA students.

## **7 Material to be posted on the password-protected portion of the CVER website**

- The setup of a password protected subsection on the CVER website for posting resources relevant for students, will be discussed in the near future at a CVER coffee social.

Adjourned at 2:31pm