

THE
AUSTRALIAN
VETERINARIAN MAGAZINE

FIVE COMMON
MYTHS ABOUT
PRE-WARMING IN
VETERINARY PRACTICE

HOW AI POWERED
DIAGNOSTICS CAN MAKE
CONVERSATIONS EASIER
TO NAVIGATE

HOW WINTER
ROUTINE CHANGES
CAN UNDERMINE
PARASITE PREVENTION



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HOW WINTER ROUTINE CHANGES CAN UNDERMINE PARASITE PREVENTION

BY: DR EVAN SHAW - VETERINARIAN AND FOUNDER OF FLEAMAIL

Winter has a way of changing routines. We stay in bed longer, cut walks shorter, and suddenly the dog who was once out the door at 6:00am is staring at us wondering whether walks are still part of the household agreement.

New research commissioned by Zoetis Australia found 44% of Australian dog owners say winter changes how they exercise or walk their dog.¹ That is not surprising, but it does matter when it comes to parasite protection. When daily routines shift, the way owners perceive their dog's health needs can shift too, including their views on parasite risk.

WHAT DOG OWNERS SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT IN THE COLDER MONTHS

For veterinary teams, this seasonal change is more than a lifestyle observation. It is a timely prompt to revisit preventive health conversations and check whether owners are still maintaining the basics.

One thing I often remind owners is that dogs experience winter differently to us. They live closer to the ground, with many sleeping in a kennel or having a bed in a corner, usually on a hard surface. These can be the coldest places in the house or yard. I sometimes ask owners to put their head where their dog's head would be on a cold morning. It is a simple exercise, but it changes the conversation quickly.

Dog's comfort matters in winter, but routine matters just as much. For many dogs, the problem is not simply less exercise, it's the disruption of their routines. When daily walks disappear or are drastically shortened, it can affect their behaviour, stimulation and wellbeing. In some cases, that change can contribute to anxiety or destructive behaviour. It is not always something owners can "make up for" with a longer walk after work. With 14% of dog owners saying they walk

their dog significantly less in winter, this is a conversation veterinary teams should not skip.¹

HOW CHANGES IN EXERCISE AND OTHER ROUTINES DURING WINTER CAN AFFECT A DOG'S HEALTH

Winter is also when many everyday health habits start to slip. Washing, brushing, coat checks, diet, can all become less consistent. As people tend to crave higher-calorie comfort food in winter, many dogs end up sharing the leftovers. Combine that with less activity and more time indoors, these small changes can affect weight, behaviour and general wellbeing.

The same pattern can apply to preventive care. When owners are walking less, spending more time indoors or assuming their dog is less exposed, parasite protection can start to feel less urgent. I still hear owners say they only treat when they see signs of parasites, or that their dog is mostly indoors so exposure is low. The new research found that close to 400,000 dog owners say that winter changes their approach to parasite protection, including 1% (which is over 60,000 Australian dog owners!) who stop parasite protection during winter altogether.¹ This is an important insight because it suggests winter routine changes may inadvertently increase parasite risk if owners delay, reduce or stop prevention based on the assumption that less outdoor activity means lower exposure.

WHY PARASITE PREVENTION NEEDS TO STAY ON THE WINTER HEALTH CHECKLIST

A colder season or reduced outdoor activity does not eliminate parasite risk. Dogs may still be exposed through backyards, other animals, travel, and household conditions. Parasite risk also varies by geography, climate, lifestyle and local conditions. Prevention should be based on risk assessment rather than be a seasonal conversation.

I often come across the belief that parasite exposure can be controlled. While certain hygiene practices can help reduce exposure, no dog is risk-free, including dogs that spend most of their time indoors. This is especially important in the current cost-of-living environment. Many owners are looking for places to save, and if they believe parasite risk drops in winter, regular prevention may be seen as one area where they can have a cost saving by reducing its frequency or stopping all together.

The problem is that lack of routine prevention can end up costing far more, both financially and emotionally, depending on the parasite and the consequences for the dog's health. Prevention is almost always easier than dealing with a preventable health crisis later.

This is where veterinary teams can normalise winter conversations to raise these important factors. For some dog owners, simplifying parasite routine treatment can make a real difference. Discussing monthly, broad-spectrum options as part of a dog's winter health review can help owners connect parasite prevention with the broader routine they are already trying to maintain. For many dogs, Simparica Trio® may be one option to consider, as it provides monthly multi-action protection. The key is to help pet owners understand why that product suits their dog and how to use it consistently.

If there is one message we should reinforce this winter, it is this: let's stop talking as though there is an "off season" for parasites or that prevention matters more during certain seasons. Winter may change a dog's routine, but it should not pause preventive health care.

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HOW AI POWERED DIAGNOSTICS CAN MAKE CONVERSATIONS EASIER TO NAVIGATE

BY: DR TINH-SON NGUYEN (DVM, MBA), GLOBAL DIAGNOSTICS MEDICAL LEAD (APAC & AFRICA) AT ZOETIS

It's time for an honest conversation. Across Australia and New Zealand, veterinary teams are juggling intense workforce pressures, rising caseloads, and increasingly wellinformed pet owners. Against this backdrop, conversations around suspected serious illness are among the most challenging interactions in the consult room.

While conversational skills are integral in day-to-day general practice, visual aids can reinforce verbal explanations in a more accessible and tangible way. When we're discussing diagnostic results, analysers today can contribute to this process by presenting data visually and rapidly, supporting clear conversations with pet owners, even though communication is not their primary function.

THE PRESSURES SHAPING TODAY'S CONSULT ROOM

Workforce shortages remain a pressing challenge, particularly in regional and rural areas. In Australia, more than one-third of veterinary roles have reportedly taken over 12 months to fill, which contributes to heavier caseloads, longer consult days, and increased professional burnout.¹ In this context, tools that streamline workflows and reduce manual tasks are no longer a luxury, they're a necessity.

At the same time, emotionally invested pet owners have increased access to information through online resources and social media. They come to us looking for fast, transparent answers about their animal's health. The rising cost-of-living also makes affordability an important factor in these conversations. For us, this places a great importance on our ability to explain diagnostics, prognosis, and next steps clearly, with



OptiCell In-Clinic
(Photo credit: Zoetis)

little margin for misunderstanding.

AI-POWERED DIAGNOSTICS AS SUPPORTIVE CLINICAL TOOLS

Designed to support, not replace, veterinary expertise, diagnostic analysers harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) are well placed to function as clinical assistants.

Digital cytology and imaging platforms are already in use, analysing samples at the point of care and delivering structured, consistent outputs – sometimes even during the consultation. In busy practices, this immediacy can help streamline workflows and support clearer discussions around diagnostic findings. The AI contributes by enabling digital microscopes to quickly analyse and highlight areas of potential concern, significantly reducing the time clinicians spend manually reviewing slides or images, or waiting for samples to be sent to reference labs and analysed. The results can be available within hours, or even minutes, allowing healthcare teams to move onto the next stage of the diagnostic process or begin looking at treatment options.

Importantly, these tools do not make diagnoses independently; outputs generated by these AI platforms serve as decision support, with interpretation and clinical judgement resting with the veterinarian. Through consistent and

repeatable sample preparation and analysis, paired with reliable results, teams can more efficiently plan out their workflows.

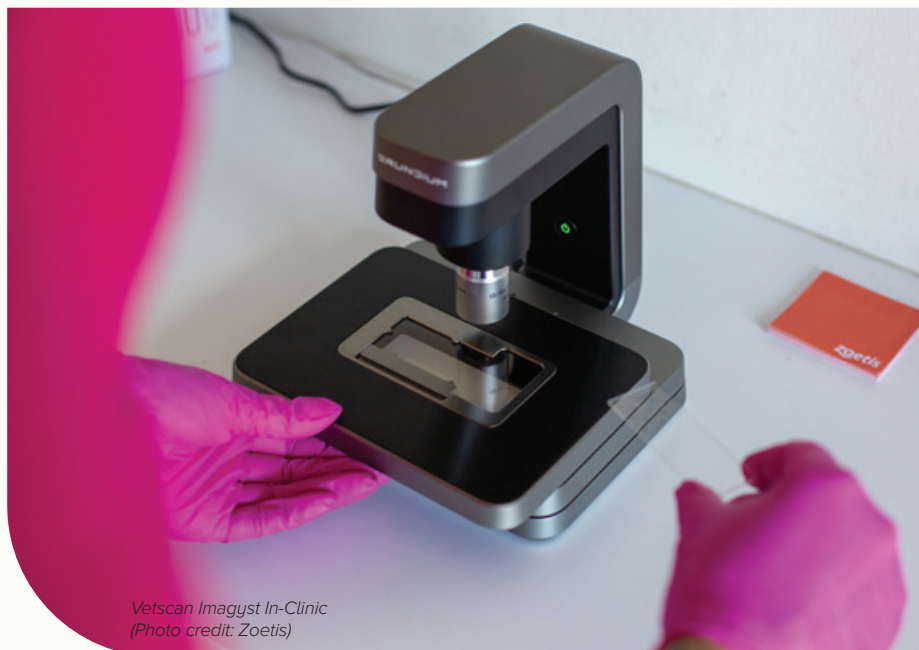
With minimal onboarding, these steps can be confidently handled by veterinary staff, freeing up veterinarians to spend more time with their patients. When used alongside existing workflows, AI-enabled diagnostics act as an extension of the veterinary team – improving efficiency, supporting clinical decisions, and allowing more meaningful conversations with pet owners.²

CLEARER COMMUNICATION WITH PET OWNERS

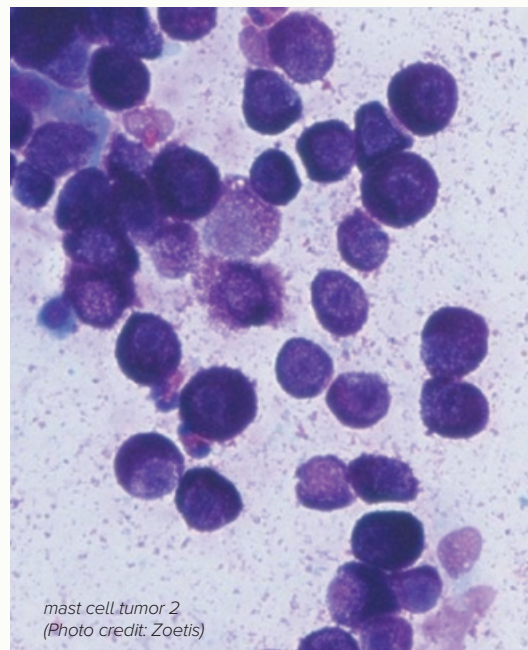
When it comes to building trust, clear communication is central when discussing complex diagnostics or potentially serious diseases. AI-powered, point-of-care diagnostics can support these conversations by presenting results in an easily shareable visual format during the consult. Annotated images, standardised reports, and clear indicators of concern help bridge the gap between clinical data and pet owner understanding.

By reducing the time required for manual slide or image review, these tools allow veterinarians to spend more time actively engaging with pet owners, whether that's answering questions, discussing options, or addressing emotional concerns. This shift can be particularly valuable in highpressure consults, where owners may struggle to process large volumes of information.

Improved clarity at the point of care can improve client confidence and satisfaction, helping owners feel more informed and involved in decision-making. If owners can visualise and revisit diagnostic findings, conversations become more



Vetscan Imagyst In-Clinic
(Photo credit: Zoetis)



mast cell tumor 2
(Photo credit: Zoetis)

collaborative, supporting shared decision making and reinforcing the veterinarian's role as both clinician and trusted advisor.

VALUE IN CRITICAL CASES

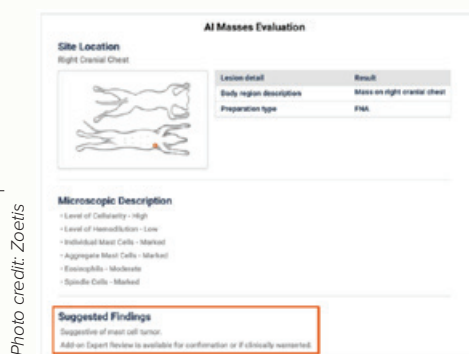
When a serious disease is suspected, speed and clarity are even more critical. Delays or ambiguity can heighten anxiety for pet owners and complicate next steps. Structured, shareable results and visual evidence can help to guide clear, timely discussions.

In oncology cases, this combination of speed, structure, and visual clarity can help pet owners better understand complex information to help them make decisions at a difficult time.

MISSY: A DIAGNOSTIC CASE STUDY

When Missy, an Australian cattle dog, presented for her first routine wellness examination following adoption, the vet identified a firm, raised mass on the thoracic wall. The owners had not previously noticed the lesion and were understandably concerned.

A fine needle aspirate was obtained and analysed in-clinic using the Vetscan Imagyst™ platform. Within minutes, Vetscan Imagyst™ AI Masses flagged the presence of mast cells, indicating a potential mast cell tumour. To support clinical confidence, the sample was submitted for an add-on expert review, where a board certified clinical pathologist confirmed the AI findings and provided additional interpretative guidance.



(Photo credit: Zoetis)

Above: Missy's Vetscan Imagyst™ AI Masses evaluation

The combination of rapid, structured results and annotated digital images supported a clear discussion with Missy's owners regarding diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options during the same visit. Surgery was scheduled for the following week, and the mass was successfully removed. Histopathology later confirmed a lowgrade mast cell tumour, and Missy made an uncomplicated recovery with no evidence of recurrence.

By enabling timely diagnosis and informed decision-making within the consult room, the diagnostic pathway reduced uncertainty for both the veterinary team and the owners. The clarity and speed of the process helped turn an unexpected finding into a confident, well supported plan of care, reinforcing trust at a critical moment.

RESPONSIBLE INTEGRATION INTO EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Trust remains central to the adoption of AI-enabled diagnostics. Clinicians need confidence not only in the results

themselves, but in how those results are generated: through transparent validation, testing, and algorithm design. When this understanding is in place, AI is no longer perceived as a mysterious power, but as a reliable extension of the diagnostic process.

For these tools to add genuine value, they must integrate seamlessly into existing workflows, supporting clinical decision-making and communication without disrupting the flow of the consultation. Successful adoption depends on ease of use, minimal additional training, and clear alignment with established clinical pathways. Setting clear expectations around clinical responsibility and reinforcing that AI outputs support professional judgement will also help to build confidence and trust in the technology.

Used responsibly, AI-enabled diagnostics can become part of everyday practice, helping veterinary teams navigate growing workloads while maintaining high standards of care and communication.

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MORE THAN 110 NEW SPECIES FROM THE CORAL SEA REVEALED

MARINE SCIENTISTS, LED BY CSIRO AND THE NIPPON FOUNDATION-NEKTON OCEAN CENSUS, HAVE DISCOVERED MORE THAN 110 NEW-TO-SCIENCE FISH AND INVERTEBRATE SPECIES IN THE LARGELY UNEXPLORED DEEP WATERS OF THE CORAL SEA MARINE PARK.

Marine taxonomists have identified more than 110 fish and invertebrate species from the Coral Sea that are new to science, with that number likely to exceed 200 as more cryptic species are identified.

Brought together by CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, and The Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census, the taxonomists identified fish and invertebrates collected late last year by scientists on board CSIRO research vessel (RV) Investigator. They were discovered between 200 to 3,000m deep in the Coral Sea Marine Park, which comprises nearly a million square kilometres of mostly unexplored, deep-water marine environments.

CSIRO Voyage Chief Scientist and shark expert Dr Will White identified four new species during a series of workshops around Australia, two rays (in the genera *Dipturus* and *Urolophus*), one deepwater catshark (in the genus *Apristurus*) and one chimaera (in the genus *Chimaera*).

"During the voyage it was incredible to observe plenty of unique, deep-sea creatures in locations from seamounts and atolls to unexplored deep reefs," Dr White said.

The Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census Head of Science, Dr Michelle Taylor said workshops like these help close knowledge gaps about undocumented marine life worldwide.

"To ensure high-quality data is visible to the global community in real-time, the taxonomists at the workshops input the species data directly into the Ocean Census Biodiversity Data Platform, the world's first open-access digital gateway for newly discovered marine species," Dr Taylor said.

"During what were likely the largest taxonomic workshops of marine animals ever undertaken in Australia, other notable discoveries included species of brittlestars, crabs, sea anemones and sponges that are new to science," Dr White added.

The team on board the voyage also observed a rich diversity of marine life in stunning new imagery from RV Investigator's deep-towed camera, including capturing footage of the rare sand tiger shark (*Odontaspis ferox*), a deepwater relative of the well-known grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*).

"These incredible discoveries, made possible by the impressive deep-water survey capabilities of RV Investigator, reveal the extraordinary life in our oceans and are crucial for protecting Australia's marine biodiversity," Dr White said.

Biodiversity samples from the voyage are now lodged in collections around the country including CSIRO's Australian National Fish Collection and State museums.

This research was supported by a grant of sea time on RV Investigator from the CSIRO Marine National Facility which is supported by the Australian Government's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS). It includes support from Parks Australia, Bush Blitz and The Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census, and in collaboration with a network of leading museums, universities and research institutes.



Dr Claire Rowe, Australian Museum, On back deck of RV Investigator (Photo credit: CSIRO John Keesing)



CSIRO research vessel (RV) Investigator provides an impressive range of capability for deep sea research (Photo credit: CSIRO)

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.csiro.au/en



Coral Sea Frontier voyage, Rarely seen Sand Tiger Shark (*Odontaspis ferox*) at Mellish Seamount_ credit_CSIRO (Photo credit: CSIRO)



Dr Candice Untiedt, Research Scientist, CSIRO (Photo credit: CSIRO Frederique Olivier)



Dr Will White, CSIRO Coral Sea Frontier voyage Chief Scientist (Photo credit: CSIRO Frederique Olivier)

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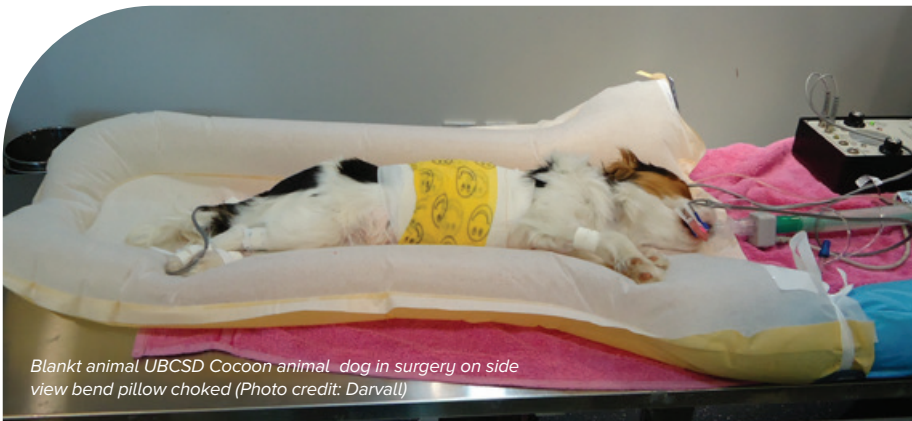
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FIVE COMMON MYTHS ABOUT PRE-WARMING IN VETERINARY PRACTICE

BY: VETERINARIANS COLIN DUNLOP, FOUNDER AND CEO OF DARVALL, GLOBAL LEADER IN VETERINARY ANAESTHESIA, AND SIMON WHEELER, VETERINARY NEUROLOGIST AND CONSULTANT.



Blankt animal UBCSD Cocoon animal dog in surgery on side view bend pillow choked (Photo credit: Darvall)

Maintaining body temperature during anaesthesia is widely recognised as a critical part of patient care. But despite this, approaches to temperature management still vary considerably between clinics, and some long-standing assumptions continue to shape how and when warming is introduced.

As more veterinary practices adopt pre-warming protocols, many of these assumptions are being reconsidered.

In this article we explore some of the most common misconceptions around peri-anaesthetic hypothermia, and what modern thinking suggests instead.

MYTH 1: HYPOTHERMIA IS INEVITABLE DURING ANAESTHESIA

It is true that hypothermia is common during anaesthesia with a large proportion of anaesthetised dogs and cats experiencing some degree of temperature decline during procedures. But despite hypothermia being common, it does not mean that it can't be avoided.

Sedatives and anaesthetic agents promote vasodilation allowing heat to move from the body's core to the periphery, impair thermoregulation and suppress shivering. This

redistribution leads to a rapid drop in core temperature, often all within the first 15 to 30 minutes following induction.

What is increasingly understood is that this early heat loss can be mitigated. By introducing pre-warming before anaesthesia even begins, veterinary teams can raise peripheral tissue temperature and reduce the extent of redistribution. In this context, hypothermia is better viewed as a preventable risk rather than an inevitable outcome.

MYTH 2: TEMPERATURE MANAGEMENT ONLY MATTERS DURING SURGERY

In many practices, warming strategies are still focused on the intraoperative period. While this remains important, it overlooks two critical phases where temperature loss and its consequences begin to develop.

Heat loss often starts soon after premedication, before the patient even reaches the operating table because of clipping, wetting the coat and exposure to cooler environments.

Equally, the recovery phase is a period of increased vulnerability.

Hypothermia can slow heart rate and respiration, impair drug metabolism and prolong recovery times, meaning patients may take longer to regain consciousness and often experience shivering and discomfort.

It is estimated that approximately *one in 500* animals die during anaesthesia or sedation, with around half of these deaths occurring during recovery, so consistent temperature management across the entire peri-anaesthetic period is vital.

MYTH 3: YOU CAN SIMPLY WARM PATIENTS ONCE THEY BECOME COLD

A reactive approach to warming is still a common practice, with intervention beginning only after a drop in temperature has been observed. The challenge with this strategy is that restoring normothermia is significantly more difficult than maintaining it.

Once a patient becomes hypothermic, re-warming can be slow and resource intensive as well as extending recovery times and increasing the risk of complications.

