

A Society for Companion Animal Studies' (SCAS) Conference

Animal-Assisted Interventions: Research meets Practice

Sunday 19th September 2021
9am-5pm (GMT) Online

The conference provides evidence-based research from academics, supported by case studies from organisations who are putting this research into practice and offering animal-assisted interventions to three different client groups (children, older adults, and mental health).

**Prizes will be awarded for the best poster and best student poster
(see our website for full details)**



Cost: £60 per person. £30 for SCAS members.
(Become a SCAS member for just £25 and book at the member rate!).



Book a place online at www.scas.org.uk

Programme Overview

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| 09.00–09.15 | Welcome and Greeting from Conference Chair, Dr. Sandra McCune |
| 09.15–10.00 | Keynote: Progressing the field of Animal Assisted Interventions: the need for science, practice and government working together Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers (President of IAHAIO) |
| 10.00–11.00 | Session 1: Pets and Children Talk 1: Children and Companion Animals: Child-animal interactions and animal-assisted interventions Professor Joanne M. Williams (University of Edinburgh) Talk 2: The Virtual Read2Dogs Service Model Matthew Robinson (Pets as Therapy) Talk 3: Reversing the cycle of abuse and fostering compassion Lesley Winton (Fostering Compassion) <i>- Break -</i> |
| 11.15–11.30 | Session 1: Questions and answers |
| 11.30–12.00 | SCAS Funded Projects: Videos from the 2020 recipients <i>- Lunch -</i> |
| 12.45–13.45 | Session 2: Pets and Older Adults Talk 1: Companion Animals in the Lives of Older Adults Professor Nancy R. Gee (Virginia Commonwealth University) Talk 2: Therapet® visiting with the Elderly James Macdonald (Therapet) Talk 3: Our Special Friends (OSF): promoting, preserving and providing the power of animal companionship for people in need in the local community Dr Belinda Johnston (Our Special Friends) |
| 13.45–14.00 | Session 2: Questions and answers |
| 14.00–14.30 | SCAS Funded Projects: Videos from the 2020 recipients <i>- Break -</i> |
| 14.45–15.45 | Session 3: Pets and Mental Health Talk 1: The role of companion animals for people living with mental health problems: a systematic review of current evidence Dr Helen Brooks (University of Manchester) Talk 2: The Hope and Recovery Pet Program: A One Health Emotional Support Animal Placement Initiative Dr. Janet Hoy-Gerlach (The Hope and Recovery Programme) Talk 3: Horse Play & Canine Capers- NO compromise – Animal sentience & welfare IS Animal Assisted Play Therapy Tracie Faa-Thompson (Animal Assisted Play Therapy™) |
| 15.45–16.00 | Session 3: Questions and answers |
| 16.00–16.50 | Panel on the Integration of Research and Practice Prof. Marie-José Enders-Slegers, Dr. Nancy R. Gee, Dr. Janet Hoy-Gerlach, Prof. Jo Williams |
| 16.50–17.00 | Awards and closing remarks |



Dr Sandra McCune V.N., B.A.(Mod), Ph.D.

Sandra's background is in veterinary nursing and ethology. She has studied a range of companion animal topics including aspects of temperament, behaviour, cognition and welfare, and Human-Animal Interaction (HAI). Until 2019, she was a scientific leader for Mars Petcare, based at the WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition. She has extensive experience studying HAI from both animal and human perspectives in collaborations with HAI researchers from the USA, U.K., Austria, France, Germany, Australia, Brazil, Russia, Japan and China, and has presented internationally on companion animals and their relationship with people.

Sandra was instrumental in the establishment of the public-private partnership between the National Institutes of Health and Mars/WALTHAM focused on child development and HAI resulting in a programme of high-quality HAI research, workshops and several edited volumes, journal series and book chapters. Sandra is a Visiting Professor of Human-Animal Interaction at the University of Lincoln. She is also a Fellow of the Annenberg PetSpace Leadership Institute. She currently leads ANIMAL MATTERS Consultancy Ltd, providing expert input on a wide range of animal issues. She shares her home with her family including two cats and a lurcher.

