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THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARIAN MAGAZINE

BIRD FLU IS HERE: THE 5 SIMPLE WAYS EVERY DOG AND CAT OWNER CAN PROTECT THEIR PETS

AUSTRALIA'S VETS ON THE FRONTLINE AS FIRST H5 BIRD FLU DETECTED ON THE MAINLAND REVEALING CRITICAL NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN THE PROFESSION

HIDDEN PAIN EPIDEMIC: MOST AUSSIE CAT OWNERS UNAWARE THEIR CATS CAN SUFFER FROM OSTEOARTHRITIS

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BIRD FLU INCURSION HIGHLIGHTS CRITICAL ROLE OF ANIMAL HEALTH DURING NATIONAL BIOSECURITY WEEK

AS AUSTRALIA MARKED NATIONAL BIOSECURITY WEEK FROM 24–30 AUGUST 2026, ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA (AMA) URGES ALL AUSTRALIANS TO RECOGNISE THE INDISPENSABLE ROLE ANIMAL HEALTH PLAYS IN SAFEGUARDING OUR BIOSECURITY, AND PROTECTING THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS.

Animal health is foundational to effective biosecurity. Livestock and companion animals, through access to vaccines, parasiticides, and veterinary medicines, are far less susceptible to disease, protecting Australia's public health, animal welfare, food safety, environment, and agricultural trade markets.

Timely access to effective and affordable animal health products remains a critical precondition to an effective response to any animal disease emergency response.

AMA supports the National Biosecurity Strategy and Action Plan, which promotes shared responsibility, strong partnerships across sectors, and science-based, risk-informed decision-making. Since Australia's first confirmed H5 bird flu detections in wild seabirds in June, the virus has been detected in wild birds across Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, as well as in a long-nosed fur seal in South Australia. There remain no detections in poultry or the wider agricultural production system, and the risk to human health remains low.

Animal Medicines Australia CEO, Mr Ben Stapley, said the recent H5 bird flu detections underscored the importance of sustained national biosecurity investment and close collaboration across government, industry and the community.

As the first H5 vaccines are administered to identified priority species, we must acknowledge that vaccines are not a standalone solution. Vaccination must be complemented by rigorous biosecurity measures, which remain the cornerstone of protecting Australia's unique wildlife.

"This H5N1 incursion highlights the fact that biosecurity relies on vigilance before, during and after a threat emerges. Strong surveillance, access to effective veterinary medicines and coordinated preparedness are essential to protecting animals, people, our food supply and our environment." Mr Stapley said.

"The animal health industry has an important role to play in safeguarding Australia's biosecurity. AMA members supply over 75% of veterinary medicines used in Australia, improving animal health and welfare, and serving a $46 billion livestock industry, delivering the tools necessary for preparedness and rapid response.

"The animal health industry is critical in any response to a biosecurity outbreak, with veterinary medicines, including vaccines helping to manage the risk and limit the spread of disease," concluded Mr Stapley.

If you notice sick or dead birds or other animals showing signs of bird flu, you should not touch them or get too close. Record your location and report multiple sick or dead birds or other animals to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888.**

AUSTRALIA'S VETS ON THE FRONTLINE AS FIRST H5 BIRD FLU DETECTED ON THE MAINLAND REVEALING CRITICAL NEED FOR URGENT GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN THE PROFESSION

AUSTRALIA'S VETS ON THE FRONTLINE AS FIRST H5 BIRD FLU DETECTED ON THE MAINLAND REVEALING CRITICAL NEED FOR URGENT GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN THE PROFESSION

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) has acknowledged the confirmed detection of H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) on the Australian mainland for the first time, describing it as a sobering milestone that underscores both the readiness of Australia's veterinary profession and the urgent need for government investment in the veterinary workforce that the nation's biosecurity depends upon.

On Saturday 20 June 2026, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Julie Collins MP, and Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Beth Cookson, confirmed that testing by the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness had identified H5 avian influenza in a brown skua found on Western Australia's south coast on 14 June. A second bird, a giant petrel, has also returned a positive result and is undergoing further testing to confirm the strain. The detection follows the arrival of the strain on Australia's sub-Antarctic Heard and McDonald Islands in October 2025; until now, mainland Australia had been the last continent free of H5 bird flu.

At this stage there is no evidence of any mass bird or animal mortality in Australia, and no evidence of infection in poultry. The national committee for emergency animal disease has convened, and state and territory governments are coordinating the response, including heightened surveillance.

"This detection is sobering but, as authorities have long forecast, not unexpected. What it demonstrates beyond doubt is that veterinarians are Australia's frontline against biosecurity incursions and emergency animal disease," said AVA President, Dr Diana Barker.

"From the first sick bird on a remote beach to laboratory confirmation, surveillance, diagnosis and response, it is veterinarians who detect these threats and stand between an incursion and the prevention of a national crisis. Our federal and state governments rely on this work and can't overlook the importance of that contribution any longer. Australian vets protect our $90 billion agricultural sector, our world-class biosecurity status, public health, and the millions of animals in our homes and communities."

The AVA said the detection lays bare a confronting reality: the profession charged with safeguarding the nation against H5 HPAI is itself under acute and sustained strain. Australia's veterinary sector is now in its ninth consecutive year of workforce shortage, with the deficit most severe in the regional, rural and remote areas where incursions are most likely to first emerge.