Pre-warming on the other hand offers a more effective alternative. Even a relatively short period, typically 30 to



Blankt animal recovery (Photo credit: Darvall)

40 minutes, can provide a thermal buffer that reduces the sharp decline in temperature after induction. In practical terms, it is easier to keep a patient warm than to re-warm one that has already cooled.

MYTH 4: ALL WARMING BLANKETS PERFORM IN THE SAME WAY

Warming devices are often viewed as interchangeable, but their performance can differ considerably in clinical use.

Reusable blankets are widely used, yet their effectiveness declines over time. Repeated washing and physical wear increases fabric porosity, allowing warm air to escape rather than being evenly distributed and this can result in inefficient heating.

Disposable forced-air blankets on the other hand are designed to maintain structure and airflow, supporting more even heat delivery. In practice, many clinics use them across multiple patients within a short timeframe, integrating them into pre-warming and peri-operative routines.



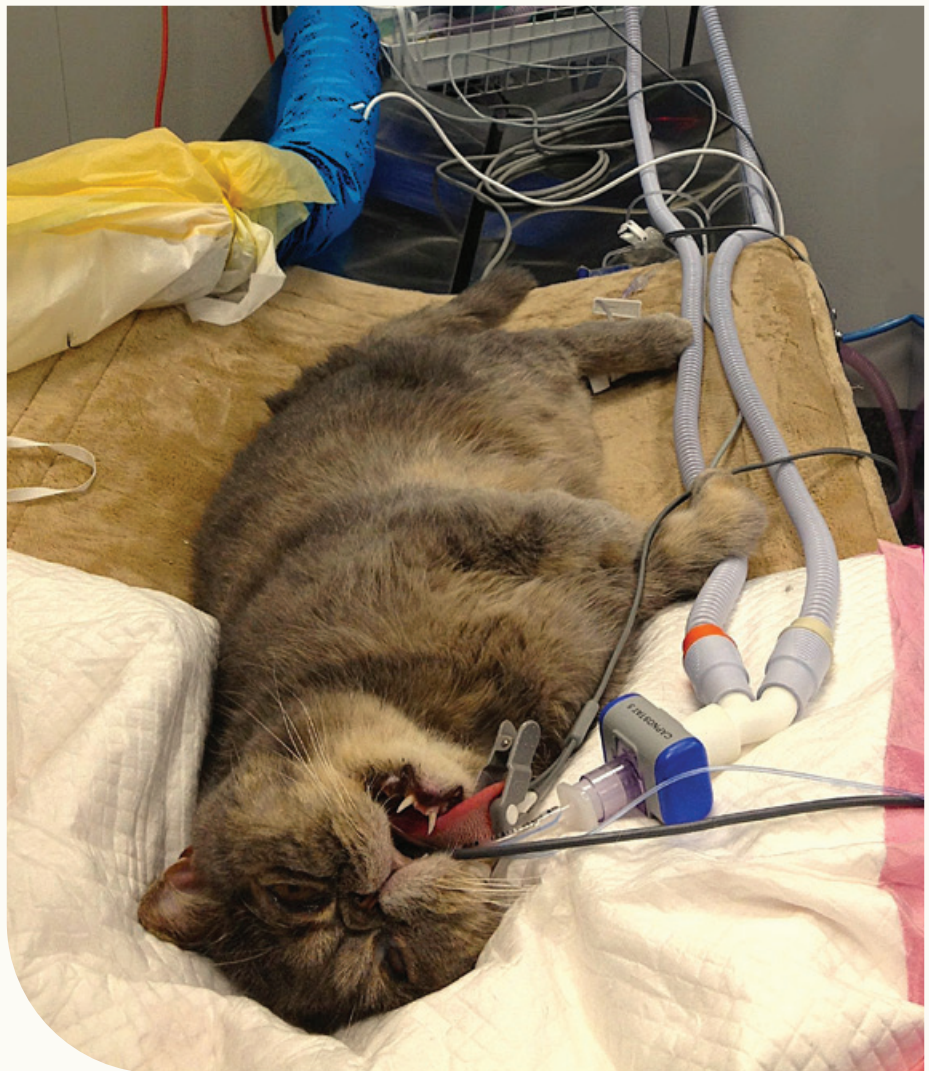
Figure 3B. (Photo credit: Darvall)



Figure 3B. (Photo credit: Darvall)

The red cloth-type blanket fails to inflate, demonstrating a lack of warm air distribution compared with the yellow Darvall Cozy blanket, which is stiff like an inflated air bed. This indicates efficient distribution of warm air.

As practices place greater emphasis on consistent temperature management, these performance differences are becoming more and more relevant to clinical decision making with many vets making the switch to disposable blankets as a result.



Heated Circuits section Pg 10 start reduce heat loss 1st breath (Photo credit: Darvall)

MYTH 5: PRE-WARMING IS TIME-CONSUMING AND IMPRACTICAL

Introducing an additional step before anaesthesia may seem like a hassle in a busy clinical setting but it's important to remember that pre-warming can improve efficiency in the long run rather than hinder it.

Warming patients in advance can be incorporated into routine preparation, particularly when animals are already housed in kennels prior to procedures. Some blanket designs, for example, allow patients to be warmed comfortably before surgery and continue receiving heat during and after the procedure, creating a more seamless workflow.

In many cases, practices find that they can actually pre-warm several patients in the time it would take to manage one hypothermic patient during recovery!

A CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

The growing adoption of pre-warming by modern vet teams reflects a broader

shift in how peri-anaesthetic care is approached. Rather than viewing hypothermia as an expected side effect of anaesthesia, it is increasingly being recognised as a risk that can be reduced through earlier and more consistent intervention. This is reassuring news for pet owners, patients, and vets alike.

ABOUT DARVALL

Darvall is a global leader in the design, manufacture, and support of innovative solutions in veterinary anaesthesia, patient warming and monitoring equipment. Darvall is owned and operated by board-certified veterinary anaesthetists, collaborating with engineers to solve the real-world challenges faced by clinicians. With patient safety as the highest priority, its clinical solutions reduce anaesthetic consumption, costs and lower waste gas emissions protecting both veterinary staff and the environment.



WORLD VETERINARY DAY 2025: CELEBRATING VETERINARIANS AS GUARDIANS OF FOOD AND HEALTH

ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA (AMA) IS PROUD TO JOIN THE GLOBAL VETERINARY COMMUNITY IN RECOGNISING WORLD VETERINARY DAY ON SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2026, UNDER THE THEME “VETERINARIANS: GUARDIANS OF FOOD AND HEALTH.”



Chosen by the World Veterinary Association (WVA), this year’s theme highlighted the critical role veterinarians play in safeguarding food security and food safety by protecting the health and welfare of animals across Australia’s agricultural and food production systems, while also supporting public health.

“This year’s theme recognises the essential contribution veterinarians make to ensuring Australia’s food supply is safe, nutritious and sustainably produced,” said AMA CEO Mr Ben Stapley.

“Veterinary care underpins Australia’s food security, but it is not delivered by individuals working alone – it depends on strong collaboration across the animal health and agricultural sectors,” Mr Stapley said. “World Veterinary Day is an opportunity to acknowledge the teams whose expertise and coordination support animal health across the food supply chain, from farms through to consumers.”

AMA recognises the vital contributions of those working behind the scenes in animal health, including our members that develop the animal medicines, to regulatory experts, educators and animal carers, who help ensure production animals receive safe, effective and timely veterinary care. Together, they all play a key role in maintaining productivity, biosecurity and confidence in Australia’s food system.

In the face of rising pressures on food

production, including growing demand, workforce challenges, geopolitics and emerging animal health risks, the theme “Veterinarians: Guardians of Food and Health” highlights the essential role of collaboration in safeguarding animal welfare and securing Australia’s food supply through a One Health approach.

AMA’s policy priorities include targeted government incentives to support veterinary services in regional and rural Australia, where the majority of food production occurs, alongside regulatory settings that ensure veterinarians can access the full range of safe, effective and innovative animal health products they need to do their jobs. Together, these measures are central to strengthening the veterinary workforce and maintaining reliable access to animal health solutions that underpin a secure and resilient food supply.

“The food supply chain is a major employer across regional, rural and remote Australia and is central to the wellbeing of our communities and economy,” Mr Stapley said. “Protecting animal health depends on veterinarians having timely access to appropriate veterinary medicines and animal health products. These tools are fundamental to food security, animal welfare and public confidence in Australia’s food systems. Supporting veterinarians means ensuring they are equipped with the products and technologies they need to

safeguard animal and human health.”

AMA is urging the Government to modernise regulatory and intellectual property frameworks so veterinarians continue to have access to innovative veterinary medicines and animal health products, and so Australia remains an attractive, competitive market for animal health innovation and investment.

“Animal health underpins Australia’s food security, biosecurity, animal welfare and public health, A relatively modest investment now will deliver long-term economic, environmental and social returns for all Australians.” Mr. Stapley said.

Key measures include increasing data protection periods for new veterinary medicines and extending patent term extensions to align with provisions already available for human medicines.

“These reforms will give companies confidence to invest in Australia and bring innovative products to market sooner, providing veterinarians and farmers with the benefits that come from faster access to new and improved animal health solutions.” Mr. Stapley said.

Animal Medicines Australia encourages all Australians to recognise and celebrate the veterinary professionals whose dedication, skill and teamwork help keep animals healthy and ensure Australia’s food remains safe, nutritious and secure.



MOBILE WILDLIFE HOSPITAL RACES TO EXMOUTH FOLLOWING CYCLONE NARELLE DEVASTATION



Matilda Mobile Wildlife Hospital
(Photo credit: Stephen Van Mil/Murdoch University)



Dr Stephen Van Mil
(Photo credit: Murdoch University)

A MURDOCH UNIVERSITY ALUMNUS HAS DEPLOYED HIS MOBILE WILDLIFE HOSPITAL IN EXMOUTH TO HELP TREAT INJURED WILDLIFE FOLLOWING THE DEVASTATING FALLOUT FROM EX-TROPICAL CYCLONE NARELLE.

The region is in desperate need of assistance as hundreds of animals such as turtle hatchlings, dolphins, reptiles, sea snakes and sea birds have washed ashore along the coast in WA's north.

Dr Stephen Van Mil is the founder and director of Wildlife Recovery Australia, a registered charity and not-for-profit company based in Byron Bay on a mission to conserve and protect Australian wildlife.

Dr Van Mil and his team operate Matilda, a fully equipped, gold-standard mobile wildlife hospital that can be rolled out

wherever the need is greatest.

A full-sized, custom-built semi-trailer, Matilda is the first of her kind in Australia, fitted with state-of-the-art veterinary equipment.

"Matilda is a genuine mobile veterinary hospital with absolutely everything that a gold-standard bricks-and-mortar veterinary hospital has," Dr Van Mil said.

Dr Van Mil and Matilda had just left Kangaroo Island as part of a national tour when he received a call for help from Exmouth.

"Literally as we came off Kangaroo Island, I got a call from Exmouth. The cyclone had just hit, and we were asked to deploy there," he said.

The team crossed the Nullarbor, and after a brief period on standby in Perth waiting for the roads to open, Matilda arrived in Exmouth on Monday night and has immediately got to work treating injured wildlife.

"The scale of injured wildlife we're seeing is confronting and deeply saddening," Dr Van Mil said.

"So many animals have been impacted at once and many urgently need veterinary care. But this is exactly why Matilda exists — she was designed to deploy rapidly into disaster zones and provide immediate aid where it's needed most.

While the circumstances are heartbreaking, being able to get on the ground quickly and make a real difference for these animals is incredibly motivating, and we're focused on giving them the best possible chance of recovery.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/>



Microbat on vet table (Photo credit: Stephen Van Mil/Murdoch University)



THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE WIDENS ACCESS FOR ASPIRING VETERINARIANS WITH FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND FOUNDATION YEAR FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE (RVC) IS SET TO LAUNCH A NEW PATHWAY STARTING IN SEPTEMBER 2027 WHICH WILL WIDEN ACCESS FOR ASPIRING VETERINARIANS BY PROVIDING A ROUTE INTO ITS LONG-ESTABLISHED BACHELOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE (BVETMED) DEGREE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE FACE BARRIERS DUE TO THEIR SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Across many education systems around the world, talented young people who aspire to become veterinarians may face barriers to direct entry onto the world-renowned RVC BVetMed course because their education systems or school structures do not align with UK entry requirements. This can be due to a number of different reasons: either their national qualifications are not recognised by the United Kingdom National Information Centre (UK ENIC) as comparable to UK A Level qualifications, or they have not been able to study both Biology and Chemistry to the required level.

The RVC's Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine with Integrated Foundation Year is the first of its kind to be offered in the UK. It will create a new pathway for international students bridging specific knowledge and language gaps to prepare them for their veterinary studies.

The year will cover the foundations of veterinary biosciences; animal husbandry, behaviour and welfare; English for science and academic purposes; foundations of professionalism; and scholarship and research. Alongside classroom work, students will have access to the RVC's own farm and Clinical Skills Centre. The class sizes on the course will be small to ensure students can access the appropriate level of support required.

Students who are accepted onto the Foundation Year are also guaranteed accommodation for their first year, providing them with the opportunity to live with peers and make connections

in a new city. Teaching will primarily take place at the RVC's Camden Campus in London. As this is an integrated course, students who complete the foundation year and meet the assessment requirements will automatically progress onto the RVC's internationally acclaimed five-year BVetMed programme. This removes the additional application process typically required after other foundation year courses.

Hamad Yasir Binsaidan, current RVC BVetMed student, who joined the RVC from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, reflected on the value of this new pathway, saying: "If this pathway had existed when I applied, it would have saved me a lot of extra time and uncertainty. Coming from an education that didn't support direct entry onto the BVetMed, it would have given me a clear, direct route into veterinary study."

Professor Stuart Reid CBE, President & Principal of the RVC, said: "With the changing face of veterinary science and our commitment to diversity through recruiting students from a range of educational backgrounds, we are delighted to be launching this new pathway to a veterinary degree. The RVC's Latin motto, "Venienti Occurrite Morbo", translates as "fight disease at its origins", which underlines the need for global citizenship and a cadre of graduates capable of carrying our mission and addressing animal health internationally."

Introducing this new course reaffirms the RVC's position at the forefront of veterinary education and demonstrates its commitment to widening access and participation and continuing

to meet the demand and needs of international students. The launch also coincides with the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject, which continues to recognise the RVC as the world's leading veterinary school.

Applications should be made via UCAS by 15th October 2026 for 2027 entry.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the new BVetMed with Integrated Foundation Year course, visit: <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/bvetmed-foundation>.

ABOUT THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is the UK's largest and longest established independent veterinary school and is a Member Institution of the University of London.

It is one of the few veterinary schools in the world that hold accreditations from the RCVS in the UK (with associated recognition from the AVBC for Australasia, the VCI for Ireland and the SAVC for South Africa), the EAEVE in the EU, and AVMA in the USA and Canada.

The RVC is ranked as the top veterinary school in the world in the QS World University Rankings by subject, 2026.

Visit: <http://www.rvc.ac.uk>



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VETS WARN OF HIDDEN ZOOBOTIC PARASITE RISK IN AUSTRALIAN HOMES

FIRST ALL-IN-ONE PARASITE PROTECTION THAT INCLUDES TAPEWORM LAUNCHES IN AUSTRALIA

Australian dog owners are being urged to rethink how they protect their pets, as vets warn that parasites are no longer just a seasonal concern but a year-round health risk, including zoonotic parasites that can be transmitted to humans and impact human health.

New independent research from Advocate™ Ultra Chew conducted in partnership with PureProfile[®] surveyed more than 1,000 dog owners across Australia revealing a significant gap in parasite awareness, with over one in three dog owners (35%) unaware that common canine parasites such as tapeworms, hookworms and roundworms can infect humans.

Tapeworms in particular remain under-recognised by many dog owners, despite being the intestinal worm of most concern to pet owners. While 42% of owners report seeing symptoms that could indicate a tapeworm infection such as “bum scooting”, most tapeworm infections remain invisible, posing a silent risk to both dogs and their families.

This warning comes with the launch of Advocate™ Ultra Chew, Australia’s first all-in-one monthly parasite treatment that kills tapeworms. It protects against fleas, ticks, heartworm and intestinal worms, including those that can pass from animals to humans and pose a serious risk to human health, like the hydatid tapeworm. It’s a reminder that some parasites are a risk, not just to dogs but to the families they live with.

Dr Liisa Ahlstrom, Technical Services Veterinarian at Elanco for Advocate warns, “Canine parasites are more than just a nuisance, they can have serious and even life-threatening consequences in dogs and in people.”



Image Credit: Elanco



Hydatid Tapeworm. Image Credit: Elanco.

Ahlstrom says, “Today, dogs are truly part of the family, sharing our homes, our holidays and even our beds. The bond between people and their dogs has never been closer, making consideration of zoonotic parasite risks and protection increasingly important.

“We’re now seeing a shift in veterinary recommendations on how parasite protection is approached, with a growing focus on more comprehensive, all-in-one solutions that can help simplify the process and address these risks more effectively.”

With dogs now considered a member of the family, the risk of zoonotic parasites is increasing. The prevalence and dangers of parasites (particularly tapeworms) are often underestimated by dog owners. There are often very few or no visible signs meaning infections can go unnoticed, increasing the potential risk to humans. Importantly, the behaviours of most Australian dogs put them at risk of parasites, including tapeworms.

ADVOCATE™ ULTRA CHEW

Advocate™ Ultra Chew simplifies parasite protection for pet owners. By including tapeworm protection, for the first time in Australia, there is a product that has been formulated to deliver the broadest spectrum² of coverage that is available in a single monthly chew. The product combines four active ingredients into one palatable chew, protecting against:

- Fleas
- Ticks (including the deadly paralysis tick, brown dog ticks and bush ticks)
- Heartworm
- Intestinal worms, including tapeworms
- Demodex mites

ZOONOTIC TAPEWORM RISKS

- **Hydatid Tapeworm (Echinococcus granulosus):** A risk for dogs that can explore off-leash where there are livestock or wildlife, or for dogs fed raw untreated offal. Can cause a rare but deadly disease in people, slowly forming large cysts in vital organs (e.g. lungs, liver, brain) that can be difficult and risky to treat.
- **Flea Tapeworm (Dipylidium caninum):** The most common tapeworm in Australian cats and dogs, transmitted when pets ingest infected fleas during grooming. Infected people, usually children, can have an itchy bottom, mild intestinal upset, and crawling tapeworm segments around their bottom or in their underwear, and whilst not serious, can be very distressing.

HOW PEOPLE BECOME INFECTED

- Infected dogs release microscopic worm eggs in their faeces that can be directly infectious to people, or via a flea.
- People can quite easily come into contact with eggs or fleas through close contact with an infected dog, forgetting to wash hands before eating, and for children, putting their hands and other things into their mouths.

TOP TIPS: PROTECTING YOUR DOG AND FAMILY FROM PARASITES BY DR LIISA AHLSTROM

- 1 Year-round parasite protection –** look for the all-in-one flea, tick and worm product with the broadest spectrum of coverage^[2], Advocate™ Ultra Chew.
- 2 Check for ticks regularly:** especially around their head and neck if you’re in a paralysis tick region.
- 3 Plan ahead:** If travelling with your dog, ask your vet for advice about parasite risk in your destination and ensure your dog’s up to date with their parasite protection.
- 4 Hygiene:** wash hands before eating, dispose of dog faeces promptly, don’t feed dogs untreated raw meat or offal.

Additional information on Advocate™ Ultra Chew is located at: <https://mypetandi.elanco.com/au/campaign/advocate-ultra-chew/tapeworms-and-zoonosis>

ABOUT ELANCO

Elanco Animal Health Incorporated (NYSE: ELAN) is a global leader in animal health dedicated to innovating and delivering products and services to prevent and treat disease in farm animals and pets, creating value for farmers, pet owners, veterinarians, stakeholders and society as a whole. With nearly 70 years of animal health heritage, we are committed to helping our customers improve the health of animals in their care, while also making a meaningful impact on our local and global communities. At Elanco, we are driven by our vision of Food and Companionship Enriching Life and our Elanco Healthy Purpose – all to advance the health of animals, people, the planet and^[3] our enterprise. Learn more at www.elanco.com/en-au/

REFERENCES

- 1 Independent research conducted by PureProfile commissioned by Elanco, the owner of Advocate Ultra Chew surveyed 1,009 dog owners in Australia (April 2026). On file.
- 2 Of all canine endectocides, based on the number of parasite species controlled.



FIRST VETERINARY MISSION TO PNG TARGETS CRITICAL GAP IN ANIMAL CARE

NSW VET NURSE HELEN SPRY RECOGNISED WITH INAUGURAL BUDDY GIVING PROGRAM AWARD AHEAD OF 12TH INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT



Helen Spry. Image Credit: VBB.

Australian-based international veterinary charity Vets Beyond Borders (VBB) will deploy its first veterinary team to Papua New Guinea (PNG) in April 2026, marking a significant milestone in its expansion across the Pacific.

Among the volunteers heading to PNG is veterinary nurse Helen Spry from Inverell NSW, who has just been named the inaugural recipient of VBB's Buddy Giving Program Volunteer Excellence Award in recognition of her long-standing commitment to animal welfare.

Helen is about to embark on her 12th deployment with VBB's VetMatch program, which delivers animal health services and community education across the Asia-Pacific in regions with limited access to veterinary care.

Over the years, she has volunteered in the Cook Islands (three times), Sardinia, Thursday Island (three times), Nauru, Vanuatu (twice) and Fiji – bringing her experience and dedication to some of the region's most challenging environments.

In PNG, Helen and her five Australian

colleagues will work alongside the RSPCA of PNG for two weeks, supporting local veterinary services and animal welfare initiatives.

The volunteer team includes veterinarians Dr Helen Todd (Dee Why, NSW), Dr Helen Purdam (Canberra, ACT) and Dr Corinne Lendon (Ferny Grove, QLD), vet nurses Nikki Hohmuth (Canberra) and Ruby Swanston (Erina NSW).

"Deploying our first team to Papua New Guinea marks an important milestone for Vets Beyond Borders as we expand our work across the Pacific," said Professor Nick Sangster, Chair of VBB.