09.15–10.00

Progressing the field of Animal Assisted Interventions: the need for science, practice and government working together

The world has changed a lot since COVID and the field of Animal Assisted Interventions has gone through challenging times. A reflection on the current state of research and practice in our AAI field will be presented and ways about how to develop strategies and build collaborations that are helpful to make progression. The diversity of the client groups, the multidisciplinary professionals, the many species of animals that are involved, ask for professionalism: in the human field as well in the animal field. Besides a license in a professional field, (psychotherapy, occupational therapy, pedagogy, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc.) knowledge of animal behaviour, animal emotions and animal wellbeing as well as knowledge about best practices to 'do the job' is required. Therefore, tight collaboration is needed between science and practice as well as the support and acknowledgment of governmental bodies. Besides an overview of the state of art suggestions will be made how to pave a pathway towards a transparent professional AAI field in which many parties, practice, research and government participate.



Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers Professor em. PhD. MsC

Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers is a clinical and health psychologist by training. Her special field of interest is the human-animal bond and animal-assisted interventions in health care and education. Her research topics include: the development of the human-animal bond, the meaning and effects of human-animal interactions and animal-assisted interventions for different groups of vulnerable people (e.g. elderly people, elderly people with dementia, traumatized children, mentally handicapped people, children with behaviour problems, veterans with PTSD). She is also interested in the 'dark side' of the human-animal relationship: the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. In 2013 she was appointed as Professor in Anthrozoology at the Faculty of Psychology, Open University Heerlen, the Netherlands. Since 2016 she is serving as President of IAHAIO (International Association of Human Animal Interaction Organizations). She is involved in many international and national boards, is ISAZ fellow and published many articles and book chapters.

10.00–11.00

Talk 1: Children and Companion Animals: Child-animal interactions and animal-assisted interventions

This lecture will begin with an overview of the role of pets in children's lives, and consideration of the recent changes in UK pet ownership during the covid-19 pandemic. We will consider evidence of 'pet effects', the impact of living with companion animals on children's development, and in particular the role of attachment to pets for child mental health and wellbeing. Drawing on a range of studies we will explore what attachment to pets is, how it can be measured, and how it can change with child's age and type of pet. We will also review evidence of the benefits of animal-assisted interventions for children in both health and educational contexts. Attention will then focus on how children's relationships with animals can affect their behaviour towards them. Viewing children's behaviour towards animals on a spectrum from compassion to harm, we explore risk and protective factors for animal harm. We will consider how we can promote compassionate behaviour towards animals through school-based interventions focusing on animal welfare needs and appropriate responsible pet care. Essential components of successful interventions and how we can evaluate them effectively, will be considered. The lecture will close by reflecting on what we do not yet know about animal-assisted interventions for children. We will consider how we can promote reciprocal benefits for children and animals through supporting their relationships.



Professor Joanne M. Williams
(University of Edinburgh)

Jo leads 'Children, Adolescent and Animals Research' (caar) and is Director of the Centre for Applied Developmental Psychology, at the University of Edinburgh. She has over 20 years of experience of research on child and adolescent mental health, children's interactions with animals, and animal cruelty prevention. Her research has been supported by grants from a range of funders: UK Government, European Union, ESRC-UKRI, The Wellcome Trust, R.S. MacDonald Charitable Trust, and Royal Society of Edinburgh. A particular strength of her research approach is that she works collaboratively with animal welfare charities (including The Scottish SPCA, Fostering Compassion, SCAS and The Blue Cross) to co-create impactful research that will lead to societal changes for children and their animals.