"We cannot ask a depleted and exhausted workforce to carry the weight of the nation's biosecurity defence indefinitely without urgent investment," said Dr Barker. "A response to an event like this draws on the very veterinarians who are already in critically short supply in the bush, including in the WA community where the first detections were made. If we are serious about protecting Australia from H5 bird flu and the next emergency animal disease event, we must be serious about the workforce that delivers that vigilance and protection."

To immediately support veterinarians as our nation's first responders to this event and other biosecurity emergencies, the AVA is calling on the Australian Government to urgently commit to funding $7.5 million over 4 years for a pilot program that will compensate veterinarians who are caring for infected animals presented to them by the public in clinic. "This investment would instantly support the capacity of Australia's veterinarians in responding to emergency animal disease outbreaks at the coalface and ensure the viability and sustainability of veterinary businesses who remain unpaid for this critical work," said Dr Barker.

"This incursion is a national test of preparedness, and the veterinary profession is ready to play its part," said Dr Barker. "But readiness is not free. We urge the Government to match the dedication of Australia's veterinarians with the investment the profession has needed for nearly a decade. A profession under pressure for nine years deserves a government that has its back."

The AVA is monitoring the situation closely, is engaged with the relevant departments, and has activated its preparedness resources to support members and the broader profession, including its High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Private Veterinary Practitioner Preparedness Toolkit.

The AVA reminds the public not to touch sick or dead birds or animals, and to report them to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on **1800 675 888** or via **birdflu.gov.au**. While transmission to humans is rare and there is no evidence of person-to-person spread of the current strain, appropriate precautions should be taken when handling suspected.

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WE DON'T KNOW HOW WELL THREATENED SPECIES FIGHT OFF BIRD FLU - BUT WE NEED TO

LETHAL BIRD FLU IS NOW SPREADING IN AUSTRALIA. HOW CAN WE PROTECT AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE SPECIES?

BY: PROFESSOR KATHERINE BELOV AND PROFESSOR CAROLYN HOGG

Lethal bird flu is now spreading in Australia. This is bad news for many native species.

New federal government analysis suggests close to one in five Australian bird and mammal species is at high, very high or extreme risk. But this risk assessment omits something vital – how genetically well-equipped the species is to fight the virus.

While species such as black swans are likely to be very hard-hit, others such as wild ducks are expected to be less affected. One reason for this is different immune systems – some are more or less able to fight the virus. But there's a more significant factor – how much variation there is in key immune system genes across populations.

Right now, we don't have an overview of which threatened species are at highest risk based on this. If we urgently create a national immune-risk map for species at risk, we can act to protect those in most danger.

WHY IMMUNE GENE VARIATIONS MATTER

When a virus enters an animal's body, its immune system must first detect it, then respond. Key immune genes help determine if an animal fights off infection, becomes seriously ill or dies.

Different individuals will have slightly different immune responses based on variations at different immune genes. Some variants will allow an individual to survive the virus, and others won't. This is why diversity in these genes is critical across the species.

Large wildlife populations often have a wide array of variants at each immune gene. This acts as biological insurance – when a new disease arrives, some individuals will be more able to survive. But if a species becomes threatened and its population falls, it's likely to lose much of this protective diversity.

If the remaining individuals share similar vulnerabilities, a lethal disease such as H5N1 bird flu could be enough to push the species closer to extinction.

THREATENED SPECIES ARE OFTEN IMMUNOLOGICALLY FRAGILE

Australia's wildlife faces threats such as habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, pollution and disease. These threats not only reduce population size – they erode genetic diversity.

Small, fragmented populations may have enough genetic diversity to look viable in the short term. But when a new disease arrives, they may lack the breadth of variation at the immune genes needed to survive the new disease. This is a large, hidden vulnerability.

The orange-bellied parrot is a species that worries us deeply. The small, migratory parrot is one of Australia's most endangered birds. Just 86 birds are left in the wild, with a few hundred more in captive breeding populations.

Our previous research found the parrot has suffered a dramatic loss of genome-wide diversity over the past century – including variation in immune genes.

If H5N1 infects these parrots, they may lack the immune gene variants needed to buffer the species against severe disease.

Tasmanian devils are similarly at risk. These iconic marsupials have critically low immune gene diversity due to population bottlenecks over the past 5,000 years. This left them vulnerable to the contagious devil facial tumour disease, which saw populations plummet with local declines of 95%, and an estimated 80% decline across Tasmania since the disease arose in the 1990s. Our preprint research shows facial tumour disease is still eroding immune gene diversity.

These scavengers are likely to be exposed to bird flu by eating carcasses, and we know which devil populations eat seabirds. The question will be whether devils have enough immune variation to respond to H5N1.

HOW A NATIONAL IMMUNE-RISK MAP COULD HELP

While we know how some species are likely to respond to the virus, the picture is far from complete.

We could fill in the blanks quickly, using DNA samples held in museums or from animals in zoos to generate genomic data on many more species.

We could then analyse immune gene variation across different populations of each species to measure how diverse they are. This approach could reveal populations that have lost important immune variants and may be particularly vulnerable to bird flu.

The Threatened Species Initiative, has collected this data for more than 125 threatened species. But there are hundreds more threatened animal species for which we have no data and no samples.