"We congratulate Helen on being named the inaugural recipient of the Buddy Giving Program Volunteer Excellence Award. Her unwavering commitment, skill and compassion exemplify the spirit of the award and the values at the heart of our organisation. We are incredibly proud to recognise her contribution as we take this next step."

Helen works full-time as a veterinary nurse and while she loves her role, she says volunteering with VBB gives her the opportunity to support animals and communities beyond her local clinic.

"The work I do with VBB makes a difference. It's a privilege to be part of it," she says. "To be able to go and help animals in remote places, show communities how to care for their animals, and give them a better life is incredibly rewarding."

Through her volunteer work, Helen has seen the challenges faced by communities with limited access to veterinary services, where unmanaged animal populations can lead to preventable disease and suffering.

"Regular desexing and animal health

clinics, like those supported by VBB, are vital. Without them, female dogs can have litter after litter, leading to rapid population growth in communities with limited veterinary access. Many puppies won't survive, and those that do often face disease, injury and neglect. It's a terrible life," she says.

"The single most effective way we can improve animal welfare and public health in developing communities is through animal population management programs, like VBB's VetMatch. I've seen firsthand how well they work."

The expansion of VBB's VetMatch program into PNG has been made possible through the Buddy Giving Program, proudly supported by Buddy Pet Insurance. The program helps fund volunteer deployments across the Asia-Pacific, enabling experienced veterinary professionals like Helen to deliver essential care where it is most needed.

"Volunteering as a veterinary nurse is my passion. Seeing animals and people learning together brings me enormous joy — healthier animals mean happier animals and happier communities," says Helen.

"To be part of VBB's inaugural PNG deployment is incredibly special, and to be the first volunteer recognised through the Buddy Giving Program Volunteer Excellence Award is truly humbling. After 13 overseas volunteer trips (11 of those with VBB), having this deployment supported by the Buddy Giving Program fills me with gratitude. I can't stop smiling."

Vets Beyond Borders thanks Buddy Pet Insurance for its ongoing support of volunteers who are making lasting change for animals and communities across the Asia-Pacific.



AVOCADO AND DOMESTIC DUCKS DON'T MIX

BY: LIZ HANCOCK, DISTRICT VETERINARY OFFICER, WARRNAMBOOL

In April 2025, Agriculture Victoria investigated the sudden deaths of ducks in a backyard setup in south west Victoria.

While the deaths were caused by avocado (persin) toxicity, this case study provides a working example of how reports like this are urgently assessed to rule out an Emergency Animal Disease (EAD).

It all began when the Agriculture Victoria duty veterinarian received a call via the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline from a backyard poultry farmer reporting that 7 of their 18 ducks had died that day, all within minutes of each other.

The duty veterinarian asked the owner to carefully double bag all deceased animals and store them in a secure area, and keep all remaining live poultry isolated from wild birds until an investigation was done.

These initial steps help reduce the risk of disease spread while an investigation is underway.

The Agriculture Victoria on-call District Veterinary Officer (DVO) was notified, who went to the property to conduct a post mortem, collect information

and samples to rule in or out Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and determine the actual cause of the deaths.

When the DVO arrived at the property, the owner of the poultry explained that 7 ducks had died in the past 24 hours. The ducks were co-housed with 10 chickens and 11 ducks, most of whom appeared clinically normal. There had been no prior illness in any poultry on the farm, and no dead wild birds had been seen.

Discussion with the owner uncovered that the last feed, approximately 6 to 7 hours prior to the deaths had included 6 whole avocados.

At this stage, a suspected diagnosis of avocado toxicity was made, and swabs and samples were collected and sent to Agriculture Victoria's Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory at AgriBio for analysis.

Our pathologists at AgriBio performed a number of tests, including one to rule out HPAI.

Avocados are known to contain persin which is toxic to mammals and birds. Birds which have ingested it often show lethargy, difficulty breathing, loss of appetite, swelling around their neck

and chest and sudden death.

Diagnosis is made by history of access to avocado and clinical signs in the duck. However, it can also be supported by tissue examination and testing, as this case was. Treatment involves supportive care only and is often unsuccessful and/or cost prohibitive.

This case shows how important it is to report sudden or unusual animal deaths promptly, even if the cause turns out not to be an emergency animal disease.

The community is encouraged to report any unusual signs or suspected cases of emergency animal disease immediately to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888**.

MORE INFORMATION

Find out more about Agriculture Victoria's emergency animal disease preparedness at Emergency animal diseases | Animal diseases | Biosecurity | Agriculture Victoria, visit: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/emergency-animal-diseases>



MODEL MAPS POTENTIAL LUMPY SKIN DISEASE GATEWAYS TO AUSTRALIA

TWO LOCATIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE MOST LIKELY ENTRY POINTS INTO AUSTRALIA FOR A DISEASE THAT POSES A HUGE RISK TO THE BEEF AND DAIRY INDUSTRIES.

A University of Queensland-led team has built the first geospatial model to map where insects carrying lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV) could arrive either blown by strong wind or carried on ships.

Professor Ricardo Soares Magalhães at UQ's School of Veterinary Science said the findings show where future surveillance and preparation activities could be prioritised.

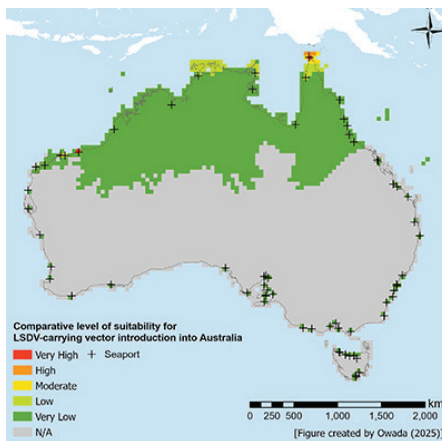
"The Port Hedland and Dampier region in Western Australia showed the highest risk of insects hitchhiking into Australia on ships from locations known to have infections," Professor Soares Magalhães said.

"The northern tip of Cape York Peninsula was flagged as the location most exposed to windborne insect arrival, particularly during the summer months.

"The model we have built can be updated and refined as more detailed data or new information is available, or if the situation changes and a new outbreak location is identified outside of Australia."

Lumpy skin disease (LSD) is caused by a virus spread through the bites of insect vectors including mosquitoes, flies and ticks. It leads to skin nodules and lesions, fever and weight loss.

It has never been reported in Australia but has spread through Asia to reach Indonesia in 2022.



"Infected animals are in pain, they don't want to move and become emaciated so there is a significant animal welfare issues as well as the loss of production," Professor Soares Magalhães said.

"A case in Australia would likely lead to trade restrictions, particularly on exports of live cattle but also on beef and dairy products, leading to huge economic losses.

"While previous assessments indicated the risk of LSD coming to Australia was

low, it is a huge country, so we wanted to explore whether that was true everywhere.

"We've shown that strong winds have the potential to bring insects carrying LSDV hundreds of kilometres to particular areas in Far North Queensland and that Port Hedland in particular has commercial shipping to places in Southeast Asia known to have LSD.

"This information is valuable to inform targeted and seasonal surveillance in shipping areas, on livestock properties, and in feral bovine populations."

The project builds on previous work at the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation and was supported by the Department of Primary Industries.

The paper has been published in Scientific Reports.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://uq.edu.au/>



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CHIROPRACTIC CARE FOR GERIATRIC CANINES: MAINTAINING MOBILITY, PREVENTING FALLS, AND SUPPORTING QUALITY OF LIFE

A SYSTEMS-BASED PERSPECTIVE ON SPINAL HEALTH.

BY: DR. BILL ORMSTON, DVM, CAC, DVETHOM

As our canine patients live longer, veterinarians are increasingly tasked not only with managing disease but also with preserving function and comfort into old age. Chronic pain, reduced mobility, proprioceptive decline, and muscular atrophy all erode quality of life—even in the absence of acute pathology. While pharmaceuticals and dietary support play a role, there is growing interest in manual therapies that **enhance neuromusculoskeletal function without compounding comorbidities.**

Chiropractic care, when applied within an integrative veterinary framework, supports geriatric dogs by restoring joint mobility, optimizing neurological input, and preventing the spiral of immobility that often accelerates physical decline. This article outlines how chiropractic contributes to the care of senior dogs, with emphasis on fall prevention, comfort, and conservative pain management.

THE AGING CANINE SPINE: A SILENT BURDEN

With aging comes a predictable cascade of musculoskeletal and neurologic changes:

- **Degenerative joint disease (DJD)** in the spine and appendicular skeleton
- **Loss of proprioception** due to diminished peripheral nerve sensitivity
- **Muscle atrophy**, especially in the epaxial and hindlimb groups
- **Reduced range of motion** in key weight-bearing joints
- Altered **gait patterns**, leading to compensatory strain

These changes often go unreported until mobility is visibly impaired. Owners may describe their dogs as “slowing down,” “slipping more,” or

“having trouble getting up.” Subclinical joint restrictions—particularly in the thoracolumbar and lumbosacral spine—contribute significantly to these symptoms.

Vertebral restrictions, in turn, affect afferent nerve input from mechanoreceptors and muscle spindles, leading to **further decline in motor control, balance, and weight distribution.** This dysfunction rarely appears on radiographs and may not correlate with pain scores, but its effects are evident in day-to-day movement.

HOW CHIROPRACTIC SUPPORTS THE AGING NERVOUS SYSTEM

The goal of a chiropractic adjustment is not merely to increase joint mobility—it is to **restore afferent input** from dysfunctional segments, allowing for more accurate proprioception and neuromuscular control. In geriatric dogs, this mechanism offers several benefits:

1. **Improved postural stability** - Regular adjustments support better limb placement and reduce swaying, crossing, or delayed reactions during movement.
2. **Reduction in compensatory patterns** - Addressing spinal restrictions can offload overused joints, especially in dogs with hip dysplasia or chronic stifle issues.
3. **Maintenance of muscle tone and coordination** - Improved joint function enables more confident and complete engagement during walks, even if those walks are slow and brief.
4. **Enhanced neurologic clarity** - By improving segmental input to the CNS, adjustments may reduce the frequency of stumbles, paw dragging, or “hind-end collapse.”

Chiropractic care does not halt degeneration—but it helps dogs move **more efficiently within their current physical constraints**, reducing the energetic cost of mobility and delaying secondary complications.

FALL PREVENTION AND FUNCTIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Falls are a major concern in senior dogs. Just like in elderly humans, one fall can initiate a downward spiral of injury, fear, immobility, and further weakness. Chiropractic care reduces fall risk by:

- Addressing joint fixations that impair **weight shifting** and **core engagement**
- Supporting **spinal reflexes** critical for postural response
- Improving **lumbosacral mobility**, essential for coordinated hindlimb function

Dogs who receive regular chiropractic care often demonstrate improved ability to **turn, back up, and navigate uneven ground**—tasks that challenge balance and coordination.

Additionally, owners frequently report better stamina and enthusiasm during walks, and less need to assist their dogs on stairs or slippery floors. These subjective improvements reflect objective changes in motor control and joint function.

PAIN MANAGEMENT WITHOUT PHARMACOLOGICAL BURDEN

Geriatric dogs often suffer from multiple comorbidities—renal insufficiency, hepatic compromise, endocrine disease—that limit the use of NSAIDs and other pharmaceuticals. Chiropractic offers a **non-drug approach** to mitigating mechanical pain and stiffness, reducing reliance on chemical intervention.



Through modulation of the **spinal pain gate theory** and normalization of **segmental reflex arcs**, chiropractic adjustments can:

- Reduce chronic hypertonicity in the paraspinal musculature
- Improve joint lubrication via restored motion
- Downregulate nociceptive signaling from overloaded joints

Used alongside laser therapy, acupuncture, massage, and omega-3 supplementation, chiropractic becomes part of a robust, multimodal pain strategy for older patients.

REALISTIC GOALS AND SAFE PRACTICE IN THE SENIOR POPULATION

While chiropractic can offer meaningful benefits to aging dogs, realistic expectations and appropriate precautions are essential:

- Adjustments are typically **low-force** and carefully modulated for older joints.
- **Osteopenic dogs**, or those with advanced spondylosis or instability, may require modification of techniques or targeting of adjacent compensatory areas.
- Practitioners should always screen for **neurologic red flags**, such as progressive ataxia, loss of bladder control, or cervical hyperesthesia, before adjusting.
- Chiropractic should be performed by certified professionals trained in geriatric safety (e.g., AVCA/

IVCA chiropractors or veterinarians with advanced manual therapy education).

Collaborative care—chiropractic integrated with veterinary oversight—ensures appropriate case selection and safe execution, especially in dogs with complex health profiles.

CASE EXAMPLE: MAX, A 14-YEAR-OLD KELPIE MIX

Max presented with chronic hind-end weakness, mild forelimb lameness, and reluctance to rise. Radiographs showed moderate DJD but no surgical targets. Due to prior GI issues, NSAIDs were contraindicated. Max was started on chiropractic care every two weeks, combined with short, frequent walks and joint supplementation.

After three sessions, the owner reported:

- Easier transitions from lying to standing
- More consistent foot placement on walks
- Renewed interest in following family members around the house

Max's case is typical of what chiropractic can offer—not cure, but contribution. Mobility was extended, pain reduced, and independence preserved.

CONCLUSION: A VITAL TOOL FOR AGING DOGS

As mobility declines, so does quality of life. While not a substitute for medical management, chiropractic care offers geriatric dogs a chance to move with

greater ease, maintain strength, and reduce the risk of debilitating falls—all without adding pharmacological burden.

In the hands of a trained provider and integrated with a veterinarian's oversight, chiropractic care is a powerful ally in supporting comfort, dignity, and activity through the later stages of life.

Because for older dogs, **the ability to move is the ability to live**—and every step counts.

ABOUT DR BILL ORMSTOM

Dr. O started his veterinary career as a mixed animal mobile practitioner. That is when he discovered animal chiropractic. Through animal chiropractic, Dr. O found a sense of belonging, as well as an opportunity to help animal patients resolve their ailments. Animal chiropractic helped him to build a foundation for understanding health in animals that he was eager to share with other doctors like himself. Because of this he has been the backbone of more than one animal chiropractic program. He continues to find innovative ways to help animal chiropractors grow their practice, educate their clients and help more animals. He is the author of the books "Yes! It is Really A Thing", and "Yes It's A Better Thing." He currently teaches at Animal Chiropractic Education Source.

Visit: www.yeschiro.com.



KOALA STUDY SHIFTS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENETIC RISK IN ENDANGERED SPECIES

WORLD-FIRST EVIDENCE THAT CONSERVATION DECISIONS CAN'T RELY ON STATIC MEASURES OF GENETIC DIVERSITY.



A new study published in *Science* is challenging long-held assumptions about how we measure genetic risk in endangered species. Researchers analysed whole genomes from hundreds of koalas, finding that populations previously considered most at risk are now showing early signs of genetic regeneration.

Conservation biologists have long assumed that when a population crashes, known as a bottleneck, genetic diversity declines and extinction risk increases through inbreeding and the build-up of harmful mutations. This study provides world-first evidence that the story is more complex.

A large-scale sequencing effort began after the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires on the east coast of Australia intensified concern for the species' future.

"Following the 2019-20 mega fires, there was an urgent need to establish a long-term genomic resource for koalas" said Dr Luke Silver, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Sydney. "By sequencing 418 whole genomes, we created a critical baseline to understand how koala populations are evolving over time."

Analysis of the genomes revealed that populations with higher genetic

diversity, such as those in northern Australia, generally carried more harmful genetic mutations and showed declines in effective population size.

"Koalas are a really interesting case study. Populations across regions have been managed very differently, which means that their genetic signatures also significantly vary. This work uses those differences to highlight a wider lesson in conservation genomics," said Dr Collin Ahrens, Principal Research Scientist at Cesar Australia.

"Surprisingly, it's the populations that had passed through severe historical bottlenecks that are expanding, resulting in the accumulation of new mutations and greater genetic combinations. This growth, like we see in Victoria, comes with real genetic advantages: fewer harmful genetic mutations, increased adaptive capacity and early signs of genetic regeneration."

TRANSLOCATION IMPLICATIONS

Koalas present ongoing management challenges across Australia. Northern populations remain in serious decline, while southern populations are overabundant. Conservation managers are simultaneously managing populations in crisis and those that are overabundant. While translocation was widely used in the past, it is now considered high-risk, complex, and expensive.

Victorian koala populations have long been viewed as genetically compromised because most stem from a severe historical bottleneck. While they retain the genetic signature of that event, the new research shows that many are now recovering. Through recombination, the natural reshuffling of genetic variation, and the accumulation

of new variants, harmful mutations are being reduced and adaptive potential is increasing.

"Our findings tell a story of genetic recovery in these populations, not collapse," Dr Ahrens said. "It's world-first evidence that conservation decisions can't rely on static measures of genetic diversity. We need to understand the direction populations are evolving."

Dr Andrew Weeks, Director of Cesar Australia, said the implications extend well beyond koalas.

"For decades, we've treated genetic diversity as a simple scorecard of extinction risk," Dr Weeks said. "But evolution is dynamic. Understanding whether a population is expanding, stabilising or declining over time may be just as important as measuring how much diversity it holds today."

Beyond koalas, many threatened species have experienced bottlenecks, habitat loss and rapid environmental change. The research suggests that judging extinction risk based solely on static genetic measures risks misclassifying both danger and recovery and highlights the importance of understanding processes unfolding across generations.

RESEARCH

Ahrens, C. et al 'Escaping the bottlenecks: the demographic path to genetic recovery in koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)' (*Science* 2026). DOI: 10.1126/science.adz1430

Declaration: The authors declare no competing interests. There were not external funding organisations.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/>



THE UQ DEGREE HELPING TO ADDRESS VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

A UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND INITIATED DEGREE IS HELPING ALLEVIATE THE STRAIN ON AUSTRALIA'S BUSY VETERINARY CLINICS, BUT ACADEMICS SAY INDUSTRY REFORM IS NEEDED TO SOLVE THE WORKFORCE CRISIS.

Graduates of UQ's Bachelor of Veterinary Technology program work as key members of veterinary teams with a professional skillset between vet nurses and veterinarians.

Associate Professor Rebekah Scotney from the School of Veterinary Science said recognition for vet technologists would help reduce the workload of veterinarians and provide more time to help seriously ill and injured animals.

"In a time of critical workforce shortages with veterinarians suffering from increasing levels of stress, burnout and high suicide rates, it is time to seriously consider transformational industry reforms,"
Dr Scotney said.

"We already have successful models of a mid-tier bachelor's degree in a regulated profession in Australia with the dental profession and dental hygienists.

"It's time for our veterinary industry to adopt this proven strategy, which increases accessibility and quality of services."

Vet techs perform high-level emergency first aid, diagnostic imaging, pathology tests, dental care, anaesthesiology, surgery preparation and postoperative care.

Traditionally, veterinarians would do these in addition to more complex tasks, compounding their workload and sometimes leading to burnout.

Currently, Western Australia is the only Australian state to mandate registering the qualifications of veterinary nurses and technologists.

The Queensland Government is currently reviewing the 90-year-old Veterinary Surgeons Act, which regulates qualifications, registration and disciplinary processes.

Dr Patricia Clarke was the coordinator of UQ's veterinary technology degree when it became the first university in Australia to offer the program in 2000.

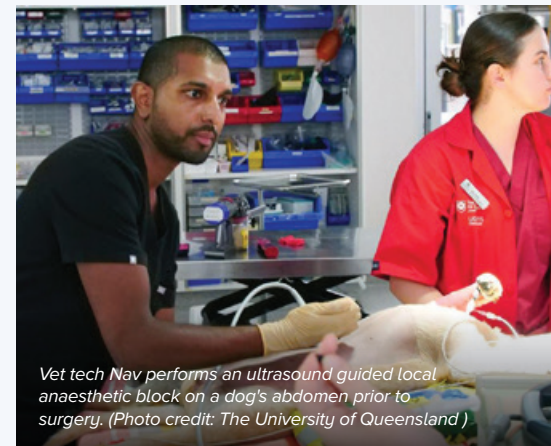
She is currently a member of the Working Party for the Statutory Regulation of Veterinary Nurses and Technologists in Australia.

She said the veterinary industry was lagging behind the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that recently recognised veterinary technologists as a professional occupation alongside veterinarians, paramedics, dentists and dental hygienists.

"Based on the ABS recognition and recommendations from the New South Wales Government inquiry into veterinary workforce shortages, the time is ripe for veterinary technologists to become regulated professionals," Dr Clarke said.

"The Queensland Government is rightfully acknowledging how technology and para-professional roles have adapted since 1936 and we hope this brings on change in this state and beyond.

"Vet techs are currently academically qualified beyond what the law allows them to perform and we need to change this to support our vets and provide better care for animals."



Vet tech Nav performs an ultrasound guided local anaesthetic block on a dog's abdomen prior to surgery. (Photo credit: The University of Queensland)

"This is in the best interests of animal health and welfare and in the public interest, which includes improving accessibility to veterinary services."

Two thirds of UQ vet tech students are hired by the practice where they complete their placements.

Dr Scotney said official recognition of vet techs would enable veterinarians to delegate with confidence and concentrate on higher level tasks.

"Over the past 20 years, UQ vet techs have excelled in the specialist practice environment, particularly in emergency and critical care nursing with many progressing into leadership roles," Dr Scotney said.

"They are providing real improvements within a workplace that is often high stress, short on staff, struggling for funding and experiencing abuse from clients."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://uq.edu.au/>



AEC MOORABBIN STRENGTHENS SPECIALIST OFFERING WITH APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE SPECIALIST

EXPANDED INTERNAL MEDICINE SERVICE TO SUPPORT COMPLEX CASE MANAGEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE REFERRAL CARE



Animal Emergency Centre + Specialty Care (AEC+SC) Moorabbin has expanded its specialist services with the appointment of Dr Chad Berman, a registered specialist in Small Animal Internal Medicine, strengthening its multidisciplinary referral offering for veterinarians across Victoria.

