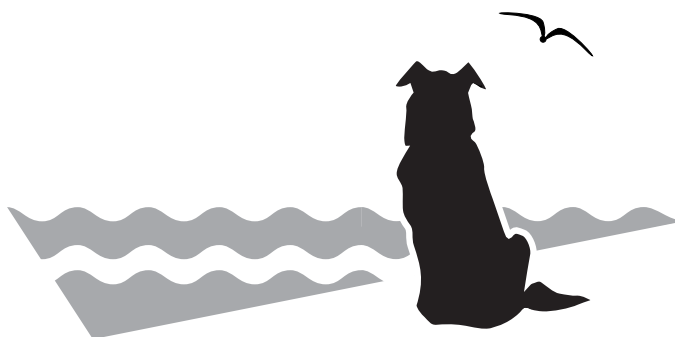


awc news

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Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre
ATLANTIC VETERINARY COLLEGE • UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



From the Coordinator's desk

Welcome to the ninth edition of the AWC News, the newsletter of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (AWC) at the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC), University of Prince Edward Island. This edition contains descriptions of the twelve projects recently funded through the 2002 AWC competition, a brief update on Bill C-15 B (Cruelty to Animals) and, on page six, an article on positive dog training by Dr. Norma Guy (AVC Clinical Behaviour Service).

Newly funded projects include *Improving care of poisoned animals in Atlantic Canada* (Dr. C. Gaskill), *Effects of aging on the immune system in horses* (Dr. J McClure), *Factors affecting the welfare of non-racing horses in PEI* (Dr. C. Hewson) and, funded through the Student Project Fund, *Ear cropping and tail docking in dogs: Information pamphlet* (Ms. K. Evers). Again this year, there are projects collaborating with community groups - to neuter feral cats on PEI (Dr. H. Gelens), and to use positive training methods to work with dogs at the PEI Humane Society (Dr. N. Guy). Funding has also been renewed for *Medical and surgical care of homeless dogs and cats* (Dr. C. Runyon) through which over 1700 animals from area shelters have been cared for at AVC since the programme was established in 1994. Another returning project *Health management services for the PEI Equine Retirement Society Inc.* (Dr. W. Duckett) has provided health services to horses since 1997.

On February 19 in Vancouver, Dr. Hewson gave the first in the Peter Stratton Memorial Lecture Series, which is funded by the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada. Dr. Hewson was hosted by Dr. David Fraser and Dr. Dan Weary of the University of British Columbia, who head a very active and large, internationally renowned animal welfare research group. Dr. Hewson spent three days at UBC, discussing topics of mutual interest.

We are very pleased with the scope of projects that the Centre is able to support, through the generosity of the Sir James Dunn and Friends of the Christofo Foundations. The 12 projects funded this year bring to a total of 72 the number of projects funded since 1994. Providing tangible benefits for companion animals, horses and wildlife remains the focus of the Centre. Please visit our web site for further information—www.upei.ca/awc

Alice Crook

Message from the Research Chair

The Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre is getting bigger and busier. Ms. Julie Christie and Dr. Nina Wojciechowska, my two MSc students, are beginning their data collection. They are respectively surveying the welfare of non-racing horses in PEI and assessing quality of life in dogs. Ms. Judy Simms, a laboratory technician at AVC, has been providing part-time technical help. She has been transcribing the data from the national survey of veterinarians' use of analgesics in dogs and cats undergoing surgery. Meanwhile, second year vet student Ms. Robin Masland has joined the Centre for the summer, and is developing a series of animal welfare information leaflets for distribution to veterinary clinics. The subjects of the leaflets include the de-clawing of cats and the welfare of exotic pets.



Back row: Caroline Hewson, Research Chair; Nina Wojciechowska, MSc student; Alice Crook, Coordinator; and Maggie; Robin Masland, summer student; Front row: Julie Christie, MSc student, and Eddie

Ms. Masland will represent the AWC at the annual meeting of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association in Halifax July 17 to 20, where we will share a booth with the Atlantic Veterinary College. The meeting will be a highlight for the Centre because Dr. Crook is this year's recipient of the Association's Humane Award (see page five). She will be presented with the award in Halifax on July 20.

Given the increased number of people involved with the Animal Welfare Centre, we have included a group photo for this issue. We all wish you a very good summer.

Caroline J. Hewson



NEW PROJECTS - 2002

Eleven service and research projects have recently been funded through the 2002 competition of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (AWC) at the Atlantic Veterinary College. A twelfth project was funded through the Centre's Student Project Fund. In total, \$267,000 was awarded for these 12 projects.