If we worked quickly to create a national immune-risk map, wildlife managers could focus surveillance, vaccination and protection efforts on the populations likely to be at most risk.

Importantly, they could establish new captive populations before the virus arrives, using breeding programs to maximise immune fitness and keep inbreeding to a minimum.

This is not science fiction. We led immune-guided conservation work in Tasmanian devils, where data on immune genes shape decisions around breeding. The end result: devil joeys with stronger immune systems.

If we use this approach for more at-risk species, we could better protect wildlife from bird flu and future diseases.

NO TIME TO WASTE

Responses to wildlife diseases are often reactive. Animals start dying in large numbers and then we investigate. This approach will be much too slow to respond to the fast-moving H5N1 strain.

Australia has world-leading wildlife genomics expertise, valuable museum and zoo collections, threatened species recovery programs and growing genome resources.

What's missing is a coordinated way to translate immune gene data into practical action.

It's not too late. But we have to act fast to identify species and populations with low immune diversity and roll out measures before irreversible losses occur.

First published at The Conversation.

MORE INFORMATION

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

BIRD FLU IS HERE: THE 5 SIMPLE WAYS EVERY DOG AND CAT OWNER CAN PROTECT THEIR PETS

AS HIGHLY PATHOGENIC H5 BIRD FLU (H5N1) CONTINUES TO BE DETECTED IN WILD BIRDS ACROSS PARTS OF AUSTRALIA, PET INSURANCE AUSTRALIA IS ENCOURAGING DOG AND CAT OWNERS TO TAKE A FEW SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS TO HELP KEEP THEIR PETS SAFE.

While bird flu primarily affects wild birds, Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) advises that cats and dogs can, in rare cases, become infected after coming into contact with or consuming infected birds or other infected animals. Overseas investigations have also linked infections to contaminated raw pet food and unpasteurised milk.*

The good news is that there is currently no evidence of H5 bird flu in Australia's commercial poultry industry, and the risk to the general public remains low^. However, as more cases are identified in wild birds, experts say awareness is key.

"Australia has some of the strongest biosecurity measures in the world, and there is absolutely no reason for pet owners to panic," said Nadia Crighton, spokesperson for Pet Insurance Australia.

"This is about being informed, not fearful. Dogs love to investigate new smells and objects, while cats are natural hunters. Unfortunately, those instincts can put them at risk if they come across a sick or dead bird."

Recent government advice recommends keeping dogs on a lead in areas where wild birds congregate, such as beaches, wetlands and lakes, while keeping cats indoors where possible to reduce the likelihood of hunting wild birds*.

“For pet owners, it’s just a case of being a little more vigilant with what our pets are scavenging to prevent the spread of bird flu and to also keep your pets safe,” Crighton says. “While the risk remains low, pets can become infected if they eat or investigate sick or dead birds, come into contact with contaminated bird droppings, or consume contaminated raw animal products.

CAN DOGS AND CATS CATCH BIRD FLU?

Although cases remain uncommon, international evidence shows that dogs and cats can become infected after exposure to infected birds or contaminated animal products.*

Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Red or inflamed eyes
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Coughing or sneezing
- Difficulty breathing
- Tremors or seizures
- Loss of coordination
- Sudden collapse in severe cases*

"These symptoms aren't unique to bird flu, which is why owners should never try to diagnose their pet at home," Crighton said. "If your dog or cat has been near a sick or dead bird and suddenly becomes unwell, contact your veterinarian immediately. Early assessment is always the safest option."

FIVE SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP PROTECT YOUR PETS

Pet Insurance Australia recommends owners:

- Keep dogs on a lead around beaches, wetlands and waterways where wild birds gather.
- Keep cats indoors where practical, particularly while authorities continue monitoring the spread.
- Never allow pets to investigate, catch or eat sick or dead birds.
- Prevent wild birds from accessing your pet's food and water bowls.
- Wash your hands after handling wildlife or visiting areas where sick birds have been found.

Crighton says the situation also highlights the importance of preventative pet care.

"We often remind owners to watch for paralysis ticks, snakes, poisonous plants and toxic foods. Bird flu is another reminder that our pets don't always recognise danger when they encounter it."

"Fortunately, the steps needed to reduce the risk are simple. By staying aware of your surroundings and preventing contact with sick wildlife, owners can continue enjoying the outdoors with confidence."

Authorities are also reminding Australians never to touch sick or dead birds. Instead, record the location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888.^**

RESOURCES

* Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) – Advice for Veterinarians: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/animal/avian-influenza/help-protect/vets

^ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) – Bird Flu (H5N1) Information and Public Advice https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.petinsuranceaustralia.com.au/

BIRD FLU VACCINATION PROGRAM **APPROVED FOR CLELAND WILDLIFE PARK**

NATIVE BIRDS AT CLELAND WILDLIFE PARK - INCLUDING CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES SUCH AS ORANGE-BELLIED PARROTS AND REGENT HONEYEATERS – HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR VACCINATION AS PART OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO H5 BIRD FLU.

The vaccination program has also been approved for a range of other native bird species at Cleland Wildlife Park, including:

- Magpie geese
- Australian pelicans
- Regent parrots
- Red-tailed black cockatoos

Developed by the South Australian Government, the vaccination program at Cleland will initially see up to 100 native birds vaccinated across over 30 different species.