Dr Berman brings extensive international training and referral hospital experience, having completed a rotating internship in Internal Medicine, Surgery and Anaesthesiology at a private referral hospital in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Prior to relocating to Australia in 2024, Dr Berman was a partner in a specialist referral practice, managing a diverse and complex caseload across multiple disciplines including cardiology, oncology, dermatology, gastroenterology, hepatology, urology, neurology, pulmonology, immunology and critical care.

At AEC+SC Moorabbin, Dr Berman leads the internal medicine service, accepting referral cases for comprehensive diagnostic work-ups and ongoing case management.

“Internal medicine often involves managing complex, multi-system disease, having access to a truly collaborative environment allows us to deliver the best possible outcomes for patients,” says Dr Chad Berman, Internal Medicine Specialist, AEC + Specialty Care.

“I’m particularly passionate about supporting referring veterinarians and working together to navigate challenging cases, from diagnosis through to long-term management.”

The expanded internal medicine offering includes:

- Advanced diagnostic imaging, including ultrasound and echocardiography
- Digital radiography and CT access
- Endoscopy and biopsy procedures
- Access to external laboratory services, alongside internal laboratory capabilities for urgent diagnostics

Dr Berman’s clinical interests include cardiology, endocrinology and critical care, with a strong focus on delivering high-quality, evidence-based patient care and supporting referring veterinarians through clear communication and collaborative case management.

The internal medicine service is fully integrated within AEC+SC Moorabbin’s multidisciplinary hospital, working closely with Specialist Surgeons Dr Charles Kuntz and Dr Malcolm Jack, as well as the hospital’s 24/7 emergency and critical care team.

This integrated model allows for streamlined management of complex and critically ill patients, bringing together multiple specialties from initial stabilisation through to advanced diagnostics, surgery and ongoing care.

“For referring veterinarians, timely access

to advanced diagnostics and specialist insight can make all the difference in complex cases,” says Dr Brian Lam, Clinical Director, AEC+SC Moorabbin.

“Expanding our internal medicine capability strengthens that support — ensuring cases can be progressed efficiently, with continuity of care and clear clinical direction at every stage.”

This appointment is part of AEC+SC Moorabbin’s continued investment in specialist capability, strengthening its position as a comprehensive referral hospital offering advanced diagnostics, expert-led care and fully integrated emergency and specialty services.

ABOUT ANIMAL EMERGENCY CENTRE (AEC) + SPECIALTY CARE MOORABBIN

Animal Emergency Centre (AEC) + Speciality Care Moorabbin is a leading 24/7 emergency veterinary hospital providing critical care to pets across Melbourne’s south-east. Part of the Animal Emergency Australia network, AEC Moorabbin delivers round-the-clock emergency and intensive care services, including advanced diagnostics, surgery and ongoing patient monitoring.

Staffed by experienced emergency veterinarians and highly trained nursing teams, the hospital is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including imaging, laboratory services and life-support equipment to manage a wide range of urgent and complex cases.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Dr Berman and AE + Specialty Care visit: www.emergencyvet.com.au/our-network/aec-home/aec-moorabbin



WOMAN VETERINARIAN OF THE YEAR HONoured AS GAPONLY® VETERINARY AWARDS SPOTLIGHT AUSTRALIA'S FEMALE VETERINARY WORKFORCE

ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST DEMANDING AND UNDER-RECOGNISED PROFESSIONS WAS PLACED FIRMLY IN THE SPOTLIGHT LAST NIGHT, WITH DR ALISON TAYLOR OF KIPPAX VET CLINIC NAMED WOMAN VETERINARIAN OF THE YEAR AT THE 2026 GAPONLY® VETERINARY AWARDS (GOVAS).

Held on Friday 6 March at Doltone House on the eve of International Women's Day, the awards celebrated the extraordinary contribution of veterinary professionals working at the frontline of animal care – a workforce that is now predominantly female.

According to the Australian Veterinary Association, women now make up around 70 per cent of the veterinary workforce.¹ Many balance demanding clinical workloads with after-hours care, while facing ongoing workforce shortages across the country.

These pressures are being compounded by an ongoing national shortage of veterinarians. With fewer practitioners available, veterinary teams are working longer and less predictable hours. They are covering more after-hours and emergency care, while managing increasing client demand. This strain is particularly acute for women, who make up most of the profession and are also more likely to be juggling caring responsibilities alongside clinical work.

Dr Maria Neale, General Manager of GapOnly®, said recognising excellence must go hand-in-hand with supporting the sustainability of the veterinary workforce.

"Veterinarians care deeply not just for animals, but for the people who love them, and that responsibility often comes with long hours and a significant emotional load," Dr. Neale said.

"Supporting a predominantly female workforce means acknowledging these pressures and improving access to care through practical solutions such as pet insurance, telehealth and innovative service models, so veterinarians are not carrying the full weight of the system alone."

This year's PetSafetyNet Welfare and Wellbeing Champion award recognised veterinarians who ensure pets receive urgent and essential veterinary care when their owners are experiencing financial hardship. The 2026 recipient was Dr Alicia Kennedy of Cherished Pets (VIC) for her compassionate, community-focused commitment to supporting vulnerable pet carers and keeping pets connected to the care they need.

PetSafetyNet is a PetSure initiative that supports eligible pet carers experiencing financial hardship. It combines 24/7 veterinary telehealth with support towards urgent in-clinic treatment when needed. The program is delivered through a collaborative network of veterinary and community partners.

PetSafetyNet is funded through the everyday use of GapOnly®, with \$1 from every GapOnly® claim contributed to the PetSafetyNet fund. To date, it has supported over 1,000 vulnerable pet owners across Australia, helping them avoid having to forgo care or face the devastating decision to surrender or euthanise their pet due to cost.

The 2026 GOVAS celebrated excellence across six categories. Winners included veterinarians, mentors, educators, welfare champions and frontline team members delivering outstanding care across Australia.

For more information about the GapOnly® Veterinary Awards, see gaponly.com.au/gova.

2026 GOVAS WINNERS

- **Woman Veterinarian of the Year** – Dr Alison Taylor, Kippax Vet Clinic / Capital Paws Group (ACT)
- **Excellence in Metropolitan Veterinary Services** – Dr Fiona Scholz and Dr. Samantha Crothers, Veterinary Dermatology Specialists (WA)
- **Excellence in Rural and Regional Veterinary Services** – Dr Michael Woodham, Sugarland Animal Hospital (QLD)
- **Veterinary Mentor or Educator of the Year** – Dr Asha Yeoman, Greencross Vet Hospital Werribee (VIC)
- **PetSafetyNet Welfare and Wellbeing Champion** – Dr Alicia Kennedy, Cherished Pets (VIC)
- **Team Member of the Year (non-veterinarian)** – Brooke McIntosh, Sugarland Animal Hospital (QLD)

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VETERINARIANS' EMOTIONAL COST OF CARE – A SOCIAL WORKER'S PERSPECTIVE

BY: PAUL SCHOTT, DIRECTOR OF PAUL SCHOTT ENTERPRISES

Are the expectations of vets for compassion, resilience and decisiveness matched by the organisational systems needed to support them?

I am not a veterinarian however my partner is. I have been a social worker and management coach in human services for over 30 years, and over the years have found myself making observations and analyses of the veterinary profession, and providing a listening ear as a partner and as a coach. I have drawn on my experience in training and coaching to identify certain key issues in the veterinary sector that I believe would benefit from lessons learned in the human services sector in dealing with the emotional impact of care on staff.

The intention of this article is not an attempt to 'one-up' the helping profession. Indeed, the human services profession is certainly not without its challenges and needs to do better at care provision for staff. The purpose of this article is to share learning from integrated support systems for staff that may have some relevance to the veterinary profession.

In the health and community sector, structured emotional support is mostly standard. Line supervision meetings, clinical supervision, employee assistance programs (EAPs), and team debriefs, are essential for staff wellbeing and ethical practice. In contrast, veterinary workplaces, despite constant exposure to grief, loss, and ethically complex situations, often appear to lack comparable supports. I was struck by some of the research findings in the veterinary industry that indicate that nearly 70% of Australian veterinarians have lost a colleague or peer to suicide, and that almost 6-in-10 veterinarians

have sought professional help relating to mental health (Royal Canin; 2022). Dr Monique Crane's 2014 Macquarie University Report linked frequent euthanasia with higher risk of depressed mood. This evidence is of major concern in any industry's language!

WHAT IS THE EMOTIONAL COST OF CARE?

Veterinarians confront death and loss with a frequency that few professions experience. From performing euthanasia to consoling grieving pet owners, they face emotionally charged situations daily. They make compassionate decisions, often under time pressure and financial constraints, and must hold both their own emotions and those of their clients. Despite this, the mechanisms for emotional recovery appear minimal for many staff. Veterinary practices, particularly smaller ones, can struggle to have the financial or personnel capacity to implement support systems. It appears that much is being asked of veterinarians without corresponding structures of care to hold them.

When staff grief and loss goes unprocessed, it can manifest as the following:

- Vicarious trauma emerging from repeated exposure to suffering and loss.
- Burnout reflecting the chronic imbalance between emotional output and recovery.
- Moral injury arising when veterinarians must act against their ethical instincts — for instance, when financial limitations prevent the care they believe is needed.
- Imposter syndrome, if practitioners question their competence or resilience under the weight of emotional fatigue.

Research by MacArthur et al. (2017) into compassion fatigue amongst veterinary 'students' concluded;

"It's apparent that students experience low compassion satisfaction, high secondary traumatic stress, and high burnout. As a result, certain emotional characteristics and coping strategies may be identified as potential targets for intervention to minimize the frequency and negative impact of burnout and secondary traumatic stress in veterinary students. A focus on enhancing these self-care capacities within veterinary medical education could lead to enhanced resiliency among students, and hence veterinarians, leading to positive outcomes for veterinary professionals and the animals they serve into the future."

These are not personal failings, but predictable outcomes of ongoing exposure to distress without system support.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FROM THE HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR?

Human services treat emotional containment as professional competence. Supervision and reflective practice support staff wellbeing, maintain professional standards, reduce errors, and safeguard clients. Research shows that resilience alone is insufficient; systemic support is essential. This appears in contrast to the veterinary profession which, according to Cake et al. (2017), has often treated resilience as an inherent personal trait. Research confirms that no amount of individual



strength can replace systemic supports. As has been shown in the human health professions, resilience is sustained by structure, not willpower alone.

Good management in the human services field recognises that practitioners are human beings who absorb emotional residue from clients, and that supervision is the mechanism that prevents harm and maintains competence. Universities, professional bodies, and employers must demonstrate compliance with wellbeing and supervision standards. For instance, accredited social work programs include coursework on reflective practice, burnout prevention, and grief processing. Psychologists must complete supervised practice hours post-graduation. These professions view practitioner wellbeing as inseparable from ethical service delivery. A burnt-out, traumatised, or emotionally numbed professional is more likely to make errors, show compassion fatigue, or harm clients. Thus, supervision and support aren't 'wellbeing perks' — they are clinical safeguards.

WHAT ARE THE LEGISLATIVE RISKS OF BUSINESS INACTION IN STAFF CARE?

WHS laws in Australia have evolved to include psychosocial hazards, reshaping employer obligations. For example, under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW), employers are now legally required to identify, manage, and eliminate (or as far as practicable minimise) psychosocial hazards, such as stress, bullying, harassment and poor workplace design. Under these laws, workplaces are expected to identify and mitigate psychological risks, including stress, trauma, and exposure to distressing events. For veterinary

clinics, this means that the potential absence of important psychosocial 'controls' such as supervision, debriefing, or wellbeing structures, may now carry not only ethical implications but also regulatory consequences. In essence, what has long been seen as a matter of compassion may increasingly become a matter of compliance.

WHAT SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE RECOMMENDED?

In the U.S, there have been interesting developments in the crossover between the veterinary and social work professions. 'Veterinary Social Work' has emerged as a specialised field that addresses the intersection of human and animal wellbeing (Compitus, K; 2025). It has grown to include social work professionals working in veterinary hospitals, animal shelters, and academic settings. Veterinary social workers are trained in grief counselling, crisis intervention, compassion fatigue, conflict mediation, and the prevention of both human and animal abuse.

So, what are the recommendations for practical strategies that can be employed in a veterinary business to best support staff?

- Structured 1:1 line supervisor meetings as a professional standard.
- Partnering with EAP providers who understand the unique grief of veterinary work, to provide subsidised sessions for staff as required.
- Normalised peer reflection and debriefing within clinical routines. Ensuring practice leaders allocate protected time for staff/team wellbeing and reflection.
- Access to external supervision for specialist input.

These measures are professional safeguards, not luxuries, and acknowledge the emotional reality of veterinary work.

FINAL NOTE ON PRACTICAL CHALLENGES FOR VET BUSINESSES

Small and/or privately owned veterinary practices face genuine constraints such as limited staffing, tight margins, and minimal administrative capacity. For these businesses, creating supervision frameworks or funding EAP access, may feel beyond reach. However, larger veterinary organisations and corporate clinics possess greater resources and, arguably, a corresponding responsibility to act. They have the capacity to integrate emotional wellbeing practices, just as hospitals and community health providers have done. While there are certainly short-term costs involved in staff support systems, the cost of 'late intervention' will be significantly worse.

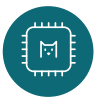
Vets ease suffering daily but often carry their own privately. If compassion is central to veterinary medicine, it must extend to veterinarians themselves. These insights are intended constructively, to inspire cultural and structural changes that strengthen the profession.

MORE INFORMATION

For further discussion or to explore support options, feel free to contact me via email: paul@psenterprises.com.au

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ZOETIS EXPANDS VETSCAN OPTICELL™ CAPABILITIES, BECOMING THE FIRST AND ONLY HAEMATOLOGY ANALYSER TO BRING REFERENCE LAB INSIGHTS IN-CLINIC

- First point-of-care haematology analyser to offer cellular haemoglobin concentration mean (CHCM).
- Addition of plateletcrit (PCT) will support clearer assessment of platelet activity.
- Continued evolution of Vetscan OptiCell™ automated complete blood count (CBC) capabilities driven by Zoetis's commitment to meaningful innovation.



Zoetis Inc., the world's leading animal health company, announced it is expanding the capabilities of Vetscan OptiCell™, its cartridge-based, artificial intelligence-powered haematology analyser, marking the next step in the platform's evolution. With this update, Vetscan OptiCell will become the first point-of-care haematology analyser to offer cellular haemoglobin concentration mean (CHCM) – a parameter previously available only in reference labs.

The award-winning platform's first update since its launch in 2025 brings reference lab level complete blood count (CBC) insights directly in-clinic, reaffirming Zoetis's commitment to innovation that delivers real value to veterinarians. The expansion of Vetscan OptiCell's diagnostic capabilities – which includes CHCM and plateletcrit (PCT) – will increase its total number of parameters to 24, while delivering the same meaningful time, cost, and space savings for veterinary teams.

Abhay Nayak, President of Global Diagnostics at Zoetis, said: "This latest progression in Vetscan OptiCell's capabilities further advances the impact that Zoetis diagnostic innovation brings veterinary teams in providing

pets and pet owners with the best possible care. Expanded parameters such as CHCM and PCT deliver deeper insights at the point of care and reflect our broader portfolio strategy to deliver a robust pipeline of impactful diagnostics that strengthen clinical decision-making."

'MEANINGFUL DIAGNOSTIC DEPTH'

The addition of CHCM gives veterinarians a direct measurement of the average haemoglobin concentration within individually analysed red blood cells. Unlike mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration (MCHC), which is a calculated value, CHCM is measured optically – providing a more reliable indicator needed when a patient is anaemic and when endogenous interferences, such as haemolysis, are present.

PCT provides the volume percentage of blood occupied by platelets – functionally similar to how haematocrit (HCT) reflects the red blood cell fraction. PCT helps clinicians better assess platelet production, consumption, and evidence of destruction. Both new parameters are expected to be available to Vetscan OptiCell users in 2026.

Dr. Michelle Larsen, Head of Medical Platforms, Clinical Studies, and Medical

Education, Global Diagnostic Platforms at Zoetis, said: "CHCM and PCT add meaningful diagnostic depth to the CBC, helping clinicians better understand red blood cell and platelet abnormalities in sick patients. Providing this level of insight in clinic supports clearer interpretation and more responsive case management. I'm excited to see how these additional parameters will help clinicians reach earlier, more confident diagnoses in general practice."

OPTICELL IS "THE MOST ACCURATE CBC MACHINE I'VE USED"

Speaking about Vetscan OptiCell's impact at his clinic, Dr Rory Cowlam, Clinical Director at Pickles & Co in London, UK, and member of the Veterinary Diagnostics Innovation Council, said: "OptiCell gives our vets more confidence and increases our offerings to clients on a day-to-day basis. From both a clinic and a patient point of view, the information that we can get at point of care, the speed that we get it, and the accuracy of the data is second to none."

He added: "The fact that this technology can be enhanced remotely and continue to get even better, with added capabilities, is really exciting. There's nothing else like this on the market."

Dr. Sue Ettinger, a veterinary cancer specialist based in New York using the platform, said: "Vetscan OptiCell is the most accurate CBC machine I've used. The VEF technology reads through platelet clumps and gives reliable counts, even in cases like lymphocytosis. Being able to trust that first CBC and not having to send it out to a reference lab for confirmation, means I can talk to pet owners right away and make timely decisions in the room, saving time and expense."

VEF TECHNOLOGY

Vetscan OptiCell combines expertly trained artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms with viscoelastic focusing (VEF) technology to count hundreds of thousands of cells during every sample run and analyse them against hundreds of unique parameters for precise cellular classification in minutes.¹

Its proprietary microfluidic technology, VEF, allows the analyser to align cells in a single layer for sharp focus imaging, providing accurate platelet recognition, even within clumps – a challenge encountered by traditional haematology analysers.

Compared to reagent pack-based technologies, Vetscan OptiCell's single-use cartridge-based system - which contains the blood sample, reagents and waste - is easier to use, requires minimal maintenance, eliminates calibration, and prevents cross-contamination.

For a complete haematology picture, CBC results from Vetscan OptiCell can be paired with Vetscan Imagyst® AI Blood Smear, together with expert support via Imagyst Digital Cytology and the Zoetis Virtual Laboratory, within the ZoetisDx portal.

MORE INFORMATION

To view the full diagnostics portfolio, visit <http://www.zoetisdiagnostics.com.au/opticell>

DISCLOSURE NOTICES

Forward-Looking Statements: This press release contains forward-looking statements, which reflect the current views of Zoetis with respect to: business plans or prospects, expectations regarding products and other future events. These statements are not guarantees of future performance or actions. Forward-looking statements are subject to risks and uncertainties. If one or more of these risks or uncertainties materialize, or if management's underlying assumptions prove to be incorrect, actual results may differ materially from those contemplated by a forward-looking statement. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date on which they are made. Zoetis expressly disclaims any obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. A further list and description of risks, uncertainties and other matters can be found in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K, including in the sections thereof captioned "Forward-Looking Statements and Factors That May Affect Future Results" and "Item 1A. Risk Factors," in our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and in our Current Reports on Form 8-K. These filings and subsequent filings are available online at www.sec.gov, www.zoetis.com, or on request from Zoetis.

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PETSURE PASSES \$3 BILLION IN CLAIMS PAID AS PET INSURANCE BECOMES EMBEDDED IN AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY CARE

PetSure has passed \$3 billion in claims paid, reflecting a significant shift in how pet insurance operates within the Australian veterinary system.

The milestone comes as veterinary medicine has advanced considerably over the past decade, with diagnostics, treatments and specialist care now available to pets that were largely inaccessible a decade ago. Pet insurance has evolved alongside that progress, moving from a product many owners held as a precaution to one that increasingly shapes how care is accessed and delivered at the point of the veterinary consult.

PetSure Chief Executive Officer Alexandra Thomas said the milestone reflects how fundamentally the role of pet insurance has changed.

"Behind every claim is a pet that needed care and an owner trying to make the best possible decision in a stressful moment," Ms Thomas said. "What \$3 billion tells you is the scale at which that is now happening across Australia."

A significant part of that shift has been driven by GapOnly®, PetSure's real-time claiming system now operating across 85% of Australian veterinary clinics. The most widely recognised and highest-rated system of its kind in the market, GapOnly® allows eligible claims to be processed during the consultation itself, removing the need for pet owners to meet the full cost upfront and allowing the conversation between vet and owner to remain focused on care.

"One of the hardest parts of a vet visit is managing a large upfront cost when you are already worried about your pet," Ms Thomas said. "When that can be resolved in the room, in real time, it changes the experience for everyone."



PetSure also operates PetSafetyNet, a program that extends access to veterinary care for pet owners who need it but can least afford it, whether facing financial hardship or other barriers to care. With a \$1 from every GapOnly® claim directed to the program, PetSafetyNet provides free 24-hour veterinary telehealth and subsidised urgent in-clinic care, where needed. Since launching in October 2024, the program has supported approximately 1,500 pets and contributed close to \$1 million in care support.

"PetSafetyNet is about making sure the system works for more people, that access to care doesn't depend solely on what someone can afford in that moment," Ms Thomas said.

PetSure processes more than 5,500 claims on a typical weekday. PetSure underwrites or administers pet insurance across more than 20 brands in Australia and New Zealand.

Disclaimer: Insurance products are issued by The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd ABN 78 090 584 473, AFSL 241436 (Hollard) and/or PetSure (Australia) Pty Ltd ABN 95 075 949 923, AFSL 420183 (PetSure) (from 8th May 2023 only), administered by PetSure and promoted and distributed through their authorised representatives and distribution partners. Any advice provided is general only and does not take into account your individual objectives, financial situation or needs. Cover is subject to the policy terms and conditions. You should consider the relevant Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) to decide if a product is right for you. PDS and Target Market Determination are available from the relevant partner's website.



