

As a graduate student, I was fortunate to have been invited to attend the 2023 SCAS Virtual Conference in September. I was excited to attend the Society for Companion Animal Studies Annual Conference because there were eight different speakers from different disciplines that contributed to companion animal research. With this year's theme focusing on the effect pets have on human mental and physical health, the presentations covered studies of populations from various backgrounds and age demographics. As an attendee from the western United States, it was fascinating learning about the research that occurs in other countries and the challenges each researcher faced.

Besides the diverse plenary speakers, the SCAS funded projects and poster presentations were also very interesting. As I learn more in my graduate studies, it is exciting learning about different methodologies and how they are applied to new research topics to examine human-animal interactions. Looking at the implications the COVID-19 pandemic had on mental health internationally, it is amazing to see how companion animals were utilized to help individuals struggling with their health.

The SCAS conference not only broadened my knowledge of recent research, but also allowed me to connect with experts in the field. I now follow the research of some of the world's top scientists that I can look to for guidance and inspiration. It was an amazing opportunity to virtually meet members of the community through this experience.