The program has received the relevant approvals in line with the national framework that supports targeted vaccination of priority native bird species that are captive or managed.

A range of factors are considered when identifying priority species for vaccination, including the conservation status and value of the species, the likelihood of catching bird flu, and whether vaccination can be delivered safely and effectively, according to regulatory requirements.

There remains no H5 bird flu detections in poultry or other livestock. The risk to human health of H5 bird flu remains low.

South Australians are encouraged to continue being vigilant in reporting sick and dead birds and other wildlife. Avoid touching sick or dead birds and other wildlife. Record what you see. Report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

For the latest updates, information and advice about H5 bird flu in South Australia visit **birdflu.sa.gov.au**

BACKYARD FLOCKS AT RISK: **VET WARNS IT'S TIME TO BIRD-PROOF YOUR YARD**

WITH CASES OF BIRD FLU SPREADING ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND A FOX THE LATEST ANIMAL BELIEVED TO HAVE CONTRACTED THE DISEASE, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN A STORY ON WHAT RISK THERE ARE FOR SUBURBAN PET OWNERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH BACKYARD CHICKENS.

It can take several weeks for the virus to spread from wild birds to pet poultry, which means the threat will arrive with little notice.

"It's really important to take action now to separate chickens from the wild birds which often visit backyards, like crows and magpies" Sydney Animal Hospitals veterinarian Dr Bec Cassilles said

"That will likely mean an end to their free range behaviour. If their housing is too small, netting can be put up to prevent contact with other birds."

All food and water should also be undercover to prevent wild bird access.

"For companion birds, prevention is critical. Prevent access to outdoor food and water sources used by wildlife, and ensure aviaries are fully enclosed with fine mesh and solid roofing."

Bird owners should look out for:

- Swelling around the head and neck
- Purple discolouration of wattles, combs and legs
- Panting, coughing, sneezing or nasal discharge
- Droopy appearance or ruffled feathers
- Sudden decrease in egg production

About a third of homes have domestic birds, with as many as 2-million non-commercial backyard and fancy-breed chickens in Australia.

That number could increase if bird flu is identified in poultry farms and concerns about egg supply grow.

Bird owners can keep informed at **birdflu.gov.au.**

Anyone who sees a dead bird or has any concern should call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline **1800 675 888**

NEW HEIGHTS FOR H5 BIRD FLU SURVEILLANCE

DEECA is using helicopter-mounted cameras to monitor Victoria's coastline and detect possible H5 bird flu cases in wild birds and wildlife.

Detections of H5 bird flu on Australian shores reinforce the need for continued surveillance, preparedness and prompt reporting of sick or dead wild birds and wildlife.

As part of Victoria's ongoing surveillance efforts, DEECA is using a helicopter-mounted high-resolution and thermal imaging camera to scan coastal areas and identify possible H5 bird flu cases.

Flights began in July, with initial operations focused on Victoria's south-west in response to the detection of H5 bird flu in Robe, South Australia, near the Victorian border.

Crews have also monitored areas known to support large seal and seabird colonies, including Mud Islands, Phillip Island, Western Port, Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland coast.

DEECA Chief Biodiversity Officer James Todd said the aerial surveillance operation complements on-ground monitoring in high-risk areas where migratory birds are most likely to arrive.

"Any immediate evidence, such as a significant number of seal or bird deaths, will be communicated from the aircraft to our wildlife teams for rapid response.

If H5 bird flu becomes established in wildlife, control options will be limited and response priorities will focus on surveillance, reducing spread where practical, protecting high-risk species, supporting animal welfare and maintaining public safety.

Our best early warning system for H5 bird flu remains the Victorian community, and we encourage everyone to stay alert and report any suspected cases." - DEECA Chief Biodiversity Officer James Todd

To learn more about how Victoria is preparing for H5 bird flu visit: **https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/poultry-diseases/H5N1-avian-influenza-H5-bird-flu**

PROTECTING LITTLE PENGUINS FROM BIRD FLU

LITTLE PENGUINS AT PHILLIP ISLAND AND ST KILDA TO BE VACCINATED AS PART OF H5 BIRD FLU MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

More than 5,000 little penguins at Phillip Island and St Kilda are expected to be vaccinated against H5 bird flu.

Following the Commonwealth's vaccine announcement, doses have arrived at Phillip Island and are ready to be administered early next week, pending final regulatory approvals.

Vaccinating wild birds is challenging because each bird needs to be caught twice to receive two doses.

Little penguins usually return to the same colonies and burrows, providing a rare opportunity to vaccinate a wild population and monitor their response over time.

Vaccination won't stop H5 bird flu from circulating, but it can help reduce its impact alongside existing biosecurity, surveillance and wildlife response measures.

The broader vaccine rollout will also prioritise vulnerable species held in captivity, including animals in zoos and other managed populations across Victoria.

The rollout comes as H5 bird flu continues to be detected in wild birds, predominantly greater crested terns, with new cases at Phillip Island, Mildura, Warrnambool, Hamilton, St Andrews Beach and Hawkesdale.

There have been no detections of H5 bird flu in little penguins in Victoria or Australia to date.

Over the past three years, Phillip Island Nature Parks has invested significantly in protecting little penguin habitat.

Victoria has invested more than $130 million in biosecurity and continues to strengthen surveillance and respond as the situation evolves.