RESEARCH UNCOVERS SOCIAL MEDIA ADVICE, RISING COSTS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY ARE RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF PET CARE

A NEW REPORT RELEASED BY ROYAL CANIN REVEALS THE DEEPENING BOND BETWEEN AUSTRALIANS AND THEIR PETS, AND THE GROWING TENSION BETWEEN LOVE AND AFFORDABILITY.



Australians are loving their pets more than ever, but rising costs, online advice and rapid implementation of technologies are making caring for them more complex than ever.

The inaugural Royal Canin Future of Pets Report 2026, surveying more than 1,600 Australian pet owners and 100 Veterinary professionals, reveals how these pressures are reshaping the way pets are fed, treated and cared for across Australia.

While only five per cent of Australian pet owners believe social media influences their pet food decisions, 72 per cent of veterinarians report seeing nutrition choices shaped by online trends, including raw feeding and grain-free diets.

Veterinary experts warn that the growing volume of online advice is making feeding decisions more complex at a time when pets are living longer and their health needs are becoming more sophisticated.

Dr Annabel Robertson, Senior Veterinarian at Royal Canin, said many pet owners are trying to do the right thing, but navigating conflicting advice can be overwhelming.

"The explosion of online advice is making feeding decisions more complex than ever," Dr Annabel said. "In a world of trends, science is still the most proven path, especially when nutrition plays such a critical role in lifelong health."

"Veterinarians are trained to put science, evidence and the pet first. Yet that expertise is now competing with 60 second videos from unqualified influencers. The data is clear, owners don't think they're being influenced, yet vets are seeing the impact every day".

"Even with the best of intentions, raw diets, grain-free trends and unbalanced home cooking are rarely supported by rigorous science. We need evidence back at the centre of the conversation," Dr Robertson explained.

The research also found that financial anxiety is widespread. 78 per cent of pet owners are concerned about veterinary care becoming unaffordable, yet 63 per cent have no pet insurance. This concern is well-founded, with 51 per cent of veterinarians reporting that between a quarter and half of their recommended treatments are now being declined due to cost.

Despite these pressures, owners remain deeply committed to their pets' wellbeing. One in four Australian pet owners said they would pay more than \$5,000 for a treatment that extends their pet's healthy life by five years, highlighting the strength of the human-animal bond and the growing focus on longevity.

Technology is reshaping expectations of care. Almost three quarters (73%) of Australian pet owners expressed interest in telehealth consultations, while 71 per cent are interested in AI-powered health

monitoring technologies that could help detect health changes earlier. However, veterinarians are cautious, with 86 per cent believing fewer than one quarter of consults can be safely managed remotely, reinforcing the irreplaceable role of physical examination.

Alongside advances in technology, interest in personalised and preventive nutrition is growing. The report found 68 per cent of Australian pet owners would consider nutrition tailored to their pet's DNA, reflecting a broader shift towards more precise, individual approaches to pet health.

"We are entering an era where nutrition will become increasingly personalised, informed by data, genetics and lifestyle. That future depends on evidence-based nutrition developed through research, testing and veterinary expertise - not guesswork and trends," Dr Annabel explained.

Looking ahead, the Report also shows owners expect pets to play an even greater role in everyday life. Nearly half (49%) of Australian pet owners want more public spaces accessible to pets, while 40 per cent support pet-friendly workplaces becoming the norm.

Veterinary professionals however anticipate growing complexity as expectations rise. More than half predict the vet-client relationship will become more challenging, as owners rely on online advice and emerging technologies to guide decision making.

Dr Annabel said the future of pet care will depend on balancing innovation with responsible, preventive health strategies.

"The future of pet care will not be defined by treatment alone. It will be defined by prevention, precision and trust in science," Dr Annabel concluded.

As Australians' love for their pets deepens, the challenge for owners, vets and the broader industry will be ensuring quality care remains within reach.

Commissioned by Royal Canin through Pureprofile, an online survey of 1,629 Australian dog and cat owners was conducted between 19th January to 1st February, 2026 with data nationally representative of gender and location based on the ABS census. Additionally, 103 Australasian vets were surveyed to form part of this research.

ROYAL CANIN FUTURE OF PET REPORT KEY FINDINGS

The Human-Pet Bond

- 90% say pet ownership has positively impacted their mental health (60% very positive, 30% somewhat positive)
- Only 17% view their pet as just "a pet"
- 77% of pets sleep in their owner's bedroom regularly or occasionally
- 49% view their pet as a "family member" or "child" (combined)

Cost of Care Crisis

- 78% are concerned about veterinary care becoming unaffordable (45% very concerned, 32% somewhat concerned)
- 63% have no pet insurance
- 51% of vets report that 26-50% of recommended treatments are declined due to cost
- A further 10% of vets say 51-75% of treatments are declined due to cost

Willingness to Pay for Longevity

- 25% would pay \$5,000+ for a treatment that extends their pet's healthy life by five years
- 8% say there is "no limit" to what they would pay
- 32% of 18-29 year olds would pay \$5,000+ (vs 17% of those aged 60+)
- 48% are interested in cancer vaccines for pets
- 41% are interested in anti-ageing supplements/medications
- 92% of vets believe there should be limits on life-extending interventions when quality of life is poor
- 41% of vets foresee "extreme life-extending interventions for elderly pets" as a prominent ethical dilemma

Social Media & Misinformation

- 5% of owners say social media influencers/reviews affect their pet food choices
- 72% of vets report noticing nutrition choices influenced by social media
- Only 27% of vets consider this social media influence to be positive
- Vets report increased enquiries for raw diets (19%), novel proteins (15%) and grain-free foods (14%)

Pet Food & Nutrition

- 42% say their vet is the #1 influence on pet food purchases
- 46% who decide which pet food to buy, cite price as a top decision factor
- 46% who decide which pet food to buy, cite ingredients as a top decision factor
- 30% who decide which pet food to buy, cite Australian-made as a top factor
- 29% are influenced by supermarket promotions

Future Food Trends

- 91% would consider senior-specific diets (extremely/very/somewhat/slightly likely)
- 87% are open to longevity or anti ageing supplements (extremely/very/somewhat/slightly likely)
- 68% would consider personalised nutrition based on DNA testing (extremely/very/somewhat/slightly likely)
- 60% would consider foods with insect-based protein (extremely/very/somewhat/slightly likely)
- 53% would consider lab-grown meat products

Technology

- 53% don't currently use pet technology
- 73% are interested in telehealth consultations for their pets
- 71% are interested in AI-powered health monitoring that detects illness early
- 66% are interested in apps that translate pet vocalisations/body language
- 65% are likely to share wearable data with their vet if it improved care (33% very likely, 33% somewhat likely)
- 57% cite cost as their concern with pet technology, the #1 concern amongst dog/cat owners
- 86% of vets believe only 0-25% of consultations could be handled via telehealth
- 33% of vets are optimistic about AI's impact on the profession; 26% are concerned

Indoor Cats

- 62% believe cats should be kept indoors to protect wildlife, nature and the cats themselves
- 76% of vets are seeing more cats living primarily indoors than five years ago

Animal Welfare Concerns

- 78% concerned about access to vet care becoming unaffordable
- 75% concerned about overpopulation of pets in shelters
- 65% concerned about breeding practices and genetic health
- 53% concerned about antibiotic resistance in pets
- 52% concerned about sustainability of pet food production
- 51% concerned about climate change affecting pet health

Future Priorities (Next Decade)

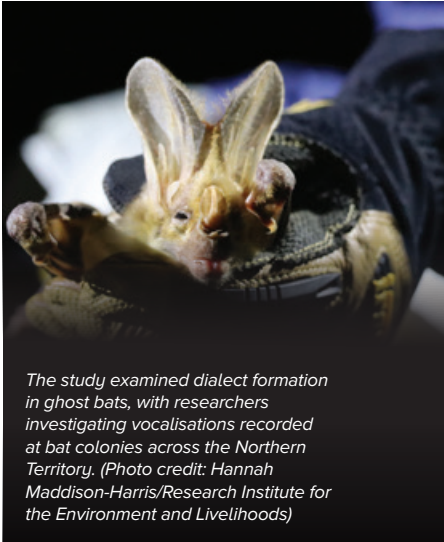
- 49% want public spaces and transport access for pets to become more common
- 40% want pet-friendly workplaces to become the norm
- 40% want mental health support animals allowed in more settings
- 30% want grief counselling for pet loss to become standard
- 26% want pets considered in divorce/custody proceedings to become more common
- 20% want paid "pawternity" leave to become more common

Vet Perspectives

- 54% of vets predict the vet-client relationship will become "more challenging"
- 17% cite rising treatment costs as the biggest challenge facing the profession
- 14% cite mental health of veterinary professionals as a top challenge
- 13% cite workforce shortages as a top challenge
- 13.5% cite client expectations vs realistic outcomes as a major challenge
- 47% expect pet lifespans to increase by 1-2 years in the next 20 years
- 36% expect lifespans to increase by 3-5 years



CHATTY BATTY: RESEARCH EXPLORES DIALECT FORMATION IN GHOST BATS



The study examined dialect formation in ghost bats, with researchers investigating vocalisations recorded at bat colonies across the Northern Territory. (Photo credit: Hannah Maddison-Harris/Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods)



ACCENTS ARE USUALLY THOUGHT OF AS A HUMAN TRAIT, INDICATING WHERE A PERSON HAS GROWN UP OR THE COMMUNITIES THEY BELONG – AND NEW RESEARCH SHOWS THE SAME DIALECTS CAN ALSO OCCUR IN AUSTRALIA’S LARGEST CARNIVOROUS BAT.

Research led by Charles Darwin University (CDU) Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Nicola Hanrahan investigated the variation in vocalisations recorded at five ghost bat *Macroderma gigas* (Megadermatidae) colonies in the Northern Territory.

The ghost bat is a threatened species with an estimated population size of fewer than 10,000 individuals. The Northern Territory is home to 20 per cent of this global population of ghost bats.

Academics assessed structural differences within three of the ghost bat social vocalisations: the ‘chirp-trill’, ‘squabble’ and ‘ultrasonic social’; and their ‘echolocation’ call, recorded at ghost bat colonies ranging from ~40km apart to more than 800km apart.

Results showed that dialects were present in all vocalisation types. Genetic, geographic, morphological (physical features associated with producing and receiving sound) have some effect on the structure observed, but the differences

involved were largely unexplained.

This raises the possibility that these ghost bat ‘accents’ are also shaped by social processes, much like culturally driven changes in human accents over time.

This study provides the first evidence of dialect formation in megadermatids, or the family of species of medium to large carnivorous bats.

Dr Hanrahan, who is with CDU’s Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods, said this gave unique insights into the social behaviour of the species.

“Ghost bats are a very social species and have a range of vocalisations that they use to communicate with each other,” Dr Hanrahan said.

“There is still much for us to learn about the social behaviour of this charismatic species, and further studies are planned to delve further into social communication use in ghost bats.”

“Research into ghost bat dialects is important because it can reveal how

colonies are socially structured and highlight isolated populations. Social calls can be useful for monitoring this disturbance-sensitive species without entering roosts, and the more we learn about their structures, the more useful they are as non-invasive monitoring techniques.

“Bats are one of the few mammalian groups with strong evidence of vocal learning and vocal plasticity, which makes them useful models for studying the kinds of biological and social foundations that may have contributed to human language evolution.”

Dialect Formation in Ghost Bats: Genetic, Geographic and Morphological Drivers of Social and Echolocation Call Divergence was published in the journal Ecology and Evolution.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://www.cdu.edu.au/>



PET DENTAL MONTH: TURNING AWARENESS INTO BETTER PATIENT CARE



Tracey Small BA, VN, Dip Vet Dent, VTS (Dentistry).
Veterinary Dentistry and Oral Surgery

www.dentalcareforpets.com.au

EVERY JULY AND AUGUST, VETERINARY PRACTICES ACROSS AUSTRALIA HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON ONE OF THE MOST UNDERDIAGNOSED AND UNDERTREATED CONDITIONS IN COMPANION ANIMAL MEDICINE — PERIODONTAL DISEASE.

Pet Dental Month is more than a marketing campaign. When implemented effectively, it becomes a powerful clinical and educational initiative that improves patient welfare, strengthens client relationships, increases compliance with preventive healthcare recommendations, and can provide meaningful growth for veterinary practices.

For veterinarians and veterinary nurses, the challenge is no longer convincing ourselves that dental disease matters. The evidence is overwhelming. The challenge is helping clients understand that oral health is not cosmetic medicine — it is an essential component of lifelong health and wellbeing.

THE SILENT DISEASE IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Periodontal disease remains one of the most common diseases encountered in small animal practice. By three years of age, the majority of dogs and cats show some evidence of periodontal disease,

yet many owners fail to recognise the signs until disease is advanced.

Unlike acute illness, dental disease develops gradually. Halitosis becomes “normal.” Reluctance to chew is attributed to ageing. Behavioural changes often go unnoticed. As veterinary professionals, we know that many patients continue

eating despite significant oral pain.

Pet Dental Month provides a structured opportunity to reset client perceptions and reinforce a simple but important message:

Dental disease is painful, progressive, and largely preventable.



WHY PRACTICES SHOULD EMBRACE PET DENTAL MONTH

1. Improved Patient Welfare

The primary objective is better patient care. Earlier intervention means:

- Reduced periodontal pain
- Fewer tooth extractions
- Reduced chronic inflammation
- Better long-term oral function
- Improved quality of life

Importantly, Pet Dental Month encourages practices to shift from “reactionary dentistry” to preventive dentistry.

When clients understand the importance of regular oral examinations and homecare, practices see more Stage 1 and Stage 2 periodontal disease cases rather than advanced, end-stage presentations.

2. Stronger Preventive Healthcare Culture

Preventive medicine is the foundation of modern veterinary practice. Vaccination, parasite prevention, weight management, and dental care should all sit within the same continuum of wellness.

Pet Dental Month creates an ideal framework for:

- Nurse-led dental clinics
- Oral health scoring programs
- Preventive treatment plans
- Client education campaigns
- Follow-up compliance systems

Veterinary nurses are particularly important in this process. Many practices find that nurse-led dental education dramatically improves client compliance because nurses often spend more time discussing practical homecare strategies with owners.

3. Increased Client Engagement

Dental campaigns provide excellent opportunities for client communication across multiple channels:

- Social media education
- Waiting room displays
- Before-and-after dental imaging
- Oral health handouts
- Reminder systems

- Nurse consultations

Importantly, these conversations frequently lead to broader health discussions. A dental examination often uncovers other age-related health concerns and improves overall preventive care uptake.

4. Sustainable Practice Growth

While patient welfare must remain central, it is also true that dentistry represents an important and legitimate component of veterinary practice revenue.

Well-organised dental campaigns commonly increase:

- Dental examinations
- Professional dental procedures
- Dental radiography utilisation
- Preventive product sales
- Recheck consultations
- Long-term client retention

Practices that invest in preventive dentistry often report stronger client trust because owners appreciate proactive healthcare recommendations rather than crisis-based treatment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOMECARE COMPLIANCE

Professional dental treatment alone is not enough.

Without ongoing plaque control, periodontal disease rapidly recurs. This is where many veterinary teams struggle — translating professional treatment into realistic long-term homecare.

Clients are often willing but overwhelmed. If recommendations are too complicated, compliance falls dramatically.

The key is to provide practical, achievable homecare plans tailored to both the patient and the owner.

TOOTHBRUSHING: STILL THE GOLD STANDARD

Daily toothbrushing remains the single most effective homecare strategy for plaque control. Unfortunately, many owners either never begin or discontinue brushing due to difficulty introducing the process.

This is where product selection and nurse coaching become extremely

important. Finger cloths, plaque control seaweed products, starter kits, and appropriately sized brushes can also help owners gradually build confidence with homecare.

Demonstration is critical. A two-minute nurse consultation showing owners how to position the brush, lift the lips, and reward the pet can significantly improve long-term compliance.

Importantly, clinics should avoid overwhelming clients with unrealistic expectations. Even brushing several times weekly is preferable to no homecare at all.

ADJUNCTIVE ORAL CARE PRODUCTS

While brushing is ideal, adjunctive oral care products can help support plaque control and oral hygiene, particularly in patients where brushing is difficult.

Products containing zinc have been widely used in veterinary oral care due to their antibacterial and anti-halitosis properties. Oral gels and rinses may assist with maintaining oral hygiene, improving breath odour, and supporting gingival health between professional treatments.

These products can be especially useful:

- Following professional dental procedures
- In geriatric patients
- In resistant brushing patients
- During homecare training periods
- As part of multimodal oral hygiene plans

It is important, however, that practices present these products appropriately — as supportive adjuncts rather than replacements for professional dental treatment and toothbrushing.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PET DENTAL MONTH CAMPAIGN

Successful campaigns are usually simple, well-organised, and team-driven.

Strategies that work particularly well include:

NURSE DENTAL CLINICS

Offer complimentary or low-cost nurse oral health assessments to identify patients needing further evaluation.

ORAL HEALTH SCORING

Use consistent periodontal scoring systems to visually demonstrate disease progression to clients.

BEFORE-AND-AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

Visual evidence is extremely persuasive and helps owners understand the impact of treatment.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

Short educational videos and social media posts explaining:

- periodontal disease
- toothbrushing techniques
- signs of oral pain
- homecare recommendations

Can significantly increase engagement.

HOMECARE STARTER PACKS

Bundling toothbrushes, toothpaste, oral gels, and printed instructions can improve compliance and increase convenience for owners.

TEAM TRAINING

Consistency is critical. Every team member should deliver the same oral health messaging.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND VETERINARY DENTISTRY

One of the most valuable outcomes of Pet Dental Month is cultural change within veterinary practice.

Dental disease should not be viewed as an “optional extra” or purely cosmetic service. Oral pain affects welfare, behaviour, nutrition, and quality of life.

Modern veterinary dentistry is preventive medicine.

Practices that actively promote dental health are not simply increasing procedure numbers — they are improving patient welfare and strengthening standards of care.

Pet Dental Month provides the perfect opportunity to reinforce that message to clients, veterinary teams, and the broader community.

If veterinary professionals continue educating owners, promoting preventive care, and encouraging realistic homecare routines, we can significantly reduce the burden of periodontal disease in Australian pets. And ultimately, that is the real success story behind Pet Dental Month.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.dentalcareforpets.com.au

AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM VETS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

AFTER NEARLY SEVEN YEARS OF POLICY, ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP WORK, THE TIME HAS COME FOR VETS FOR CLIMATE ACTION TO TAKE ITS NEXT STEP.

Through ongoing conversations with our members, partners and the wider veterinary community, it became clear that our name and identity needed to grow with us. We're excited to share that we are rebranding as the 'Australian Veterinary Environmental Alliance (AVEA).'

The rebrand also reflects a broader development. Two years ago, the then President of the World Veterinary Association, Dr Rafael Laguens, spent a week here in Australia to better understand what VfCA had built. He toured leading sustainable practices, met with local, state and federal MPs, and spent time with our patron Professor Peter Doherty, discussing how this model could be scaled.

That conversation has now produced the World Veterinary Environmental Alliance (WVEA) — a global body enabling veterinary organisations to collaborate on climate, sustainability and biodiversity. The initiative has grown directly from the foundational work developed here in Australia, and international partnerships are already emerging in exciting and unexpected ways. Every member of VfCA should feel proud that an Australian initiative has helped shape a growing global movement.

The Australian Veterinary Environmental Alliance will continue our existing initiatives — the Climate Care Program, Sustainable Equine Futures, and the Masterclass series — and through WVEA these can now be shared internationally.

Steff Goldring has been an extraordinary CEO over the past three years, and the position AVEA now occupies — both nationally and as the parent of a global initiative — is in no small part her achievement. We are deeply grateful to her, and wish her every success in what comes next. She will finish her tenure with us on 10 July 2026.

Your continued involvement is what will carry this next chapter.

Thank you for your support and for everything you have contributed to this movement.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: Vets for Climate Action www.vfca.org.au



WINTER HEALTH ISSUES SENDING MORE PETS TO THE VET

AS WINTER SETS IN, COLDER WEATHER, SHORTER DAYS AND SEASONAL HOUSEHOLD HAZARDS CAN PUT PETS AT GREATER RISK OF ILLNESS, INJURY AND DISCOMFORT, MAKING IT IMPORTANT FOR OWNERS TO TAKE EXTRA STEPS TO KEEP THEIR ANIMALS SAFE AND HEALTHY THROUGHOUT THE COOLER MONTHS.

New claims data highlights the added health pressures winter can place on pets, with a notable spike in mobility and joint-related conditions during the colder months. According to RSPCA Pet Insurance CEO Brad Smith, claims for these ailments increase significantly in winter, with the average vet visit costing \$2,462.

“We know that the top five issues resulting in vet visits year-round are ingestion of foreign objects, skin allergies, ear infections, gastroenteritis and vomiting, but during winter, the most noticeable rise in claims is for mobility and joint issues,” says Smith. These conditions can worsen in colder weather, making prevention and early care especially important.

Smith also warns that winter routines can contribute to seasonal health issues for pets. “We all feel the pull of the couch after work when the days are shorter and cooler, but less exercise, reduced fresh air, cold weather and drier indoor environments can affect pets too by increasing the risk of weight gain, stiffness, skin irritations and infections such as kennel cough.”

COLD TOLERANCE

Dr Melissa Meehan, Director of Veterinary Services, RSPCA Victoria, says that in the chillier regions, which include Tasmania, anywhere south of Sydney, the high plains, and the Australian Alps (which include the ironically named Mount Hotham in winter), several risks arise. “Among them are hypothermia, frostbite and chemical poisoning.”

Dr Meehan says smaller breeds, short-haired pets, puppies and kittens as well as senior pets are particularly vulnerable to cold weather, as they struggle to regulate body temperature and have less body fat. “Where possible,

it’s best to keep pets indoors during winter,” she says, adding that short-haired breeds may benefit from a jacket or sweater, while outdoor pets need warm, dry shelter and bedding.

Pet owners should also watch for signs of hypothermia, including shivering, reluctance to walk, whining, hunched posture or tucked tails, especially in underweight animals.