Factors affecting the welfare of non-racing horses in PEI

Dr. C. Hewson, Ms. J. Christie, Drs. I. Dohoo, M. McNiven, and C. Riley

There are about 4000 horses that are kept on PEI for reasons other than racing. This study will describe the welfare of these horses, and look at the effect of management practices on their welfare. This will be accomplished through interviews with owners and assessment of their horses. The horses' welfare will be described based on health status, body condition, and the presence or absence of stereotypic (repetitive) behaviours. Information will also be collected about management factors such as social contact and pasture access. The data will be analyzed and used to identify risk factors associated with poor welfare. The results will be incorporated into a leaflet for owners, describing what is already being accomplished to achieve good welfare for non-racing horses on PEI, and advising about areas of concern.



Cheryl (AVC Teaching Horse), Julie Christie, and Caroline Hewson

Acupuncture to treat hip dysplasia in dogs

Drs. A. Ortenburger and C. Runyon, and Ms. M. Parsons

Acupuncture has been available at the Atlantic Veterinary College since 1996, when an acupuncture service was started by Dr. Ortenburger with a grant from the AWC. The chronic pain of arthritis is one of the most common indicators for acupuncture therapy. Hip dysplasia is a common cause of arthritis in dogs, and is the single most frequent reason that dogs are referred to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital for acupuncture. Although acupuncture appears to be highly effective in treating the pain and lameness associated with hip dysplasia, there is a lack of published scientific data to support this, which leads some to question its usefulness. This pilot

project will involve a small group of dogs with hip dysplasia and will examine ways of measuring the effect of acupuncture on their pain and lameness. The results will be used to plan a larger project.

Pain management in birds

Drs. C. Runyon, A. Ferraro, and E. Miller

The importance of proper assessment and management of pain is being increasingly recognized in veterinary and human medicine. Untreated pain causes physical and psychological stresses that result in states ranging from mild discomfort, to delayed healing and recovery, to shock and even death. The use of effective painkillers is clearly an important part of successful treatment. Pain management is a real challenge in birds. Little is known about how to assess if birds are feeling pain and how to determine effective dosages of pain relievers. In fact, it is likely that difficulty in assessing and managing pain in birds is an important factor when treatment fails. This project is the next step in a study that was funded last year through the AWC, to establish a technique to measure pain/stress levels in birds. The species being studied is the red-tailed hawk which is the wild bird that is most frequently admitted to the Atlantic Veterinary College and other participating wild-life facilities. The study will measure physical changes that are known to be associated with pain in other species, and will document behaviours in birds that may be associated with pain, through videotaping them when they are alone. The birds will receive treatment as required. The eventual goal is to develop specific ways of assessing pain in companion and wild birds, and to determine appropriate medication to relieve their pain.



Healthy captive red-tailed hawks at Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, that are being observed for normal behaviour as part of this study

Effects of aging on the immune system of horses

Drs. J. McClure, D. MacFarlane, and D. P. Lunn

Vaccination is an important part of preventive health care. Studies on the effectiveness of vaccines are usually carried out on young or healthy adult animals. It is known that advancing age weakens the immune system, and this is thought to contribute

to the increased susceptibility to infectious disease. In other species, the ability to respond adequately to vaccination has been shown to decline with age. This study will compare the response to vaccination against rabies and equine influenza virus in healthy adult horses (four to 12 years), with the response in healthy aged horses (older than 25 years). Equine influenza is one of the most important contagious respiratory diseases in the horse, and almost all horses have come in contact with this disease by three to four years of age. Rabies was not present in the region until recently when it was confirmed in New Brunswick; therefore, it is timely to consider vaccination of Maritime horses against rabies. The results of the study will help veterinarians to plan the best vaccination strategies for aged horses, and to better understand the impact of aging on the immune system in horses.

Neutering feral cats on PEI
Drs. H. Gelens and P. Foley

Most communities have populations of feral cats in their midst, that are a source of concern to community members, veterinarians, and animal control agencies. These semi-wild cats are the offspring of stray or abandoned animals, which typically live in areas where they are able to find some food and shelter. These cats are often unhealthy, with a significantly reduced lifespan due to illness and injury; much of this is related to uncontrolled reproduction. An alternative to euthanasia of these cats is a “trap, neuter and release” programme. These programmes are being carried out in many areas of North America, and result in cat populations that are more stable (zero to low birth rate) and healthier (vaccinated, and with reduced fighting associated with mating behaviour). Such a programme was established through the AVC at the Atlantic Veterinary College last year, in cooperation with the Cat Action Team (CAT) in Charlottetown and the Town Council of North Rustico. In 2001 these groups trapped and brought in 185 feral cats and kittens over six weeks of age to the AVC where they were anesthetized, tested for two common serious infectious diseases, vaccinated, identified, neutered and, after recovery from anesthesia and surgery, released back to the original area.