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HIDDEN PAIN EPIDEMIC:
MOST AUSSIE CAT OWNERS UNAWARE THEIR CATS CAN SUFFER FROM OSTEOARTHRITIS, NEW RESEARCH SHOWS

NEW RESEARCH HAS REVEALED A POTENTIAL 'HIDDEN PAIN EPIDEMIC' EXPERIENCED BY DOMESTIC CATS, WITH 51% OF CAT OWNERS UNAWARE THAT THEIR CAT CAN SUFFER FROM OSTEOARTHRITIS.[1]

KEY POINTS:

- More than half (51%) of Australian cat owners are unaware that cats can suffer from osteoarthritis.[1]
- Awareness lags behind other common conditions such as cat flu (71%), obesity (70%), dental disease (68%) and kidney disease (65%).[1]
- Osteoarthritis affects 40% of all cats[2] and 60% of cats over the age of six,[3] but Aussie vets report diagnosing the disease in only 17% of their feline patients.[4] This is approximately a third lower than the diagnosis rate in dogs living with the same condition in Australia.[5]
- Vets can educate cat owners to look for subtle behavioural shifts and to speak with their cat's veterinary team if they notice any changes, to support earlier diagnosis of osteoarthritis and ensure cats receive timely care to maximise quality of life.

The Australian consumer research commissioned by Zoetis Australia highlights that while the majority (90%) of cat owners can correctly identify at least one sign of osteoarthritis in cats when prompted, more than a third (35%) have a lack of understanding of the clinical signs to look out for.[1]

The findings suggest that many Aussie cats could be living with undetected joint pain caused by osteoarthritis due to low awareness of this condition and its impact. The research shows that a quarter of Australian cat owners (25%) believe that signs such as slowing down, sleeping more, or hesitating on stairs or before jumping, are just a normal part of their cat's ageing.1 Approximately 14% of respondents also believe that joint pain is a normal part of life for most cats.[1]

As veterinary teams are well aware, osteoarthritis is a condition that leads to pain and progressive degeneration of the affected joints.[6] This can cause pain, inflammation, and reduced mobility due to bone-on-bone contact.[6]

Without appropriate treatment and pain management support, osteoarthritis can reduce a cat's quality of life by affecting their ability to jump, move freely, and play. While osteoarthritis affects around 40% of all cats[2] and 60% of cats aged six years or older,[3] cats rarely show obvious signs of the condition (like limping) and are very good at hiding pain, which delays diagnosis.[7] Aussie vets report formally diagnosing the disease in just 17% of their feline patients.[4]

According to Dr Carolyn O'Brien, feline medicine specialist and director of Melbourne Cat Vets in Victoria, educating cat owners on the importance of regular veterinary visits and greater awareness of clinical signs is essential in identifying osteoarthritis to ultimately support better long-term pain management and improve quality of life outcomes.

"As vets know well, cats are incredibly good at masking pain, which means osteoarthritis isn't always as obvious as it might be in dogs. There's also the misunderstanding amongst cat owners that common signs such as sleeping more, grooming less or slowing down on stairs are just a normal part of ageing, which is why encouraging regular vet check-ups is crucial to help pick up on osteoarthritis early. This is the only way to make sure cats are receiving the timely care and support they may need – and not suffering in silence," said Dr O'Brien.

Most cats don't visit the vet regularly, with the new research revealing that one in five (20%), or the equivalent of 966,000 cat owners in Australia, only take their cat to the vet when something is obviously wrong.[1] The gap in care is most significant for middle-aged cats (between 6 and

12 years of age), as most vet visits occur when cats are under 3 years or over 12 years of age.[7] This reduces opportunities to detect early signs of disease, leaving many cats in this age group without timely diagnosis or support, allowing subtle, often invisible signs of pain to go unnoticed until osteoarthritis is advanced.

"The good news is that there are simple steps cat owners can take to tackle this hidden pain epidemic to ensure their beloved cats can retain their quality of life. As vets, we can educate cat owners to pay attention to subtle changes in behaviour, such as being less interactive and sleeping more or hesitating before jumping up or down or using the stairs differently, to help identify osteoarthritis and make sure cats get the support they need sooner," said Dr O'Brien.

Dr Megan Lui, Associate Director of Veterinary Operations at Zoetis Australia, emphasises the importance of conversations between vets and cat owners to help catch osteoarthritis pain early. "There are many ways that vets can help manage cats' pain and give them the care they deserve, but as this new research commissioned by Zoetis shows, many owners aren't sure where to start," said Dr Lui.

"The first, and most important, step is for vets and pet owners to open a conversation about osteoarthritis, so that they can work together to develop a management plan tailored to the cat's needs."

To help spot the signs early, you can ask cat owners in your clinic to complete the free online Feline Osteoarthritis Assessment[8] 9 https://www.zoetispets.com/en-au/cat-healthcare/arthritis-quiz/) and share the results to help get the conversation — and the right care — started sooner.

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ABOUT ZOETIS

As the world's leading animal health company, Zoetis is driven by a singular purpose: to nurture our world and humankind by advancing care for animals. After innovating ways to predict, prevent, detect, and treat animal illness for more than 70 years, Zoetis continues to stand by those raising and caring for animals worldwide – from veterinarians and pet owners to livestock producers. The company's leading portfolio and pipeline of medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, and technologies make a difference in over 100 countries. A Fortune 500 company, Zoetis generated revenue of $9.3 billion in 2024 with approximately 13,800 employees.