She says colder weather can also worsen joint stiffness and mobility issues in pets. “Cold weather doesn’t cause joint problems, but it does result in reduced circulation, muscle tightening and thicker joint fluid which increase discomfort and stiffness in joints,” she explains.

While pets often begin showing signs of joint disease at the age of 7 years, claims data show that many pets visiting vets for mobility and joint-related conditions are even younger, highlighting that these issues are not limited to older animals and are something all pet owners should be aware of.

SNIFFLES, COUGHS AND RESPIRATORY ISSUES

Dr Meehan says pets are more prone to winter illnesses such as kennel cough during colder months, with claims rising as dogs pick up infections at parks, daycare and boarding facilities, while cats can be affected in poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

She recommends keeping vaccinations up to date, in particular Bordetella and Canine Parainfluenza virus, which cause kennel cough and ensuring pets have warm bedding and well-ventilated shelter. Owners should watch for symptoms including coughing, nasal discharge, lethargy and noisy breathing, and seek veterinary advice if symptoms develop.



Dr Melissa Meehan
(Photo credit: RSPCA Pet Insurance)

WINTER ITCH AND SKIN HEALTH

Heated homes and lower humidity during winter can dry out pets’ skin, worsening allergies, itching and infections, with skin-related claims remaining consistently high throughout the colder months.

Dr Meehan recommends regular brushing to maintain natural oils, limiting baths, and using moisturising shampoos when needed. She says winter can also increase the risk of ear infections, particularly in floppy-eared breeds, due to dampness and reduced airflow indoors. Owners should avoid getting water in ears, dry pets thoroughly after bathing and watch for signs including head shaking redness, odour, discharge or excessive scratching.

For pets, as with people, prevention matters. A balanced diet, regular exercise and consistent grooming can help protect their health through winter, but Smith urges owners to act quickly if something seems wrong. “Don’t wait, a quick vet check can stop minor hassles from becoming major problems.”

MORE INFORMATION

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NEW RESEARCH REVEALS DOG OWNERS' LOVE IS BLIND TO PARASITE PROTECTION

New research reveals a disconnect in how Australian dog owners think they show love for their pets through their daily actions.¹ While dog owners see protecting their dog's health as a sign of love, many are still hesitant or lacking parasite prevention routines.¹

The new national survey of dog owners, commissioned by Zoetis Australia, found that 86% believe health-related behaviours are one of the key ways they show their dog love. Three quarters of dog owners (75%) stated that they show love to their dogs by giving regular parasite protection and over half (69%) take them to the vet routinely.¹ Roughly four in five (83%) also say they'd be willing to give up on certain lifestyle comforts if it meant their dog could never get parasites, confirming strong understanding of the damage parasites can cause to dogs' health.¹ While good intentions are there, nearly half (47%) still express hesitation about giving dogs routine parasite treatment.¹

A parasite is an organism that lives on or in another living being, like our pets, and gets its food from or at the expense of its host.² In Australia, dogs can be exposed to a variety of external and internal parasites, with many dogs acquiring some type of parasite in their lifetime.^{1,3} Internal parasites, such as multiple types of intestinal worms and heartworm can lead to malnutrition, gut disease, heart and lung disease and other serious illnesses, that can even be deadly. For external parasites like fleas, ticks, and mites, common symptoms include intense skin irritation, anaemia (blood loss), and even paralysis and, sadly, death.^{3,4}

Seeing dogs as part of the family helps explain the importance owners place on their dog's health and wellbeing. That emotional bond even extends to Australians' love lives, with the survey revealing around one in 10 owners would trust their dog's judgement when selecting a romantic partner.¹



As someone who knows first-hand how much time and emotion can go into searching for love, **Grayson Mclvor, Married at First Sight contestant and proud dog owner** says his 11-year-old labradoodle, Champ, has shown him exactly why caring for a dog's health is such a meaningful expression of love.

"Champ's been my sidekick for over a decade now. When you love your dog like family, looking after their health is one of the clearest ways to show it. People spend a lot of time looking for love, but dogs give you unconditional love every single day. Life gets busy, and I know that first-hand, but staying on top of Champ's parasite protection is just one of those non-negotiables for me, no matter what else is going on," says Mclvor.

The changing climate and other factors allow parasites to thrive for longer periods and in new geographical areas, so routine parasite protection is more important than ever.⁴ Veterinary experts agree that the best protection against parasites is prevention, through the regular and consistent use of parasiticide treatments.⁴ There are several options when it comes to parasiticide treatments, including injections, topical spot-ons and – most popular – easy-to-give flavoured oral tablets, like Simparica

Trio®. Dog owners are encouraged to consult with a vet to help ensure their dog has the right protection.

Dr Evan Shaw, a veterinarian and a founder of Fleamail, an online parasite subscription service, says the challenge is that parasite risk is not always obvious, which is why prevention needs to be routine, not reactive.

"Because we are humanising our pets so much, we tend to believe their health routines and practice are quite similar to ours. But when it comes to parasite prevention, risks and approaches, they are vastly different. Parasite prevention in dogs needs to be a continuous and life-long consideration," says Dr Shaw.

The new survey confirms around one in three dog owners report their dog has contracted a parasite at least once, with fleas (53%) and ticks (48%) being the most reported.¹ This means over two million Australians have had to deal with a parasite impacting their dog's health, but the level of confidence among dog owners when it comes to knowing what to do varies. Owners feel more confident when it comes to treating



fleas – 46% say they know exactly what to do. But confidence levels are much lower for ticks (36%), intestinal worms (30%) and heartworm (27%).¹

Importantly, the survey also reveals that experience alone does not guarantee a strong understanding of best practice when it comes to parasite prevention.

Dr Shaw adds: “I often come across a belief that exposure to parasites can be controlled. And while there are certain hygiene practices that can positively impact this exposure, it’s important to recognise that parasites are ever present and no dog, even those living inside, is risk free. Having a product like Simparica Trio® as part of dog’s regular parasite prevention plan can help provide peace of mind for dog owners and ensure they are on top of parasite protection.”

While parasites aren’t in the top five reasons for veterinary visits, the broader cost and disruption of dealing with parasite-related health issues can be significant.⁵ Many dog owners cite costs as one of the main barriers to regular parasite prevention through medications.¹⁶ For 13% of dog owners or over 900,000 people that believe they only need to treat their dog for parasites if they see symptoms, lack of parasite prevention routines can end up costing thousands of dollars in treatment, depending on the type of parasite.¹⁷

Dr Christopher Ng, Veterinary Operations Manager at Zoetis Australia, emphasised the importance of vets and dog owners working as a team to discuss clinically proven parasite prevention options that help minimise risks.

“We recognise the realities of dog ownership, the joy, the chaos and many

things that aren’t always in our control. But staying on top of parasite protection is one way we can proactively care for our beloved pets,” say Dr Ng.

“Veterinary teams have the knowledge and experience to discuss parasite prevention and recommend the best approach. Luckily for many dog owners, it can be as easy as giving a monthly, tasty chew, like Simparica Trio®, which is proven to prevent fleas, ticks, mites, intestinal worms, mosquitos and deadly heartworm disease, all in one easy monthly dose.”

In scenarios where a dog does not receive regular treatment, it is important for dog owners to speak to vets to understand the risks this may present. Dog owners can also use an online tool to assess which parasites their dog needs protection from, based on the state they reside in, as well as other animals and people they may be coming in contact with: <https://www.zoetispets.com/en-au/dog-healthcare/parasites-assessment/>

ABOUT SIMPARICA TRIO

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FEDERAL BUDGET 2026: ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA WELCOMES INVESTMENT IN REGULATOR - MORE TO BE DONE

Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) has welcomed the Australian Government’s announcement in the Federal Budget of \$8.7 million in funding for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), acknowledging the regulator’s vital role in protecting animal health, supporting agricultural productivity and underpinning Australia’s biosecurity system.

This funding is a positive and practical step to support a robust, science-based and efficient regulatory system, particularly at a time of increasing pressure on supply chains, global uncertainty and rising costs across the food and fibre sector.

“A well-resourced APVMA is essential to ensuring Australian farmers, veterinarians and animal owners have timely access to safe and effective veterinary medicines,” said AMA CEO Mr Ben Stapley.

“While this funding is welcome, more still needs to be done to support innovation and improve market access to veterinary medicines. Continued commitment will be needed to ensure long-term regulatory performance and timely access to new and existing animal medicines.”

“Improvements in data protection and tighter controls for unregistered veterinary medicines are essential to ensure farmers, vets and pet owners have access to the latest innovations in animal health,” said Mr Stapley.

AMA also welcomes the additional \$387 million of funding to CSIRO and the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, strengthening Australia’s disease surveillance, preparedness and response capability.

AMA looks forward to working with the Government, the APVMA and industry stakeholders to ensure this investment delivers real improvements for animal health and the broader Australian community.

“Investment in regulatory capacity and disease preparedness directly supports Australia’s ability to prevent, detect and respond to animal disease threats,” Mr Stapley said.



HARD PILL TO SWALLOW: THE TRUE COST FOR AUSSIES WHO OWN A DOG

AUSSIE DOG OWNERS SPEND A WEEK OF THEIR LIVES, 79 TUBS OF PEANUT BUTTER AND MORE THAN 20KG OF CHEESE ADMINISTERING PET MEDICATION

- **88% of Aussies dog owners resort to tricks, treats and disguises to get their pets to take medication**
- **Many rely on cheese and peanut butter to administer medication, using more than 100 slices and 200 spoonfuls a year**
- **One in five (21%) have skipped or delayed giving medication because it was too difficult**

New research reveals Aussies are feeding their dogs more than two kilograms of cheese and three kilograms of peanut butter every year, solely to administer pill medication. Over the course of an average dog's lifetime, that adds up to more than 24 kilograms of cheese and nearly 79 tubs of peanut butter, that's a lot of cheese!

Yet for many pet parents, even these go-to tricks aren't enough, with 1 in 5 skipping or delaying medication altogether because administering it is simply too difficult (21%).

The research commissioned by GREENIES™, part of the Mars family of brands, reveals the lengths Aussies go to just to administer medication to their dogs, a task that 1 in 5 dog owners do daily.

But it isn't just food being consumed, it's time, too.

The average Australian dog owner spends three minutes administering medication per dose, with more than nine in ten (92%) spending up to six minutes each week on the task. Among dog owners who spend five or more minutes administering each dose, this adds up to nearly 75 hours spent purely on pet medication over a dog's lifetime. And for those administering medication

daily, that's nearly 206 hours over a dog's lifetime - more than a full week!

With only one in ten dog owners (12%) admitting their dog willingly takes medication as-is, 88% resort to creative tactics to disguise medication, from hiding in cheese (18%), peanut butter (18%), dog treats (32%), and gourmet meals (7%), to tickling their dog's throat to get the medication down (9%).

However, despite owners' best efforts, there's paw for concern as dogs are still finding ways to avoid taking their meds. Common tactics include:

- Sniffing out and rejecting the medication (23%)
- Pretending to take it before dropping it later (18%)
- Clamping their mouth shut (18%)

The process is also challenging for owners, with 38% of Aussie dog owners admitting administering medication is their least favourite part of the day. Given this, it's not surprising that more than half (54%) of Aussie dog owners who administer pet medication wish there was an easier way to administer it.

NO MORE 'RUFF' MEDICINE MOMENTS FOR AUSSIE DOGS

In response to these challenges, the GREENIES™ brand has created GREENIES Pill Pockets™, designed to make administering medication simple, effective, and stress-free, for both dogs and their owners.

The new product comes in two dog-approved flavours; Peanut Butter, and Smokey Ham, and has been designed to turn pill time into treat time. Disguising the taste of tablets, the flavour-packed treats are malleable, letting owners simply pop in the pill, pinch it closed, and give it to their dog as a tasty treat in seconds.

Nicola Paroissien, Portfolio Director Care and Treats at the GREENIES™ brand, said the Pill Pockets™ are designed to solve the hassle of administering medication to dogs - in a fun, simple and stress-free way.

"Giving medication to your dog can often feel stressful for both pets and their owners, with many pet-parents avoiding pill time altogether. We created Pill Pockets to help take this struggle away, turning a sometimes twice daily challenge into a simpler, more positive experience that dogs actually enjoy.

"By helping Turn Pill Time into Treat Time™ we hope owners can spend less time worrying about medication and more time enjoying the happy, tail-wagging moments with their dogs they love," Paroissien said.

It's a common frustration, especially in a nation where dogs are treated as part of the family. Almost all Aussie dog owners (91%) consider their dog an important member of the family, with more than half (52%) of owners admitting they love their dog more than some family members.

Yet despite that bond, close to 1 in 5 (16%) Australian dog owners would rather do their least favourite household chore than give their dog medication.

GREENIES™ Pill Pockets™ are available now at Petstock and Petcircle for \$30.00 RRP.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please go to www.greenies.com.au/pill-pockets.

***About the research** The study was conducted by Pureprofile among 1,013 Australian dog owners aged 18+ years who typically administer tablet or pill medication to their dog(s). The study was in-field between 13th to 17th April, 2026. Note, calculations above are based on: the average dog's lifetime (average 12 years), a 20g cheese slice and 470g peanut butter tub.*

AWARD-WINNING SIX-YEAR-OLD ENTREPRENEUR SCOOTS TO SUCCESS WITH BRISBANE DOG TREAT BRAND

SIX-YEAR-OLD HENDRIX IS PROVING THAT A PASSION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AND SERIOUS BUSINESS ACUMEN CAN START AT ANY AGE. AS THE FOUNDER OF NATURAL PET TREAT BRAND HENDRIX PET CO. AND WINNER OF THE 2026 START-UP OF THE YEAR AWARD, THE PRIMARY SCHOOLER IS TURNING HIS EARLY EXPOSURE TO ANIMAL CARE INTO A THRIVING, INDEPENDENT SMALL BUSINESS VENTURE.

Hendrix's deep affinity for animals grew within his own home. With his mother having worked as a veterinary nurse for many years, Hendrix grew up surrounded by conversations about pet care, welfare, and veterinary environments. This background led him to take over a family dog-walking venture at just five years old. By age six, he expanded

his passion by launching his own dog treat business.

Hendrix is a highly active, hands-on CEO. He personally selects the treat flavours, arranges the manufacturing, and packs the orders himself. Equipped with his own business mobile phone and a tap-and-go payment terminal, Hendrix can regularly be seen riding his scooter through the streets and dog parks of Brisbane, pitching and selling directly to dog owners. His business has since expanded to local markets and online sales.

Despite his young age, Hendrix is no stranger to the spotlight. His impressive entrepreneurial journey has already seen him featured on Channel 7 four times, as well as on various radio stations and podcasts. He has also authored his own book, sharing unique business insights and reflections from his perspective as a six-year-old CEO.



*Hendrix, CEO of Hendrix Pet Co
(Photo credit: Hendrix Pet Co)*

For readers of Australian Veterinary Magazine, Hendrix's story offers a unique look at how growing up around veterinary values can cultivate ultimate confidence, resilience, and a lifelong dedication to animal welfare in children.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.hendrixpetco.com.au

VETFORDIA: MARK THE DATE OCT 11TH AT SAMFORD SHOWGROUNDS, BRISBANE

ABOUT VETFORDIA

Vetfordia is not your typical veterinary event... it's a feel-good festival for animal lovers, vets, nurses, and kind-hearted humans who care deeply about the wellbeing of animals and each other.

Set in the beautiful surrounds of Samford, this one-day experience brings together relaxation, creativity, learning, and connection in a way that feels more like a mini holiday than a conference.

Spend your day your way:

- Ease into the morning with yoga and meditation
- Get creative with art, pottery, and hands-on workshops

- Join in drumming, choir, dancing, and shared experiences
- Enjoy live music and a relaxed festival vibe with friends old and new

Whether you come for the whole day, bring the family, or simply drop in to soak up the atmosphere, Vetfordia is about recharging, reconnecting, and remembering why you love what you do.

GIVING BACK

All profits from Vetfordia are donated to Sophie's Legacy. Let's get a crowd together so we can give back this year!

Dr Sophie Putland was a deeply loved veterinarian who tragically lost her life to suicide in 2021. In Australia, we lose a vet approximately every 12 weeks.

Sophie's Legacy is driving meaningful change in the veterinary profession — and by attending Vetfordia, you are part of that movement.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Dogs are welcome (please keep them leashed and well-behaved)
- By attending, you agree to our event terms and conditions
- Full details available on the Vetfordia website
- Come for the music. Stay for the connection.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: vetfordia.com.au



GREENCROSS VETS INTRODUCES CANINE LYMPHOMA SCREENING TO SENIOR WELLNESS CARE

IDEXX CANCER DX NOW PART OF HEALTHY PETS PLUS SENIOR LIFESTAGE PLAN

With cancer remaining one of the leading causes of mortality in dogs — and around one in four dogs expected to develop cancer during their lifetime¹ — Greencross Vets has introduced IDEXX Cancer Dx™, a blood-based diagnostic panel, beginning with earlier detection of canine lymphoma.

Lymphoma is among the most commonly diagnosed canine cancers in general practice². Research conducted by IDEXX also indicates strong clinical appetite for earlier screening, with 97 per cent of Australian veterinarians reporting they would consider adding cancer screening to their wellness protocols,³ while more than 60 per cent of pet owners say they would opt for screening if offered by their veterinarian.⁴

Greencross Vets has introduced IDEXX Cancer Dx as part of its Healthy Pets Plus Senior Lifestage Plan, representing the first time this type of cancer screening has been incorporated into a structured senior wellness program within Australian veterinary practice.

Greencross Vets is also encouraging pet owners with dogs from breeds considered at higher risk of lymphoma to consider screening from four years of age, supporting earlier monitoring in predisposed patients.

IDEXX Cancer Dx is designed to complement existing diagnostic pathways and can be included as part of routine senior wellness testing or utilised in dogs presenting with specific or non-specific clinical signs. The test requires a single blood sample and delivers results within two to four business days, enabling clinicians to identify lymphoma

earlier in the disease process — in some cases up to eight months before clinical signs are noticed.⁵

While no test can prevent cancer, earlier detection for affected dogs may allow timelier referral, staging and intervention. The inclusion of IDEXX Cancer Dx within the Healthy Pets Plus Senior Lifestage Plan reflects Greencross Vets' broader shift toward preventive, data-led healthcare models, particularly for senior patients where the prevalence of age-related disease increases.

“Senior dogs often present with subtle or non-specific changes that can make early cancer detection challenging. They deserve the same forward-thinking approach to healthcare that we value for ourselves,” says Dr Magdoline Awad, Chief Veterinary Officer at Greencross Vets.

“By incorporating IDEXX Cancer Dx into our Healthy Pets Plus Senior Lifestage Plan, we’re giving Australian pet owners access to a new level of insight into their dog’s health — earlier and more accessible than ever before.”

From a clinical and operational perspective, IDEXX Cancer Dx offers several benefits for veterinary teams, including:

- **Enhanced preventive care** — integration within the IDEXX preventive care portfolio enables longitudinal monitoring and earlier clinical insight for senior patients.
- **Diagnostic confidence** — 79 per cent sensitivity and 99 per cent specificity support use in both symptomatic patients and routine screening of at-risk dogs.⁶
- **Workflow efficiency** — the test can be added to existing wellness and diagnostic panels using a single blood draw, minimising disruption to established practice protocols.
- **Specialist-backed support** — results are supported by access to IDEXX Medical Consultants, including

board-certified oncologists and internal medicine specialists, alongside client communication and education resources.

- **Actionable reporting** — in many cases, B-cell vs. T-cell phenotype classification will be provided with positive results, at no additional cost.⁷

“Cancer is one of the most difficult diagnoses for veterinarians, often because it’s detected late,” says Dr Jason Johnson, IDEXX Chief Medical Officer.

“Earlier detection can give families more time, more choices, and hopefully more birthdays with their dogs, while giving clinicians a chance to act sooner, when it can make the greatest difference.”

“With the national introduction of IDEXX Cancer Dx through the Healthy Pets Plus Senior Lifestage Plan, Greencross Vets is supporting a more proactive approach to canine oncology in Australia,” adds Dr Awad.

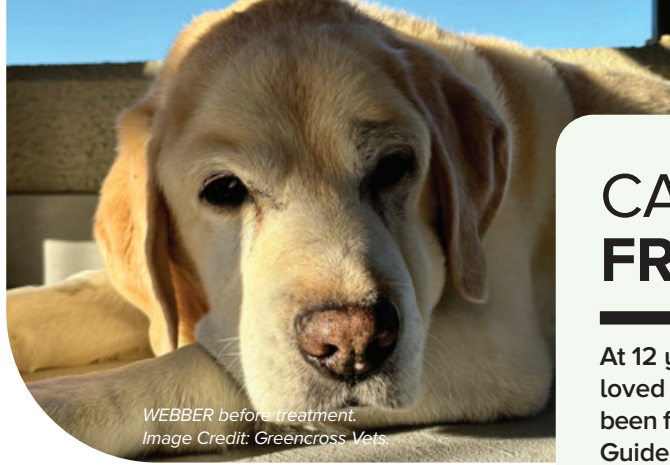
“By embedding screening within a structured wellness framework, this approach aims to improve early detection, support clinical decision-making and ultimately enhance outcomes for senior canine patients.”

MORE INFORMATION

For further information on Healthy Pets Plus visit, www.greencrossvets.com.au/healthy-pets-plus

ABOUT GREENCROSS VETS

Established in 1994, Greencross Vets is part of Greencross Pet Wellness Company and is the largest veterinary services provider in Australia with over 140+ clinics including General Practices and Referral & Emergency centres. Greencross Vets offers a comprehensive range of professional veterinary services to cater for all pet’s needs, from preventive health care to weight loss programs through to surgery and diagnostic medicine.



WEBBER before treatment.
Image Credit: Greencross Vets.