AVC students with anesthetized cat

Fifty-six additional feral cats were neutered at the AVC with funds privately raised by CAT. Funding through the AVC will support 12 neuter days over the next two years, to test, vaccinate, and neuter approximately 40 cats on each occasion. Additional communities on PEI will be involved. Veterinary services are provided voluntarily by students, staff, and faculty at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Trapping of the cats and their release after surgery will continue to be coordinated by CAT. The intent of this project is to reduce the suffering of feral cats on PEI by improving their health and stabilising their population.

Wildlife rehabilitation (including orphaned wildlife care)
Drs. H. Gelens, C. Runyon, and P-Y. Daoust

Concerned members of the public often bring orphaned or injured wild animals (birds and small mammals) to the Atlantic Veterinary College to receive veterinary and nursing care. Sometimes these animals require medical attention or temporary nursing and supportive care (especially for orphaned wildlife); sometimes the best thing for them is humane euthanasia. Unfortunately mortality among these animals is often high, due to the lack of accurate information and the inherent difficulties in the rescue and care of different species of wildlife. This project was started in 1999 and resulted in an increase in the number of successful releases back into the wild, expanded veterinary student participation, and the establishment of preliminary networks with other wildlife rehabilitators. This project has been funded again this year, to build upon and improve the existing level of care for these animals at AVC, including the purchase of specialized supplies. The project will also continue to provide practical experience for veterinary students interested in wildlife care, equipping them to play a leadership role in this area in their communities once they graduate. The end goal for all patients is successful release back into the wild.

Medical and surgical care of homeless dogs and cats
Dr. C. Runyon

Funded since 1994 through the Animal Welfare Centre, this project will continue to address the problems of pet overpopulation and homeless animals in the region. During the past eight years more than 950 animals from the PEI Humane Society, the Moncton SPCA, and the Amherst Animal Shelter have come to AVC to be neutered and returned to the shelter for adoption. Over the same period, approximately 750 stray dogs and cats were brought to the AVC Teaching Hospital by animal shelters or Good Samaritans, for treatment of illness or injury. Once healthy (and neutered if appropriate) these animals are placed in adoptive homes. The project has been funded for a further two years. There are many benefits. Neutered animals are more adoptable and healthier and they won't “accidentally” produce any litters. Sick or injured homeless dogs and cats found by or brought to the Humane Society have immediate access to treatment. This has resulted in a close working relationship between AVC and the animal shelters, creating increased awareness and discussion of companion animal welfare issues by AVC students.

AVC humane dog training programme

Dr. N. Guy

Most dogs that are given up to animal shelters in North America are adolescents (six months to two years of age). Many of these dogs may appear boisterous and unruly, and have had little training. Through this project, funded initially in 2001, a programme was developed by AVC students to work with the PEI Humane Society, its dogs, and their new owners. During the last year, 15 volunteer student trainers worked with over 60 dogs at the Society, to teach basic commands and reduce problems with unwanted behaviours. After the dogs are adopted, the students are available to provide support and counseling for new owners as to what to expect, as well as training advice.

This project has received funding for another year. Behaviour modification using positive reinforcement (clicker training) is used. No aversive, or punishment-based, techniques are employed. Interaction with the students provides much-needed enrichment for the dogs while they are at the shelter, and the reduction in unwanted behaviours increases the likelihood that the dogs will be adopted, and will fit in happily in their new homes. Working with shelter dogs and their new owners is a valuable experience for the students who, as veterinarians, will often have to advise clients on pet behaviour.