ABOUT THE YOUGOV SURVEY

On behalf of Zoetis Australia, YouGov conducted an online survey between 14th – 21st April 2026. The survey results are comprised of a nationally representative sample of 1,029 Australian cat owners aged 18 and older. The survey was designed in collaboration with Palin Communications and Zoetis Australia. Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by age, gender, and region to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

SYDNEY ZOO SHARES REMARKABLE RECOVERY FOLLOWING WORLD-FIRST ORANGUTAN SURGERY

OVER A YEAR AFTER UNDERGOING A GROUNDBREAKING MEDICAL PROCEDURE, NEW VISION RELEASED BY SYDNEY ZOO SHOWS SANTAN, A BELOVED ORANGUTAN, CLIMBING, EXPLORING AND MOVING INDEPENDENTLY ONCE AGAIN - DEMONSTRATING THE REMARKABLE LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF A WORLD-FIRST MULTI-JOINT RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA) PROCEDURE.

The footage captures Santan returning to elevated platforms and engaging more actively with enrichment activities following treatment for chronic pain caused by severe arthritis. His ongoing recovery highlights the potential for innovative veterinary care to significantly improve quality of life for animals living with chronic conditions.

Prior to treatment, Santan's arthritis had significantly limited his mobility, affecting his ability to climb, forage and interact within his habitat. Today, keepers report a dramatic transformation, with Santan once again regularly using ropes and elevated structures, while showing renewed curiosity and engagement with his surroundings.

Dr Kresen Pillay, Manager of Veterinary Services at Sydney Zoo, said the outcome from Santan's surgery has exceeded expectations and is a result of human and animal medical professionals coming together.

"This procedure has given Santan a level of comfort and mobility we hadn't seen in him in years. He's climbing again, exploring his habitat and displaying behaviours that reflect a significant improvement in his overall wellbeing. Seeing Santan thrive has made this collaboration across a wide team of medical professionals from different fields so truly rewarding."

For the primate care team, the transformation has been deeply fulfilling.

Orangutan Santan. Photo credit: Sydney Zoo

Lou Grossfeldt, Primate Manager at Sydney Zoo, said seeing Santan regain confidence and independence had been one of the most meaningful moments of her career.

"Watching him climb again after such a long period of being unable was incredible. He's more curious, more active and far more engaged with his surroundings - it's like he's rediscovered parts of his personality that had previously been limited by pain. We are proud of the robust welfare system we have in place at Sydney Zoo, where the needs of our animals are always the highest priority."

The procedure adapted radiofrequency ablation - a pain management technique commonly used in human medicine - or use in a great ape, requiring close collaboration between veterinary specialists and orthopaedic surgeons.

Dr Paul Thornton-Bott, who assisted with the operation, said the case demonstrates how advances in human healthcare can translate into improvements for wildlife.

"Applying this technology to a great ape required careful planning and expertise across multiple disciplines. The results highlight the potential beyond

Orangutan Santan. Photo credit: Sydney Zoo

Orangutan Santan. Photo credit: Sydney Zoo

Santan for innovative treatments that could significantly improve quality of life for other great apes in human care."

Sydney Zoo says Santan's recovery reflects its ongoing commitment to proactive animal healthcare, helping animals living with chronic conditions continue to live comfortably and express natural behaviours.

The newly released footage of Santan climbing and interacting confidently throughout his habitat provides a powerful example of how advanced veterinary medicine can transform outcomes for animals in human care.

ABOUT SYDNEY ZOO

Sydney Zoo opened on December 6th, 2019, and is a world class zoo in the heart of Western Sydney. Home to over 150 species across five iconic precincts, Sydney Zoo has fast become one of Sydney's most popular attractions. Sydney Zoo offers an immersive guest experience that connects people with wildlife from around the world, while promoting conservation and Aboriginal culture through its Bungarribee Dreaming experience. Sydney Zoo is located off the Great Western Highway in Bungarribee, only 40 minutes from the CBD. For more information **visit: SydneyZoo.com**

REGULATORY DELAYS REDUCE ACCESS TO NEW VETERINARY MEDICINES

CONTINUED DELAYS IN PRODUCT ASSESSMENTS DISCOURAGES INNOVATION, MAKING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR COMPANIES TO JUSTIFY THE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT REQUIRED TO BRING DESPERATELY NEEDED NEW VETERINARY MEDICINES TO MARKET.
MR BEN STAPLEY CEO, ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA

Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) says the latest Quarterly Performance Report from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) paints a concerning picture for the future of innovative animal health products in Australia.

"After multiple complex and detailed reviews of the regulatory framework for agvet chemicals, regulator performance is continuing to decline," said AMA CEO Mr Ben Stapley. "We need a renewed push to identify and rectify those elements of the framework in need of modernisation. This includes better regulatory guidance, investment and modernisation of underlying regulatory infrastructure."

While headline figures show veterinary medicine approvals at 91.1 per cent, the outlook for new products is far less encouraging, with just 53.8 per cent of major veterinary applications assessed on time. Only one in four applications for new products with an approved active ingredient were completed within the required timeframe. Performance was even weaker for products with innovative new actives, with no approvals delivered on time for therapies that could give vets and farmers new options for preventing and treating animal disease.