ABOUT IDEXX

IDEXX is a global leader in pet healthcare innovation. Our diagnostic and software products and services create clarity in the complex, constantly evolving world of veterinary medicine. We support longer, fuller lives for pets by delivering insights and solutions that help the veterinary community around the world make confident decisions—to advance medical care, improve efficiency, and build thriving practices. Our innovations also help ensure the safety of milk and water across the world and maintain the health and well-being of people and livestock. IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. is a member of the S&P 500™ Index. Headquartered in Maine, IDEXX employs approximately 11,000 people and offers solutions and products to customers in more than 175 countries and territories. For more information about IDEXX, visit www.idexx.com. IDEXX Cancer Dx is a trademark or registered trademark of IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. or its affiliates in the United States and/or other countries.

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CASE STUDY: WEBBER – FROM DECLINE TO THRIVING

At 12 years old, Webber, a much-loved Golden Labrador, had always been full of life. Adopted through the Guide Dogs program in Melbourne, he was known for his gentle nature, love of food and daily swims.

However, over the course of a few months, Webber wasn't his usual self, something had changed.

Webber's owners, Andrew and Lisa, began noticing subtle but concerning shifts. The once food-obsessed Labrador was no longer interested in eating, not even his favourite carrots. His energy had decreased and he no longer wanted to go for walks or swim, two of his favourite activities.

"He just wasn't himself," says Andrew Snelling. "He'd been deteriorating for a while, but it seemed to happen so quickly."

As Webber's condition worsened, Andrew also noticed several lumps on his body. Given his age and rapid deterioration, the family began preparing for the worst.

"We had come to terms with the fact that we might have to say goodbye," Andrew says.

Hoping to better understand what was happening, they booked an appointment at Greencross Vets Burleigh Waters, a decision that would ultimately change the course of Webber's life.

During the consultation, Veterinary Director Dr Josephine Hartono conducted a thorough health check and recommended Webber sign up for a Healthy Pets Plus (HPP) senior dog membership, a proactive wellness plan that includes routine diagnostics and access to advanced screening tools.

Webber had a blood test including the new IDEXX Cancer Dx™, a screening test capable of detecting lymphoma in dogs, often before clinical signs become advanced.

The blood test came back positive for lymphoma.

"Without that test, we would have just assumed it was old age and let him go," Andrew says. "Instead, we were able to act."

With guidance from the veterinary team, Webber began a treatment plan that was both accessible and manageable. His medication is affordable and simple to administer at home and is given to him daily with food.

"It's been incredibly easy," Andrew explains. "We just wear gloves, give him his meds with his meals, it's not invasive and it hasn't impacted his quality of life, it's actually improved his life and given him more time."

Today, Webber is not just stable, he's thriving and back to his old self.

"He's better than he was before we went in," Andrew says. "He's eating again and is back to loving his carrots. He has gotten his energy back, he's enjoying going for walks and swims."

For Andrew and Lisa, the experience has reshaped how they view veterinary care, particularly the value of proactive screening.

"The team were so proactive and knowledgeable," Andrew says. "If they hadn't suggested the testing and talked us through it, Webber wouldn't be here."

Now six months into their Healthy Pets Plus membership, the family feels supported every step of the way.

"We feel really lucky," Andrew adds. "It's a cracking organisation, they've made us feel welcome, supported and confident in every decision we've made for Webber."

What began as a routine check for concerning symptoms turned out to be the best decision Andrew and Lisa made for Webber.

During Webber's most recent check-up his T cells were showing as being back to normal. He now has good quality of life and is busy creating memories for the family who love and adore him.



IT'S YOUR CASE - 6.5YO FEMALE DOBERMANN WITH ELEVATED LIVER ENZYMES AND POLYURIA/POLYDIPSIA



Species: Canine

Breed: Dobermann

Sex: Female Neutered

Age: 6.5 years

Clinical History:

She has elevated Liver enzymes and polyuria/polydipsia in addition to 25 lb weight Loss in 3-4 months.

In the past two weeks, she has been vomiting and is now complete anorexic.

She is very ill and borderline hypotensive.

During ultrasound, there is reverberation artefact (gas shadowing) near the Liver. Radiographs are pursued to assess for pneumoperitoneum.

Diagnostic interpretation:

ABDOMEN:

There is generalised loss of serosal detail in the abdominal cavity (red arrows) with mild, non homogeneous increased opacity of the mesentery (yellow circle). A small volume of gas is present in the gastrointestinal tract. In the initial lateral views, there is no clear evidence of free gas in the most non dependent part of the abdomen. The degree of gastric and intestinal distention is normal. There is mild corrugation of the descending colon (green arrows). The kidneys have normal size and shape. There is no evidence of mass effect on the abdominal organs.

The pulmonary vasculature (blue arrows) and caudal vena cava (purple arrows) are narrow in diameter.

TOP RIGHT:

In the first horizontal beam projection (a ventrodorsal view in left lateral recumbency), small gas foci are noted along the subcostal margin of the cranial abdomen (orange arrowheads). There are several regional segments of small intestine (yellow arrows).

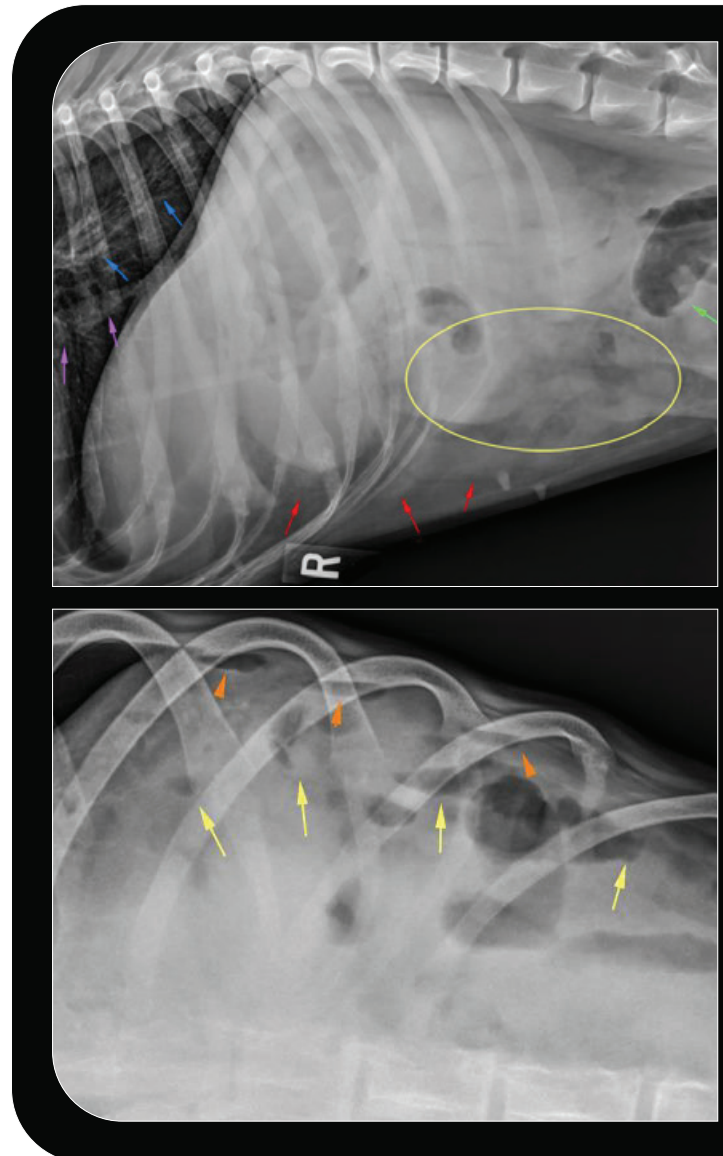
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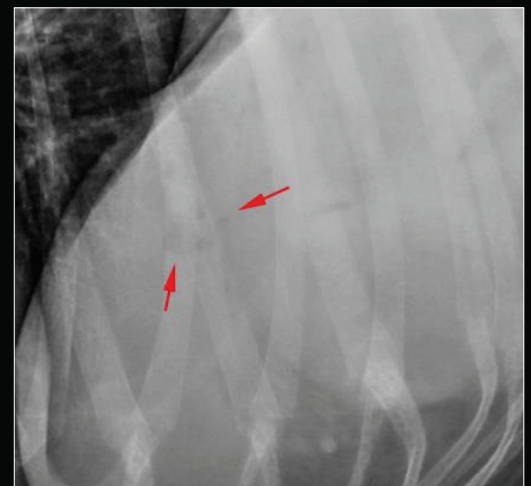
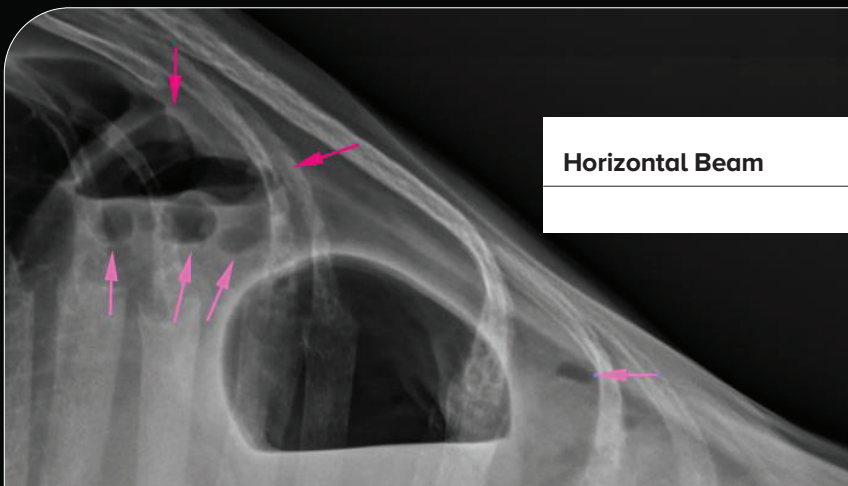
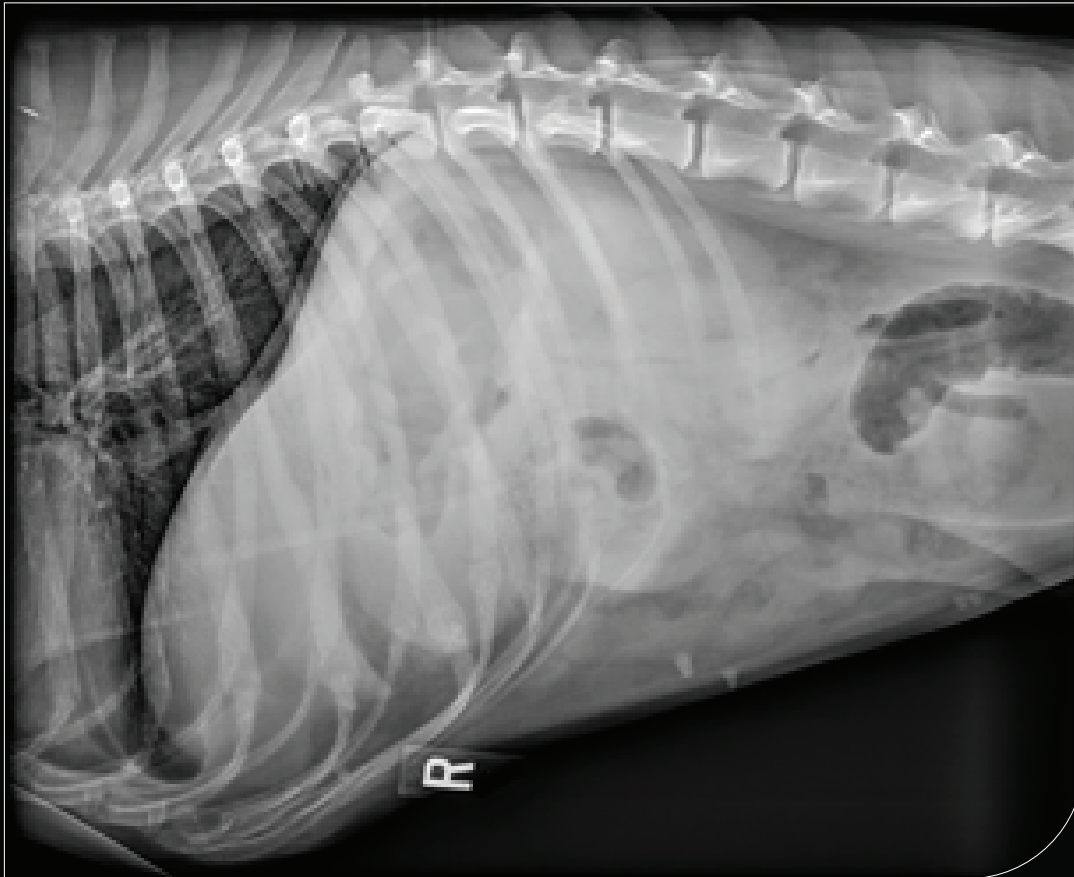
In the subsequent horizontal beam (a Laterolateral view in dorsal recumbency), made 5 minutes Later, a small gas cap is identified at the ventral margin of the diaphragm (bright pink arrows). Several smaller gas bubbles are nearby and caudal to the stomach (Light pink arrows). These do not appear definitively intraluminal.

Anatomic regions: Abdomen

Details of study and technical comments:

Abdomen: right lateral (x2), left lateral (x2), VD (x2). VD and right lateral with horizontal beam.





Conclusions:

- Loss of serosal contrast in the peritoneal space may be due to effusion or steatitis.
- Pneumoperitoneum. This indicates a ruptured viscus. Likely of gastrointestinal origin.
- Hypovascular pattern and small caudal vena cava. Primary consideration is given to hypovolaemia.

Additional comments:

The loss of serosal detail in the abdomen is attributed to a small amount of free abdominal fluid and steatitis. There are suggestions of peritoneal gas on the initial horizontal beam and with additional time, the gas aggregates in a non dependent location confirming rupture of a viscus. Principal systems of consideration are the

gastrointestinal tract and urogenital however the former is overrepresented. This is consistent with the reverberation artefact that hindered sonographic evaluation. Septic abdomen is anticipated but can be further documented with evaluation of the abdominal fluid for intracellular bacteria. This should be completed expediently since pneumoperitoneum is considered a surgical emergency if not post procedural (i.e. surgery or centesis).

With close inspection of the initial series, there are equivocal opacities superimposed by the ribs on the left lateral view (red arrows, image below). These are subtle and would not justify surgical intervention alone.

Outcome:

The patient was stabilised, went to surgery and a duodenal perforation with septic abdomen was identified.



IS YOUR CAT OR DOG OVERWEIGHT? WHY SIMPLY FEEDING LESS DOESN'T ALWAYS HELP

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS TO MANAGE WEIGHT IN PETS, WE ALSO NEED TO ATTEND TO ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR, AND HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS ARE A HUGE PART OF THAT.
BY: DR ANNE QUAIN
AND RIMINI QUINN

Overweight and obesity are among the most common conditions veterinarians see in both dogs and cats.

Yet weight-loss plans for pets are frequently unsuccessful, with a high drop-out rate. In one study, over half of participating dogs actually gained weight.

In a new study published in the journal *Animals*, we argue weight management in pets often fails because we view it too narrowly – as a nutritional problem that can be solved simply by feeding the animals less.

Yet evidence suggests to manage weight in pets, we also need to attend to animal behaviour, and human-animal interactions are a huge part of that.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET IS OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE?

Body condition scoring is the most common method vets use to classify animals as underweight, ideal weight or overweight.

The Global Pet Obesity Initiative uses a scale of 1–9, with a body condition score of 5 representing ideal body weight.

Each category between 1–9 represents a 10% difference in weight. For example, an animal with a body condition score of 6 out of 9 is 10% overweight, while a score of 7 out of 9 means the pet is 20% overweight. Obesity is defined as having a body condition score of 8 out of 9 (30% overweight) or above.

HOW COMMON ARE OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN PETS?

Globally, about half of the pet dog and cat population is overweight or obese, with middle-aged pets most commonly affected.

The largest study (conducted in the United States), comprising almost 5 million dogs and more than 1 million cats, reported excess weight and obesity in 50% and 13% of adult dogs respectively, and in 45% and 22% of cats. High rates of overweight and obesity have been reported in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and China.

Overweight and obesity are more common in animals who are highly motivated by food, those with reduced physical activity (including indoor-housed cats) and, in some studies, those who've been desexed. Some breeds, such as Labrador retrievers, have a genetic predisposition to obesity.

Owner activity levels, lifestyle and the nature of their bond with pets also influence the pets' risk of obesity. When it comes to animals they love, many owners have "weight blindness" – they don't even see their pets as overweight.

WHY SHOULD WE WORRY ABOUT OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE PETS?

Just like for humans, overweight and obesity in pets are associated with increased risk of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, skin disease, and cancer.

Excess weight exacerbates conditions like osteoarthritis, and increases the risk of heat stroke. Lifespan is reduced in obese dogs and cats.

Carrying excess weight can prevent animals from engaging in behaviours like exercise, play and interaction with other animals and people. The World Small Animal Veterinary Association describes obesity as the most important global animal welfare issue.

WHY DOES TRADITIONAL WEIGHT MANAGEMENT FAIL?

The standard approach to help your pet lose weight involves calorie restriction, increased exercise and regular weighing. It sounds so simple. And yet this approach often fails.

Pets who are fed less show hunger and increase their food-seeking behaviour, making owners feel guilty. They eat their reduced portions quickly, using the additional time to look for or demand more food.

Animals accustomed to receiving treats or scraps from the family dinner table may protest their exclusion from familiar routines. Such behaviour is difficult to resist – many owners succumb and provide treats.

Caloric restriction alters metabolism, which can initially increase weight gain, and the lack of progress can be demotivating. Some dogs and cats are fearful in veterinary settings, and owners find regular weigh-ins too traumatic.

All these factors can put owners (and animals) off sticking with the weight-loss plan.

HOW TO HELP YOUR PET LOSE WEIGHT SUCCESSFULLY

1. Use accurate information to formulate a weight management plan
All pets should be regularly weighed and scored on their body condition. Pet owners can use body condition scoring sheets for dogs and cats to do this at home.

Fearful pets who don't like being weighed at the vet can be weighed on home scales. Importantly, take note of what your pet eats (including treats and scavenged foods) and share this information with your vet.

A complete dietary history helps in planning a diet compatible with your pet's preferences. High-calorie foods could be substituted for ones with fewer calories, for example.

2. Diets should be low calorie, high satisfaction

Weight-loss diets should be nutritionally complete. The best diets are those that are reduced in calories, but still leave animals feeling satisfied after a meal.

Low-calorie treats can be factored into the daily ration so that animals don't miss out.

3. Provide opportunities to hunt, find and forage food

Feeding the daily ration in multiple smaller meals can burn additional calories and increase time spent eating.

Allowing animals to "hunt" for food by providing food in puzzle feeders, scatter feeding or setting up "treasure hunts" allows them to express natural behaviours. Animals may use up more calories and experience more pleasure from foods they can chew. They may also spend less time "asking" owners for food.

4. Be prepared for begging

Animals used to receiving table scraps will dial up their attention-seeking behaviour in an increased effort to be rewarded. It can be hard to resist such antics, but rewarding begging with a food morsel will only encourage pets to intensify their efforts.

Instead, try to preempt them by providing a rewarding alternative activity (such as giving a dog a toy to chew on their bed) while you eat your meal in peace.

Non-food related activities, including sensory gardens and digging pits, climbing opportunities or interactive toys may also provide suitable distractions.

Weight loss in pets is about giving them more years of good-quality life. With the right tools – not just calorie counting – we can keep our pets happy and healthy.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/>

This article was originally published in The Conversation as Is your cat or dog overweight? Why simply feeding less doesn't always help. By Dr Anne Quain and Rimini Quinn from the University of Sydney School of Veterinary Science.

FIRST-EVER RECORDING OF LIVE BIRTH OF ENDANGERED BROAD-HEADED SNAKE!

Conservation organisation Aussie Ark is thrilled to announce the first-ever video recording of the live birth of one of its endangered Broad-Headed Snakes!

The birth occurred in Aussie Ark's Conservation Ark facility in Somersby, NSW, where the organisation houses Australia's world-first wild-sourced insurance population of the iconic reptile.

In partnership with Professor Jonathan Webb of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Aussie Ark famously secured its first 17 founders when it started the program in 2024. With a license for 20 snakes, Aussie Ark returned to the field this spring to successfully collect the one female and two males needed to complete its breeding and re-wilding program.

Conservation Ark Ranger Dylan Wallis was part of both expeditions, is passionate about reptiles, and oversees the program. Mid this year, Mr Wallis paired the 20 adults for breeding, which was a meticulous and often highly dangerous process. Broad-Headed Snakes are notorious for being hard to handle; they are semi-arboreal, so able to turn back on themselves with ease to bite, they're incredibly defensive, and their venom is deadly.

But Mr Wallis is highly trained and skilled at snake handling, and one by one, he moved males into female habitats. The pairing was based on a complex mix of factors, including genetics, age and size. But romance is never guaranteed. In fact, the opposite can occur. "Snakes can potentially eat each other if they don't like each other!" Mr Wallis said. "So it's important we choose the right pair, and then of course we have to monitor their behaviour 24/7 to ensure no harm is done." Mr Wallis said it was a challenging process, spending months waiting, watching and hoping pairs would breed, often needing to "mix and match" to find the right combination.

Most snake species lay eggs. Only 30% of species bear live young, and the Broad-Headed Snake is one of them. Gestation takes approximately six months, during which Mr Wallis was thrilled to observe that a large female was pregnant (gravid). Two months before the anticipated birthing, the Conservation Ark team installed a remote sensor camera unit in her habitat. As this had never been attempted before, there was no guarantee of success.

The mother was not disturbed by the camera's presence. And incredibly, remained in view as she gave birth. Footage includes her large belly pre-birth, contractions, and then the emergence of the young. The team were beyond thrilled!

This is the second birth that has occurred in Aussie Ark's Broad-Headed Snake program, and nationally significant. In the wild, this cryptic, shy snake only births once a year, bearing a maximum of four young. Their low reproduction is a contributor to their decline, combined with habitat destruction and illegal poaching. The species is only found in the escarpment of the Sydney Sandstone Basin, and its population is plummeting.