10.00–11.00

Talk 2: The Virtual Read2Dogs Service Model

Synopsis: Pets As Therapy like many other charitable organisations were impacted greatly by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to pivot relatively quickly due to our size and therefore react to the restrictions using technology as our primary support mechanism to keep engagement with our volunteers and clients as active as possible. In the first National lockdown we trialled a video-conferencing delivery model of our popular Read2Dogs service aimed at developing literacy within Primary School-aged Children. The trial allowed us to test the service and ultimately configure it for a wider rollout having listened to feedback from stakeholders. Once we were happy with the model and made sure we were happy with our policies and associated risk management we applied to and were successful in gaining a National Lottery Covid-19 Community Grant. The grant enabled us to fund a 6-month long project aimed at re-engaging our volunteers and delivering 12,000 interactions with Primary School-aged Children. In this lecture we will share with you the process and look at some of the key findings from our data collection. We will look at the overall engagement with the service and the feedback through testimonial reports, surveys and social media.



Matthew Robinson MSci, PGCE (Pets as Therapy)

Matt holds a Masters in Geology from the University of Bristol with several years' experience of Oil & Gas exploration in the North Sea. Subsequently Matt qualified as a secondary science teacher having studied for a PGCE through the Open University. Matt brings a variety of skills from his training and work experience into his role at Pets As Therapy (PAT). Since starting with PAT, Matt has developed a broad understanding of how a charity works and taken on a variety of roles such as fundraising, marketing and communications, volunteer management and external relationship management including corporate support sourcing and maintenance. Part of Matts role includes working towards shared goals with organisations such as SCAS and its other members for the betterment of the sector.

10.00–11.00

Talk 3: Reversing the cycle of abuse and fostering compassion

The award winning humane education charity Fostering Compassion addresses the links between animal abuse, child abuse and interpersonal violence and works to reverse the cycle of abuse often existing in these circumstances. Working with children who may be showing worrying behaviour towards animals and be lacking compassion and empathy, we share stories of rescued animals in such a way that the children draw parallels with their own circumstances. This helps the children learn to see animals as sentient beings who experience similar emotions to them often providing a platform for the children to open up about their own neglect, helping turn worrying behaviour into caring, nurturing behaviour. Starting in 2013 with 10 children, now over 800 children have benefitted from the programme. Children referred have suffered traumatic and abusive early years often witnessing cruelty to animals resulting in indifference towards them. Through unique connections with animals and sharing the stories of rescued animals we create an environment where children feel they belong leading to improved feelings of self worth and self confidence. They learn they can make a difference in the world and their actions make a difference. We provide coping techniques to continue at home to build on positive behaviour changes taking place during our workshops. Children participating in Fostering Compassion showed significant improvements in their belief in animal minds (Child-BAM), animal welfare knowledge, attachment to animals, and attitudes towards cruelty. These findings indicate that the workshops improve children's orientations towards animals and are likely to reduce the likelihood of these children being cruel to animals in the future.



Lesley Winton (Fostering Compassion)

Lesley initially studied Legal Studies and Legal Accounting working in this field for 15 years. She then left to pursue her passion for animal welfare and addressing the links between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic abuse. She has 30 years experience working in the Voluntary Sector in both a professional and volunteer capacity and has set up two charities in relation to animal welfare and child welfare. Driven by the desire to develop a unique humane education project for vulnerable children led to the creation of Fostering Compassion, bringing together abused and neglected children with rescued animals. Lesley published her first book in September 2013 highlighting the importance of the human-animal bond and how hard pet bereavement can be. Lesley won the Ceva Animal Welfare Award for Charity Professional of the Year in 2017.

12.45–13.45

Talk 1: Companion Animals in the Lives of Older Adults

This presentation explores the growing evidence-base on the impact of companion animals on the health and wellbeing of older adults. This topic will be explored from two perspectives: pet ownership and animal-assisted interventions (AAI). The discussion will include ways that companion animals may impact aspects of physical and psychological health as well as social connectedness for older adults. Examples will include exercise associated with dog walking, risk of cardiovascular disease, impact of stressors, depression, loneliness and social isolation among others. The quality and strength of the current evidence will be discussed and implications for the findings will be considered.