The report highlights an urgent problem: only 11 applications for new veterinary medicines were approved on time, while 115 remain outstanding. Unless addressed immediately, this growing backlog will significantly delay access to essential new products for vets and farmers.

Preliminary Assessment Applications (PAAs) – intended to assist applicants with submitting high-quality applications – also fell well short of expectations, with just 17.1 per cent finalised within the legislated timeframe.

Mr Stapley said the delays will have significant real-world consequences for businesses, farmers, animal health, and Australia's biosecurity.

"Continued delays in product assessments discourages innovation, making it increasingly difficult for companies to justify the significant investment required to bring desperately needed new veterinary medicines to market," Mr Stapley said.

"Without a strong and innovative sector, our pets and livestock will ultimately bear the cost, missing out on critical new animal health products that improve welfare, protect against disease, boost farm productivity, and safeguard national biosecurity."

AMA will continue to engage with government and stakeholders to ensure the APVMA supports industry, veterinarians, farmers, and pet owners who rely on timely access to safe, innovative and effective animal medicines.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/

INTERNATIONAL DOG DAY IS A TIMELY REMINDER **THAT PREVENTION IS AT THE HEART OF CANINE HEALTH**

BY: BEN STAPLEY, CEO ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA

Ben Stapley CEO Animal Medicines Australia
Photo credit: Animal Medicines Australia

For veterinarians, International Dog Day (held on the 26 August) is more than a chance for owners to post a favourite photo of their dog. It is also a useful moment to talk about what keeps dogs well across their whole lives: regular veterinary care, early intervention and access to safe, effective animal medicines.

Dogs occupy a remarkable place in Australian homes and communities. They are companions, working partners, assistance animals, therapy dogs and, for many families, an everyday source of connection and routine. That bond is powerful, but it also comes with a responsibility to make sure dogs receive the preventative healthcare they need before small problems become serious ones.

Animal Medicines Australia's latest Pets in Australia report estimates there are 7.4 million dogs living in Australian households. Around half of Australian households own a dog, and families with children under 18 are especially likely to have one. In other words, canine health is not a niche issue - it is a mainstream animal health, family wellbeing and community concern.

Veterinarians see this every day. A routine consultation may be about vaccination, parasite prevention, dental health, skin disease, mobility, nutrition or behaviour, but the broader purpose is the same: keeping dogs healthier for longer and helping owners make informed choices at each stage of the animal's life.

That is why prevention matters. Vaccination programs, parasite control, routine examinations and appropriate treatment plans are among the most practical tools available to protect dogs from avoidable disease and support good welfare outcomes. They also give veterinarians an opportunity to identify emerging health issues early, when they are often easier to manage.

The animal health industry has an important role in supporting this work. Safe, innovative and effective veterinary medicines help veterinarians prevent disease, manage chronic conditions and respond to changing animal health challenges. From vaccines and parasite control products to treatments that improve comfort and quality of life, these animal health tools are a central part of canine care.

For pet owners, these products can be easy to take for granted. For the veterinary profession, their value is much clearer. Reliable access to registered animal health products allows veterinarians to recommend evidence-based care, tailor prevention programs to individual animals and local risks, and support owners in making decisions that protect both animal and public health.

International Dog Day is a good prompt for a broader conversation. Celebrating dogs should also mean encouraging owners to book that overdue health check, ask about vaccination status, review parasite protection and seek veterinary advice when something changes in their dog's behaviour, appetite or general wellbeing.

Veterinarians are trusted messengers in this conversation. Vets translate science into practical advice, balance prevention with treatment, and help owners understand that proactive care is often better for the animal, less stressful for the household and more effective than waiting until a disease has advanced.

Animal Medicines Australia is proud to represent the companies that research, register, manufacture and supply the animal health products veterinarians rely on. Our shared goal is simple: healthier animals, better welfare and stronger support for the people who care for them.

As Australia's dog population continues to grow, that collaboration between owners, veterinarians and the animal medicines sector will only become more important. Preventative healthcare is not just a message for one day of the year. It is an everyday commitment to giving dogs the healthiest life possible.

Boehringer Ingelheim

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Are we giving Australian cats the protection they need?

Every spring, thousands of Australian kittens enter veterinary care. It creates an ideal opportunity to have one of the most important, and sometimes overlooked, preventive health conversations: FIV risk.

Why FIV deserves renewed attention

Up to 80 percent of pet cats in Australia enjoy some level of outdoor access placing them **at risk of infection.**[1,2]

Almost three in 10 previously vaccinated cats have **not been vaccinated** in the past year.[2]

Half of cat owners believe kitten vaccination removes the need for **annual vaccination.**[2]

Australia has one of the highest reported rates of FIV infection globally[3], with an estimated 1 in 7 cats with outdoor access infected, yet recent pet owner research shows vaccination is not front of mind.[2]

While FIV is preventable, infection can have lifelong consequences for affected cats and create considerable emotional and financial burden for owners.

As FIV primarily transmitted through bite wounds, outdoor access and contact with other cats are important considerations.

A kitten's future lifestyle isn't always predictable. Research shows that 39% of cat owners who initially intended on keeping their kitten exclusively indoors later changed their mind, so vaccinating kittens is the ideal opportunity set them up with the protection they need.[1]

With kitten season underway, now is the time for veterinarians to reassess how FIV risk is discussed with owners, challenge assumptions around indoor-only lifestyles, and ensure preventive conversations start early.