AVC student Juanita MacIntyre working with PEI Humane Society pup

Humane education in schools

Dr. N. Guy

Since the beginning of this project in 1997, volunteer veterinary students and their pets have made over 300 visits to classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12, to promote better pet-owner relationships and to foster compassion and respect for animals. Although the programme is based in PEI and mostly serves this province, a number of presentations have been given in the other three Atlantic provinces. Topics include choosing a pet that is right for you and your family, bite prevention, how to communicate with your pet, caring for your pet, and first aid. For the more senior grades, there are discussions about our societal responsibilities to pets, with reference to pet overpopulation and euthanasia. Lesson plans, videos, and a French-English colouring book have been put together as supplements to the visits. The visits have been very well received by teachers and

students, and lesson plans have been supplied on request to several humane societies across Canada and to interested school teachers in the region. The project has received funding for the next two years to hire a student to coordinate the presentations and other aspects of the project, and to cover travel expenses and the cost of materials.

Health management services for the PEI Equine Retirement Society Inc.

Drs. W. Duckett and G. Conboy

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 27 horses of which 11 have been placed in new homes, four have been euthanized due to intractable health problems and 12 are currently at the facility. Through the support of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, AVC has provided preventive medical care to the horses at the Society from the beginning. The funding for this project is continued for two more years. The programme includes a physical exam on all horses that come to the PEIERS, a parasite monitoring and control programme for the facility, dental work, routine vaccinations, and minor surgical and medical procedures as needed. This year the programme will be expanded to include vaccination against Eastern and Western encephalitis, and to screen horses arriving at the facility for equine infectious anemia. AVC senior veterinary students, interns and residents all participate in the care of these horses. This project provides significant benefits to the horses through basic preventive medicine in preparation for adoption, and by minimizing respiratory disease and parasite burden at the facility.



Dr. Gus Stringel and Jack, a 4-year-old Standardbred who was retired from racing due to tendon injuries

Improving care of poisoned animals in Atlantic Canada
Dr. C. Gaskill

Poisoning of dogs, cats and horses by toxic substances is quite common. Many poisonings result in severe injury or death within minutes to hours after exposure; therefore it is critical to have rapid access to information about diagnosis and treatment. No published toxicological information exists for many new drugs and new chemical products, or the available information usually pertains to humans only. The only animal-oriented poison control centre in North America is the Animal Poison Control Centre (APCC) which is an excellent source of information. The APCC is a 24-hour, non-profit, emergency toxicology hotline service providing diagnostic and treatment recommendations to veterinarians and animal owners. Staffed by 25 veterinary toxicologists with access to an extensive collection of scientific journals and books, as well as a sophisticated database involving hundreds of thousands of toxic substances, the APCC provides information that is available nowhere else in the world. The primary goal of this project is to improve the clinical care and treatment of poisoned animals in the Atlantic provinces, by providing toxicological information to veterinarians. This will happen via creation of a website to be updated bi-monthly over the next year that will provide information about new and important toxins, and will highlight for veterinarians various relevant information sources such as the APCC and useful web sites. The second major goal is to enable Atlantic Veterinary College clinicians, teachers, researchers, and others to access the APCC's database, by setting up an APCC account for the AVC. This will facilitate access to information available from the APCC, to improve patient care, for research purposes, and for teaching - to better equip students to deal with poison cases after they graduate from the AVC.

The following project was funded through the AWC Student Project Fund.

Ear cropping and tail docking in dogs: information pamphlet
Ms. K. Evers

Cosmetic surgery is performed to change a dog's appearance, and is not required for health reasons. Although banned in many countries, tail docking and to a lesser extent ear cropping are still common in Canada and the US, as specified by North American breed standards. These procedures are painful and there is a risk of post-operative complications, including infection, improper ear shape, and chronic pain. The AWC Student Project Fund is funding the development of a brochure about these surgeries, to help owners make informed choices when acquiring a pup of a breed in which ear cropping and/or tail docking is still the norm in North America.

OTHER NEWS

Bill C-15 B (Cruelty to Animals) passes Third Reading

On June 4, 2002, Bill C-15 B passed Third (and final) Reading in the Canadian House of Commons, with no changes other than those proposed by then Justice Minister Anne McLellan in December 2001, following analysis by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. These revisions strengthen or clarify the Bill.

The Bill contains amendments to the Canadian Criminal Code that will provide important new protection for animals in Canada. Among other measures, C-15B increases penalties for Canadians convicted of intentional cruelty to animals, from the current maximum of six months in prison and fines of up to \$2000, to a possible five years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000.