Professor Nancy R. Gee PhD
(Virginia Commonwealth University)

Nancy is Professor of Psychiatry, Bill Balaban Chair in Human Animal Interaction, and the Director of the Center for Human Animal Interaction at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, USA. She served for five years as the HAI Research Manager for the Waltham Petcare Science Institute, located in Leicestershire, UK. In this role she managed a large portfolio of collaborative university-based projects spanning multiple countries and topics. Dr. Gee's own program of research has focused primarily on the impact of dogs on aspects of human cognition, including working memory, executive functioning and physiological responses to interactions with dogs. A recipient of multiple grants and awards, she has more than 50 peer reviewed publications in HAI and has edited and contributed to numerous books on the subject. Dr. Gee regularly delivers international presentations, serves on editorial review boards of journals and on the governing boards of several organizations.

12.45–13.45

Talk 2: Therapet® visiting with the Elderly

In 1988 I volunteered to visit with my first dog called Bramble an Old English Sheepdog, to share her with others because of her gentle nature. That was 33 years ago. Visiting as a volunteer with Canine Concern Scotland Trust with a Therapet® which can be a dog or a cat is very rewarding and everyone starts their volunteering visits with working with the elderly. Our visits can take place in care homes, hospices, NHS wards and brain injury units and anywhere the elderly reside or gather in a day centre setting. Visiting with a Therapet® can often break down an invisible barrier that can exist between humans, but the simple sight of a well-trained dog wagging its tail coming up to you can bring on a conversation. The invisible barrier is broken right away, often with the simple question from the person “and what’s your name then” as the dog sits next to them to be stroked. I am often asked what does the Therapet® do? As we all know they can make us do several things without trying; they make us smile, make want to touch them and they encourage us to communicate. That is very a very powerful thing to be able to do when people are withdrawn with certain old age conditions. My talk to you today will be about this human animal interaction that I have found during my Therapet® visiting over the last 30 plus years and sharing some interesting interactions with the people I have visited.



James Macdonald (Therapet)

James has been a member of the Canine Concern Scotland Trust since its inception in 1988. He retired from the fire service in 2006 after serving 32 years with Strathclyde Fire & Rescue. He has a great interest in Old English Sheep Dogs and works for their Rescue & Rehoming in Scotland. All of his Old English Sheepdogs dogs have been registered as Therapets®, starting with Bramble, Kettles, Echo, Bonnie, Lacy, Willow, Tallie and now Apple. We also have had the lovely Pebbles too. Kettles, Echo, Bonnie, Lacy, Willow and Tallie have all been involved in our school visiting scheme in which the dogs and James all thoroughly enjoy. Both Willow and Tallie have taken part in the “Reading With Dogs” Programme. James is also very interested in our dog phobia work with children also children and adults with additional support needs. He is Trustee Director and one of the Area Representatives for Glasgow & Strathclyde and is currently chair of the Therapet Committee.

12.45–13.45

Talk 3: Our Special Friends(OSF): promoting, preserving and providing the power of animal companionship for people in need in the local community

OSF supports people experiencing times of vulnerability and where ownership of a pet, or contact with an animal, is crucial to enable them to cope. Many clients are elderly and facing issues including lack of mobility and frailty, social isolation and loneliness, poor physical and/or mental health, disability and financial strain. A range of animal companionship support services have been developed which are person-centred and tailored to the client's needs and include:

- Animal-Assisted Activity (AAA) Regular/weekly volunteer visits with dog to provide animal companionship, human social interaction and (if appropriate) accompanied walks
- Attending to the needs of pets, including dog walking, when a person is frail, ill or disabled and unable to fully care for the pet themselves but does not want to be separated from the animal
- Sourcing new animal companions and supporting the subsequent relationship
- Making temporary fostering arrangements for clients' animals at times of crisis or sudden change of circumstance with the aim to reunite owner and pet at a later date
- Identification of other health and welfare needs and liaison with relevant service providers which enables early intervention and prevention of crises
- Providing emotional support when facing animal bereavement
- Providing financial assistance when there is significant financial stress and animal welfare needs



Dr Belinda Johnston MA VetMB MRCVS
(Our Special Friends)

After graduating from Cambridge Vet School, Belinda was a founder partner of a London clinic before marriage took her to Suffolk. Studying person-centred counselling skills and her volunteering for Cruse (human bereavement) and the Samaritans developed her passionate interest in bereavement training and the need for multidisciplinary community support for people and animals experiencing vulnerability. She founded and runs the Suffolk, UK charity, 'Our Special Friends' providing animal companionship support services.