Aussie Ark's breeding and re-wilding effort is part of a larger holistic program in which the organisation is also funding on-site monitoring by Traditional Owners, the erection of gates to reduce access to key habitat, and ongoing research in partnership with UTS. The four new baby snakes will one day be released back On Country, helping bolster wild genetics and population. Aussie Ark is calling on the community to support this vital work to help secure the future of the Broad-Headed Snake. Donations can be made at aussieark.org.au

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: aussieark.org.au



BLUEPRINT FOR A LIFETIME: HILL'S 'WORLD OF THE KITTEN' REPORT SUPPORTS VETERINARY TEAMS & PET PARENTS IN NAVIGATING THE CRITICAL FIRST YEAR

GROUNDBREAKING REPORT HIGHLIGHTS KITTENHOOD AS A CRITICAL ONE-YEAR DEVELOPMENTAL WINDOW, SHOWCASING NEW RESEARCH ON GUT HEALTH, PROACTIVE VETERINARY CARE AND SHELTER SUPPORT.



As a global leader in science-led nutrition, Hill's Pet Nutrition (Hill's), is continuing to set a new standard for feline health with the release of its first 'World of the Kitten Report.' Building upon Hill's 'World of the Cat Report,' this report is a comprehensive, evidence-based guide that delivers expert insights into optimal kitten growth, nutrition, socialization, and veterinary care, ensuring healthier, happier feline companions across the globe.

Authored by Hill's feline specialist Lisa Restine, DVM, DABVP (Feline), and supported with content by International Cat Care (iCatCare) and the Hill's Cat Advisory Team (C.A.T.) a global collective of feline specialists, behaviorists and nutritionists, this pivotal report clearly identifies the best practices in kitten care, offering invaluable information for pet parents, veterinary professionals, caregivers, and animal welfare organizations dedicated to laying a foundation for lifelong health for young felines worldwide.

"This report shifts the focus from reactive treatment to a proactive, evidence-based foundation," said Restine. "By understanding the unique nutritional and biological needs of the first year, we can fundamentally transform feline health outcomes."

By designating these full twelve months as a critical pediatric period, Hill's

encourages a shift in focus beyond initial vaccinations to ensure kittens' unique physical and emotional developmental needs are met, aligning to with the iCatCare, American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the Feline Veterinary Medical Association (FelineVMA) guidelines.

OTHER KEY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Key Nutritional Standards:** The report underscores that feline pediatric nutrition is a sophisticated science, requiring a precise balance of protein and fat, essential fatty acids such as DHA, and optimized mineral ratios to serve as the foundational building blocks for a kitten's rapid first-year development.
- **Microbiome Innovation:** The report showcases the impact of Hill's ActivBiome+ technology, a prebiotic blend that supports a healthy gut environment essential for a kitten's developing immune system.
- **Updated Care Standards:** To improve lifelong immunity, the report aligns with global experts in recommending a 26-week (six-month) vaccination booster to replace the traditional one-year booster.
- **The "Fix by Five" Initiative:** The report shares that spaying or neutering kittens by five months reduces mammary cancer risk by 91% and helps combat shelter overpopulation.

- **Shelter Impact:** Addressing the challenges of "Kitten Season," the report notes that robust foster programs can achieve neonatal save rates as high as 95%.

The full "World of the Kitten Report 2026" is available at [hillsvet.com/felinehealth](https://www.hillsvet.com/felinehealth). Veterinary professionals can access related RACE-approved feline training at the Hill's Veterinary Academy.

ABOUT HILL'S PET NUTRITION

Founded more than 75 years ago, Hill's Pet Nutrition has been committed to providing pets with the best nutrition through extensive research and a scientific understanding of their specific needs. Their team of 220+ veterinarians, PhD nutritionists, and food scientists constantly strive to develop innovative solutions for pet health. Hill's offers a full line of products, including their Prescription Diet therapeutic nutrition and Science Diet wellness products, which are available at veterinary clinics and pet specialty retailers worldwide. For more information about their products and nutritional philosophy, please visit [HillsPet.com](https://www.hillspet.com).

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://www.hillsvet.com/felinehealth>

Petosan HOME DENTAL CARE RANGE

Professional oral care solutions for dogs and cats.



Petosan Toothpaste

Petosan toothpaste tastes of chicken and is specifically formulated for dogs and cats to help remove plaque and prevent the build-up of tartar. No rinsing required. Tube, 70 g.



Petosan Toothbrushes

Petosan double-headed toothbrushes are user-friendly and effective, hugs the teeth, cleaning the front and back of the teeth at the same time.

Available in 4 sizes:
Toy breeds (0-2kg),
Large dogs (>16 kg),
Medium (7 - 15 kg) and
Small dogs (0-6 kg).



Petosan Dental Kits

For pet owners who prefer to buy a combination of toothpaste and toothbrush, Petosan offers the Dental Kit.

It is available in 4 sizes:
Large, Medium, Small
and Toy.



Petosan Complete Kits

The Complete Dental Kit contains a 70 g tube of toothpaste, an oral cleaner and a double-headed toothbrush, all packed in a dishwasher proof plastic box.

Available in 3 sizes:
Small, Medium and Large.



Petosan Plaque Control

Petosan Plaque Control contains Ascophyllum nodosum to reduce plaque buildup and promote healthier teeth and gums:

1. Derived from carefully selected algae, which contain bioactive components such as natural polyphenols, minerals, and antioxidants which interfere with the formation of plaque by reducing the adhesion of bacteria to the teeth.
2. Algae stimulate the natural cleansing properties of saliva, helping to wash away food particles and bacterial buildup before they can harden into plaque.



Petosan Puppy Kits

Contains a 20 g tube of toothpaste, an oral cleaner and a double-headed toy dog brush, perfectly adapted to the small teeth of puppies. The Puppy Pack comes in a special and attractive dishwasher proof plastic box.



Oral Cleaner - finger microcloth

Antimicrobial, chemical-free, self-cleaning microfiber finger cloth which helps remove plaque and bacteria in the mouth.

This is the ideal approach to regular tooth brushing.



Starter Kit

Contains a 20 gram mini tube of Toothpaste and an Oral Cleaner; a microfibre, antimicrobial, chemical-free and self-cleaning microfiber finger cloth which helps remove plaque and bacteria in the mouth.



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DIVORCE SHOCK: YOU COULD BE FORCED TO PAY YOUR EX ALIMONY FOR THE DOG

AS SEPARATIONS RISE UNDER COST-OF-LIVING PRESSURE, AUSTRALIA'S LEADING FAMILY LAW EXPERTS SAID A SURPRISING ISSUE IS BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST EMOTIONAL AND BITTER FLASHPOINTS IN DIVORCE: WHO GETS THE PET.

Award-winning family lawyer Joplin Higgins OAM and leading Melbourne barrister Dr Darren Mort said disputes over dogs, cats and other beloved animals are escalating, with arguments now extending far beyond who keeps the pet to include who pays vet bills, pet insurance, food, medications and whether 'shared custody' can work.

"People may fight harder over the dog than the dining table," Higgins said.

"Pets are family. For many people, they are children."

PET CUSTODY BATTLES ARE RISING

The experts said pets are increasingly becoming emotional leverage in separations.

"We are seeing disputes where one party refuses to hand over a pet, uses the animal as a bargaining chip or threatens to withhold access," Mort said.

"It can become deeply personal very quickly. Pets are innocent victims in the chaos and become trading pawns."

They said pets can become especially contentious when children are attached to the animal.

"It is not just about ownership, it is about attachment, routine and emotional security," Higgins said.

WHO GETS THE PET?

Despite the emotional weight, pets can create legal grey areas.

"People are often shocked to learn the law may not view pets the way families do," Mort said.

That can mean questions around who bought the pet, who has cared for it, who has paid expenses and what arrangements may be practical can all become relevant.

Higgins said couples should avoid treating pets as weapons.

"The goal should be what is best and workable, not who can 'win' the animal."

WHO PAYS THE VET BILLS AND INSURANCE?

The experts said financial disputes involving pets are also rising, especially with soaring veterinary costs.

Pet insurance premiums, surgery costs, medications and specialist care can become major points of conflict.

"People are asking, who pays ongoing insurance? Who covers emergencies? What if one party wants expensive treatment and the other refuses?" Higgins said.

Their advice: discuss these issues early and document arrangements where possible.

"Treat it seriously. A pet can involve thousands of dollars in ongoing costs. It may sound ridiculous, but the best thing you can do when you bring a new pet into the home is to set written rules around how you will support and manage the pet if something goes wrong in life or the relationship," Mort said.

CAN SHARED PET CUSTODY WORK?

Some separating couples are attempting shared care arrangements. Sometimes it works, sometimes it collapses.

"Shared arrangements can sound appealing however, if the relationship is highly conflicted, it can become another avenue for ongoing dispute," Higgins said.

Mort said practicality matters.

"If handovers create hostility every week, it may not be sustainable."

DON'T LEAVE PETS OUT OF SEPARATION PLANNING

The pair said one of the biggest mistakes people make is focusing on property and parenting while ignoring pets until conflict erupts.

"People plan for houses and bank accounts but forget the Labrador. That can be a costly mistake emotionally and financially," Higgins said.

A GROWING ISSUE PEOPLE ARE BRINGING TO THE PODCAST

The rise in pet disputes is one reason more Australians are turning to the Dear Divorce Diary Podcast for insight.

"People are realising separation is full of issues nobody warns you about and pets are one of them," Mort said.

Higgins said the message is simple.

"If you are separating, don't assume the pet issue will sort itself out because in many breakups, the fiercest fight may not be over the house, it may be over the dog," Higgins added.

ABOUT DEAR DIVORCE DIARY

The Dear Divorce Diary is a fast-growing Australian podcast delivering honest, practical and expert insights into separation, divorce, parenting disputes and domestic violence.

Hosted by award-winning family lawyer and domestic violence advocate Joplin Higgins OAM and leading Melbourne barrister Dr Darren Mort, the podcast draws on decades of combined legal experience at the frontline of family law. Through real-world case insights and candid conversations, Dear Divorce Diary helps Australians better understand their rights, navigate complex legal processes and avoid common pitfalls during separation. The podcast is rapidly gaining traction for its raw, informative and accessible approach to one of life's most challenging transitions.

PODCAST:

Visit: <https://www.youtube.com/@DearDivorceDiary-withDazJop>



DOMINANT FISH ARE MORE LIKELY TO CONSUME MICROPLASTICS THAN OTHERS IN THEIR SOCIAL GROUP

FISH WHO DISPLAY DOMINANT TRAITS ARE MORE AT RISK OF CONSUMING MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION THAN OTHERS IN THEIR SOCIAL GROUP, ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH.



The study, led by the University of Glasgow and published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, details the different levels of risk microplastic pollution poses to aquatic life, with some fish in hierarchical social groups affected more than others.

Researchers found that dominant fish in a group were more at risk of swallowing microplastics than their subordinates. However, the data also showed that groups with clearer social hierarchies – including strong, dominant fish – were seemingly better at telling the difference between food and pollution, resulting in reduced microplastic ingestion overall.

In addition, the study found that microplastic ingestion risk was altered, in different ways for different fish, by flowing or still waters. For most fish, flowing water helped to reduce microplastic ingestion at both an individual and group level. However, for dominant fish, flowing water had the opposite impact, causing an increase in the proportion of microplastic particles ingested.

The authors say their findings demonstrate, for the first time, that the kinds of dominant social traits usually associated with a competitive advantage may, in polluted habitats, make the

strongest fish most vulnerable to microplastic pollution.

Professor Shaun Killen, Professor of Ecophysiology at the University of Glasgow and senior author of the study, said: “Plastic pollution is a growing ecological threat, yet the behavioural and social factors influencing susceptibility to microplastic ingestion have until now remained poorly understood. Our findings show that microplastic exposure is shaped not only by the environment, but also by social structure.”

To carry out the study, the research team focused on European minnows – a widespread species found in both flowing and still waters, who live in hierarchical groups that can range from a few individuals to several hundred fish. The researchers examined how social hierarchy alongside water flow influenced microplastic ingestion in groups, by monitoring the fish across a number of feedings bouts.

Dr Weiwenhui Liang, lead author of the study, said: “One important implication of this work is that water flow should not be treated as a minor background condition in microplastic research. Most experimental studies on microplastic effects have been conducted in still

water, but many aquatic animals experience pollution in moving water.

“Our findings show that water movement can really change the picture. Because flow can interact with social behaviour and feeding, some individuals face risks that would otherwise be missed. Accounting for this could help us better understand which animals are most vulnerable to pollution in natural habitats.

“Dominance can be a double-edged sword. The traits that help some fish win access to food may also make them more likely to consume pollution when plastic particles resemble their regular food. This means that microplastic risk is not shared equally within animal social groups. It depends on who the fish are, how they behave, and the social environment around them.”

The study, ‘Intraspecific behavioural and environmental contexts influence collective risk of microplastic ingestion in a social fish’ is published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B. The work was supported by a China Scholarship Council grant and a UKRI Natural Environment Research Council.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.gla.ac.uk/



PURPOSE MEETS PROTECTION: NEW RSPCA PET INSURANCE LAUNCHES

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE CREATES A NEW RSPCA PET INSURANCE THAT ALLOWS GREATER INFLUENCE FOR THE RSPCA AND CONTRIBUTES MORE THAN EVER BEFORE TO THE RSPCA'S ANIMAL CARE INITIATIVES.

The RSPCA Australia has unveiled a game-changing strategic partnership with Pacific International Insurance, marking a new era for pet insurance in Australia.

Starting 1 April 2026, the new RSPCA Pet Insurance is introducing customisable pet insurance - developed with input from RSPCA veterinarians and grounded in the RSPCA's more than 150 years of animal welfare experience - that also helps provide vital funds to support the RSPCA's work.

CEO of RSPCA Australia, Richard Mussell said the new strategic partnership will give the RSPCA a stronger voice and enable the trusted animal welfare organisation to take a much more active role. "With a significant share and a seat at the table, the RSPCA now has a greater role in the governance of the RSPCA Pet Insurance, including participation in board-level decision-making. It also provides the benefit of ongoing financial contributions, helping us to achieve even more for animal welfare."

RSPCA Pet Insurance CEO Brad Smith described the development as a defining moment and a powerful step forward for the pet insurance sector in Australia. "What we're announcing today is a great opportunity for animals and the people who stand by them," he says. "Our aim is to make pet insurance more accessible for pet owners, while increasing resources for RSPCA programs, including rescue, rehabilitation, and rehoming across Australia."

Smith cited research from Animal Medicines Australia which shows that over 80% of Australia's 13.2 million cats and dogs are not insured. The survey also shows 23% of pet owners have surrendered a pet because they could no longer afford care, while 18% of cat owners and 14% of dog owners are deferring vaccinations and check-ups due to costs.¹

The collaboration between the RSPCA and Pacific International Insurance aims to empower pet owners with accessible and transparent insurance options. Pacific International Insurance COO and Company Secretary Rick Claughton said the partnership was about values. "Commercial success and social impact strengthen each other. Our focus is on providing trusted, customisable pet insurance enabling pet owners to tailor cover that suit their pets and their budget, while also helping to support the RSPCA's initiatives."

He highlighted Pacific International Insurance's commitment to creating 'soft landings,' providing a safety net for pets and their families when they need it most. "Today this extends beyond families and the companion animals they love to soft landings for vulnerable animals across Australia. It's the first time we've structured a framework like this, where the RSPCA is directly involved, with representation at a governance level and input into how the offering was developed and evolves."

"Rather than a traditional underwriting relationship, this is a genuine strategic partnership built around shared values, long-term collaboration and a commitment to improving outcomes for pets and animal welfare across Australia," says Claughton, welcoming the new initiative.

The RSPCA is an independent, community-based charity that receives minimal government funding for its core services, notes Mussell. "Strategic partnerships like this are essential for ongoing financial support and helping us care for animals across Australia," he says.

"Twenty-three years since it was first launched, RSPCA Pet Insurance is entering a new chapter, leveraging a valuable commercial product to help achieve meaningful progress for animals in need," he adds.

More than that, Mussell pointed to the work of the RSPCA. "In 2025, the RSPCA cared for more than 77,000 animals across the country, rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming neglected, abandoned or surrendered animals. Our inspectors investigated more than 55,000 cruelty complaints and made 11,000 visits ensuring proper care. This partnership, and all of our other donations together, are essential in supporting these efforts so animals across Australia receive the care and protection they deserve," he states.

Smith said at the heart of the launch is PetFlex, a customisable protection plan that enables customers to tailor a policy to their pet's needs and budget, rather than being limited to rigid and complex pre-packaged tiers.

"Customers can choose cover options to suit their financial circumstances by selecting their Annual Limit, Benefit Percentage and Excess level. Optional extras can be added in just a few, simple clicks," he said. "RSPCA Pet Insurance features annual cover options up to \$35,000 with no sub-limits and a single annual excess."

"Optional extras enhance the base coverage, such as dental illness, providing protection for issues such as gingivitis and periodontal disease, behavioural conditions, for disorders like excessive licking or aggression, supportive therapies including acupuncture and hydrotherapy and routine care for annual health checks, vaccinations and microchipping. Policyholders also gain access to Pet Support, a dedicated phone service where experts provide trusted pet health support," added Smith.

"We've also developed 'Direct2Vet', a solution to simplify the claims experience for both veterinary clinics and pet owners," Smith said. "With this system, customers pay only the difference



Dr Andrew Marchevsky, Dr Melissa Meehan, Brad Smith, Dr Katrina Warren, Dr Emily Lucas - Photo credit: Cassandra Hannagan

between their veterinary bill and eligible insurance cover at the time of their visit. Clinics submit the invoice, and approved claims are paid directly to the practice, reducing administration and eliminating the need for customers to wait for reimbursement.”

“Direct2Vet helps remove financial friction, giving pet owners greater confidence to seek timely care while supporting clinics to focus on treatment,” he explained.

“It’s also important to note that customers with an active RSPCA-branded pet insurance policy that started before 1 April 2026 moved with the previous underwriter and no longer contribute to the RSPCA. We warmly invite all such RSPCA Pet Insurance customers to come home to the new RSPCA Pet Insurance, with no new exclusion periods and cover for previously claimed conditions up to your annual limit and benefit percentage.”

“By choosing RSPCA Pet Insurance from 1 April 2026 onwards, you’re not just protecting your pet, you’re helping fund programs that extend care to animals beyond your own backyard,” Smith concluded.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the exciting new pet protection offering, how to get insured, or come home to RSPCA Pet Insurance which provides ongoing support for the RSPCA’s vital animal welfare work, visit www.rspcapetinsurance.org.au.

REFERENCES:

1. Animal Medicines Australia Pets in Australia 2025 report (September 2025)

AUSTRALIANS SUPPORT KEEPING PETS AND OWNERS TOGETHER IN TIMES OF CRISIS

- Clear majority of Australians support keeping people and their pets together during crises
- RSPCA Federal Pre-Budget Submission includes a comprehensive proposal for funding to expand emergency programs and pet-inclusive domestic violence refuge accommodation

Research commissioned by RSPCA has revealed that 98 per cent of Australians believe it is important that people and their pets are kept together in times of crisis. Furthermore, 96 per cent believe keeping people and pets together has a positive impact on their wellbeing.

The research from McCrindle shows Australians (96%) overwhelmingly agree that options should be explored to support individuals and their pets staying together, and 95 per cent thought that having pet inclusive options may help people seek support earlier in times of crisis.

Every year, thousands of Australians and their companion animals experience crisis through domestic and family violence, homelessness or health challenges. The safety of pets has been identified as a critical barrier to many people leaving domestic and family violence situations or seeking timely medical treatment, due to concern over their pet’s safety and care. In addition, those who find themselves homeless sometimes cannot temporarily and safely care for their pets.

As a result, many people in crisis situations are at risk of harm or may need to surrender, rehome or euthanise their pets.

Richard Mussell, CEO at RSPCA Australia says: “It’s clear keeping pets and owners together during a crisis is something Australians believe in.”

Any situation resulting in the forced separation of an owner from their companion animal is difficult to handle, and the RSPCA is always working on alternative ways to prevent these separations from occurring.

“While RSPCA programs that provide emergency boarding, care and support to keep people and pets safe during short-term crises have been successful, shelters are often at capacity and limited in their ability to provide expanded crisis support due to lack of funding.

The RSPCA’s Federal Pre-Budget Submission includes a comprehensive proposal for funding that both animal and human welfare organisations can apply for to expand emergency programs and pet-inclusive domestic violence refuge accommodation, to enable Australians and their companion animals to stay safe during times of crisis. An education program helping animal welfare workers such as veterinarians, inspectors and other frontline staff identify and respond to animal abuse in domestic violence situations would support faster pathways out of harm for victim-survivors.

The RSPCA offers programs providing emergency boarding, care and support to keep people and pets safe during short-term crises. With shelters often at capacity, further funding to the RSPCA and other organisations would increase their ability to provide further support, helping to keep Australians and their companion animals together.

MORE INFORMATION

The RSPCA continues to advocate for better animal welfare through regulatory and legislative processes. Read more about the link between domestic violence and animal abuse on the RSPCA Knowledgebase: www.kb.rspca.org.au/

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(grapiprant)



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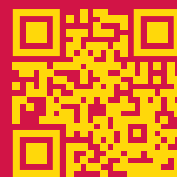
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^Not in conjunction with any other offer. One free sample per veterinarian will be available during the sample promotional period from 1st January 2026 until 30th September 2026. To qualify for a free sample a veterinarian must complete the registration at <https://my.elanco.com/au/galliprant-sample-request>. This is a vet clinic promotion and as such wholesale and online pharmacy accounts are not eligible. A valid Australian veterinary registration number must be provided. Deliveries will only be made to the street address of a registered veterinary premises. No PO boxes accepted. Please allow 28 business days for Galliprant sample to arrive.

INDICATION Galliprant is a NSAID that controls pain and inflammation associated with osteoarthritis in dogs. *1. Kirkby Shaw, K, et al. Vet Med Sci. 2016;2:3-9.

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