Bill C-15B is now before the Senate where it has passed First and Second Reading. Following committee hearings and Third Reading in the Senate, the bill (if passed) must receive royal assent before becoming law. For more information on C-15B, please go to the AWC web site www.upei.ca/awc/cruelty.htm

CVMA Humane Award

The AWC is pleased to announce that Dr. Alice Crook is this year's recipient of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's Humane Award. The Award "is presented to an individual, veterinarian or non-veterinarian, whose work is judged to have contributed significantly to the welfare and well-being of animals". The award is being given to Dr. Crook in recognition of her work in establishing the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre since its beginnings (as the Animal Welfare Unit) in 1994; her contributions over seven years to the CVMA's Animal Welfare Committee, including chairing the committee from 1999 through 2001; and her longstanding participation on the PEI Humane Society's Board of Directors.

This is the second time that the Animal Welfare Centre has been connected with the recipient of the award. Dr. Karen Gibson received the 2000 CVMA Humane Award for advancing companion animal welfare through a number of very effective service projects funded through the Centre. Dr. Gibson has left the College but the projects continue. They are *Humane education in schools*, *Medical and surgical care of homeless dogs and cats* and *Neutering feral cats on PEI* and they are outlined in this issue.

We are delighted that Dr. Crook is receiving this recognition through the CVMA Humane Award. The award will be presented to her in Halifax on July 20, at the CVMA's annual Awards Luncheon.



Dr. Alice Crook & Tigger

The changing face of dog training

Dr. Norma Guy (AVC Clinical Behaviour Service)

Heel, sit, down, stay - the meat and potatoes of dog training. Many people are convinced that teaching their dog to respond to these commands is the only road to a great family pet. It is not the actual responses a dog learns, however, but the way in which those responses are taught that makes all the difference. The process of domestication has given dogs a relatively high tolerance for the foibles of their human owners. You can train a dog to do almost anything, using almost any technique, if you are consistent. Generations of dog trainers have employed the “spare the rod and spoil the child” approach, assuming that dogs are driven to overstep boundaries, and that we must be on guard to keep them in their place.

Few dog owners are skilled trainers, or have the time to invest in serious dog training. On the other hand, dog ownership has the potential to be a tremendously important part of the lives of many people. When the relationship works, dogs make us laugh, they get us out exercising and socializing, and they are indeed good company. If you ask someone to describe a dog they have met that impressed them, they will invariably describe it as being friendly and appealing, with self-control - a dog that is great with kids, visitors, and other dogs. Will it walk in the heel position? Will it do a 20 minute down stay? Do we really care? Most of the responses that are required of dogs in competitive obedience trials are akin to the stereotypic training of ballet - beautiful and demanding, but far removed from normal movement and behaviour. What people are seeking in a family dog cannot be found solely in regimented command response, because what makes a dog truly great is attitude.

Traditional dog training techniques teach the dog how to avoid “corrections” (a euphemism for punishment). Jerks on the leash, or “pops” as they are sometimes called, are applied when the dog makes an error. Many owners unhappily apply these methods, believing there is no alternative. Such aversive training frequently leads to serious problems with anxiety and aggression. How can a jerk on a choke collar teach a dog to relax with visitors, to gladly tolerate accidental ear-tugging by toddlers, or to enjoy having its nails trimmed?

When a dog is trained with positive reinforcement, command response becomes a psychologically safe place. This type of training uses rewards such as a small food treat, and is a particularly effective method if some sort of cue (a clicker or whistle) is also given prior to the treat to mark the correct behaviour at the moment it occurs. Commands such as “sit” are associated with feelings of happy anticipation, not avoidance of pain. The dog learns that following the owner’s lead, even when placed in a stressful situation, is a way to reduce anxiety. We can shape dogs to have a relaxed and engaging attitude, which in the end gives us the social behaviour we were looking for in the first place.

Science has proven that animals can be trained to perform very consistently without punishment, and that positive reinforcement produces more adaptable behaviour. What’s more, it makes a dog’s tail wag. Nothing like a little dessert with the meat and potatoes.

For more information on positive dog training methods, see *The Power of Positive Dog Training* (Howell Book House) by Pat Miller, www.clickertraining.com, and www.gentleleader.com

MANDATE

The Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre (AWC) exists to promote animal health and well-being in the broadest sense.

Objectives:

- 1) The AWC promotes research projects and service activities where there is a clear potential for tangible benefits to animals.
- 2) The AWC serves as a resource centre to compile, generate, and disseminate information relevant to the well-being of animals.
- 3) The AWC strives to raise the awareness of the public and the veterinary profession on broad questions of animal welfare and animal use, and to provide accurate, scientifically based information on these questions.

The Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre gratefully acknowledges the continued support of the Sir James Dunn Foundation and the Friends of the Christofor Foundation.



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