14.45–15.45

Talk 1: The role of companion animals for people living with mental health problems: a systematic review of current evidence

Mental illnesses have a significant impact on those that experience them, their families and the wider community. Traditional approaches to self-care and treatment; however, often fail to take into account the wider resources in people's everyday lives that may be important in managing mental health conditions such as companion animals. There is growing recognition about the role that pets can play in the management of health conditions. However, there has been no previous attempt to bring together evidence relating to how pets might contribute to the work that people have to do in order to successfully manage a long-term mental health conditions in their everyday lives. Three main types of work have previously been identified are:

- Practical work: any tasks which are practical in orientation such as housekeeping, personal care, diet and exercise, taking medication, understanding symptoms and preventative work to avoid crisis and relapse.
- Emotional work: wellbeing, companionship and comfort either generally or when worried about everyday matters and/or illness specific concerns.
- Biographical work: any tasks which are undertaken to give life meaning and allow people to develop and maintain a positive self-identity post diagnosis.

This presentation will give an overview of findings from the 17 studies that were identified from systematic searches of 9 academic databases and 5 databases of unpublished or 'grey' literature. Results will be presented in relation to the positive and negative contributions of companion animals to the three types of work implicated in the management of mental illness. The quality of included studies will also be discussed along with the implications for researchers, practitioners and policy makers.



Dr Helen Brooks BSc (hons), MRes, PhD
(University of Manchester)

Helen is a Senior Lecturer in the Mental Health Research Group at the University of Manchester. Her work has a dual focus on the role of social networks in the management of chronic conditions and the implementation of complex interventions designed to improve health experiences. She has a particular interest in the role of pets in the management of physical and mental health.

15.45–16.00

Talk 2: The Hope and Recovery Pet Program: A One Health Emotional Support Animal Placement Initiative

This lecture provides an overview of practice considerations in operating an Emotional Support Animal Placement Program known as the Hope and Recovery Pet (HARP) Program. HARP is located in Northwest Ohio and runs through a collaboration between the Toledo Area Humane Society (TAHS), ProMedica Healthcare System and the University of Toledo. Through HARP, homeless shelter animals are placed as Emotional Support Animals with adults living with chronic mental illness who are at risk of social isolation. To our knowledge, this is the first ESA placement program in the United States, and certainly the first to be located in a healthcare system. The goals of HARP are two-fold: 1) to improve health and wellness for individuals living with mental illness; and 2) to increase placement opportunities for shelter animals through developing and offering a national program model that can be replicated through partnerships between other healthcare systems and humane societies. HARP is thus an example of a One Health program; both human and animal well-being are advanced in an integrated fashion that leverages each to support the other. The well-being of both human participants and the animals serving as ESAs are of paramount importance within the HARP model.



**Dr. Janet Hoy-Gerlach Ph.D., LISW-S
(The Hope and Recovery Programme)**

Janet Hoy-Gerlach is a Professor of Social Work at the University of Toledo (Ohio USA) with a Joint Appointment in the Department of Psychiatry. She is an avid advocate for the inclusion of human-animal bond considerations within human healthcare and social service provision. Toward that end, she is lead author of *Human-Animal Interaction: A Social Work Guide* (2017), a book published by National Association of Social Work. Her research focuses on health and mental health benefits of human-animal interaction for individuals with chronic mental illness. Most recently, she completed a longitudinal study of the Hope and Recovery Pet (HARP) Program, which places homeless shelter animals as Emotional Support Animals through a One Health collaboration between ProMedica (a regional nonprofit healthcare/hospital system), Toledo Humane Society, and the University of Toledo. Dr. Hoy-Gerlach has worked extensively in community mental health as a case manager, therapist, clinical supervisor, and program developer/evaluator.

15.45–16.00

Talk 3: Horse Play & Canine Capers- NO compromise – Animal sentience & welfare IS Animal Assisted Play Therapy

This lecture is an Introduction to the field of Animal Assisted Play therapy and how Animal Ethology, Animal Welfare, sentience, and freedom of choice are fundamental to the approach. There is a growing desire to involve a range of animals in Animal Assisted Interventions, Animal Assisted Therapy, Visitation programmes to hospitals, schools etc. We see 'cute' pictures on all forms of social media which attract much interest. People are now buying 'therapy' animals. Some pictures show stressed animals. The focus in many programmes has been on training the animal to be able to perform certain tasks or NOT react when humans do things the animal finds aversive. Within the field some practitioners are purchasing or certifying 'therapy' animals etc without having any professional training themselves with the client group they are wishing to work with. The onus is on the animal to work the 'therapy' magic. There is also a slant toward what the animal can do for the human, how they made the human feel and much less on what the animal is getting out of the interaction. However, there is a desire for change. In AAPT being fluent in your animal's language and way of communication is key. Everyone wants a great relationship with their animal partners this lecture will hopefully help you think about your own great relationship with the animals in your life and how you can build an even stronger connection.



Tracie Faa-Thompson, BA Social Work, MA Crim, PG NDPT, Clin Hypno, Cert EAGALA,

Certified Non-directive Play Therapist; Filial Therapist, Supervisor & Filial Therapy Instructor. IIAAPT Instructor, supervisor, International trainer and speaker. Her passion is working outdoors in nature and since 2004 has been amalgamating Nature family therapy with Equine Assisted Family Therapy. Tracie is the author of numerous manuals, articles, and training programmes on attachment and resilience, life story work, sibling contact in adoption, introductions of adoptive families and children, EAL/EAP, and Animal Assisted Play Therapy. She is co-author of the book Animal Assisted Play Therapy which won the coveted Maxwell Award 2018 under the Category Human Animal Bond. Tracie and Dr Rise Van Fleet founded the International Institute of Animal Assisted Play Therapy™. Her Motto for life is 'Egotism the enemy of Empathy'.

SCAS was pleased to receive grant applications from scholars across the globe. Continued research into human-animal interactions, combined with practitioner training, is essential to help ensure that the field continues to develop responsibly, thus enabling more people and animals to benefit from carefully planned interventions.

Projects to this round of funding were prioritised if they focussed on animal assisted interventions, particularly with children, explored the human-companion animal relationship or utilised cross-disciplinary working.

Five pump priming grants were awarded to the following projects:

A framework for understanding the impact of dog ownership and its related activities on the mental health of autistic adults. Ana Maria Barcelos, University of Lincoln (£9,771)

SAFE – Safe Animal Friendly Eldercare. Developing a comprehensive multi-species risk management tool to enable people to bring their companion animals into high needs residential aged care (Dr Janette Young, University of South Australia, £10,000).

Exploring the use of animal assisted interventions in educational settings: A mixed method approach (Dr Lauren Finka, Nottingham Trent University, £9,952.30).

Physiological assessment of the effects of human-animal interaction on social anxiety in adolescence (Dr. Megan Mueller, Tufts University, £9,982).

How best to say goodbye? Exploring new ways of enfranchising childhood experiences of grief following the loss of nonhuman life or the termination of a nonhuman supportive relationship (Professor Samantha Hurn, University of Exeter, £9,989.34).

Additional funding:

In response to the ongoing covid-19 crisis, an additional project was funded which will examine the impact of the pandemic on companion animal relinquishment and abandonment (Dr Catherine Reeve, Queen's University Belfast, £9,285).

SCAS also funded the open access publication of a systematic review examining current evidence on the effects on assistance dogs on psychosocial health and wellbeing (Kerri Rodriguez, Purdue University, £1,372).