MORE INFORMATION

The Australian Feline Retrovirus Advisory Panel Guidelines provide evidence-based Australian recommendations for the prevention and management of FIV. The guidelines were developed by an independent expert panel convened by Boehringer Ingelheim.

To learn more or access the guidelines, visit the Animal Health Academy www.animalhealthacademy.com.au

'Australia continues to have one of the highest reported rates of FIV infection in the world. I think the first question Australian veterinarians need to start with is a question for themselves. What do they think FIV infection does to the day-to-day health and longevity of cats in Australia? In my opinion, the evidence has been pretty consistent. While lacking the significant acute impact of other vaccine preventable diseases, FIV infection can be associated with dental disease, skin conditions, haematological changes (in particular anaemia and neutropenia) and neoplasia, and infection can shorten the lifespan of cats by a few years. With an appreciation of the impact of FIV infection for cats under their care, starting a conversation with owners about preventative measures available for FIV like secure outdoor enclosures or vaccination becomes easier and should be a regular focus of preventative health visits, especially for kittens.'

Dr Mark Westman
Chairperson of the Australian
Feline Retrovirus Advisory Panel

FIV vaccination should be considered for all kittens as the vast majority will have outdoor access during their life. The risk can be reassessed annually. Optimal compliance can be expected when FIV vaccination is incorporated into the primary vaccination course.

Fel-O-Vax® FIV provides veterinarians with a convenient vaccination option to help protect at-risk cats against feline immunodeficiency virus and can be readily incorporated into feline preventive healthcare protocols.

Fel-O-Vax FIV®

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NATIVE BUSH RATS RETURN TO SYDNEY BUSHLAND IN AMBITIOUS PROJECT

'BOGULS' ARE THE 'HARDEST WORKERS IN THE BUSH' FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION IN THIS URBAN REWILDING INITIATIVE.

Native bush rats have returned to two pockets of northern Sydney bushland as part of an ambitious University of Sydney-led project aimed at restoring one of the city's overlooked engineers of ecosystem health while testing new approaches to wildlife reintroductions, known as rewilding.

Researchers from the University's Global Ecology Lab and Behavioural Ecology and Conservation Lab have released 104 native bush rats (Rattus fuscipes), known as boguls in the Dharug language, into Twin Creeks Reserve near Turramurra and Allenby Park at Beacon Hill. The project has also been active in strengthening the existing bogul population at North Head, where the bogul was successfully reintroduced more than a decade ago.

REWILDING NATIVE BUSH RATS TO SYDNEY'S URBAN BUSHLANDS

The most recent reintroduction was delivered in two phases across Twin Creeks and Allenby Park, with the first release of 24 bush rats taking place in March 2026 and the second involving 80 bush rats in June. Researchers are now in the monitoring phase, tracking how the animals establish themselves in their new homes.

PhD candidate Mareshell Wauchope releasing native bush rats. Photo credit: University of Sydney

The project forms part of the Sydney Rewilding Initiative, an exploration of how carefully planned reintroductions can help restore native wildlife and ecological function to urban bushland.

The project was designed by University of Sydney PhD candidate Mareshell Wauchope, whose doctoral research focuses on improving the success of wildlife reintroductions in urban environments. She is supervised by Dr Patrick Finnerty, Associate Professor Thomas Newsome and Professor Peter Banks in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences.

"Cities have lost many native species as urbanisation has intensified, but they can still support surprisingly rich biodiversity," Ms Wauchope said.

"Urban rewilding is about bringing back the native animals that quietly keep ecosystems functioning. Bush rats might not be well known, but they disperse seeds and fungi, support healthy vegetation and even help sustain native wildlife by competing with introduced black rats.

"By returning boguls to these reserves we're not simply reintroducing a species, we're helping restore the ecological relationships that have been missing from Sydney bushland since the species disappeared."

SMALL MAMMALS; BIG ECOLOGICAL ROLE

While bush rats rarely attract the attention given to koalas or quolls, they perform vital ecological functions.

“Bush rats aren't the animals that usually make the headlines, but they're some of the hardest workers in the bush,” Ms Wauchope said.

“They're exactly the kind of species we should be bringing back into our cities."

Native bush rats benefit other native wildlife. They compete strongly with introduced European black rats, helping suppress populations of one of Australia's most widespread invasive mammals. Fewer black rats can reduce predation pressure on small reptiles, such as skinks, invertebrates and the nests of native birds.

Unlike these introduced black rats, bush rats feed largely on fungi, seeds, fruit and other plant material. As they move through the landscape they disperse seeds, fungi and pollen, helping to maintain healthy native vegetation. Bush rats were also among the first rodents anywhere in the world to be documented as pollinators.

"Keeping these vital native species a common presence in the bush is one of the most effective ways we can restore ecological function," Ms Wauchope said.

TESTING NEW APPROACHES TO REWILDING

Wildlife translocations are increasingly used around the world to restore declining species, but many reintroductions fail because animals quickly disperse from release sites or struggle to establish new populations.

Global ecology lab researchers in the field. Lab director Associate Professor Thomas Newsome is left and PhD candidate Marseshell Wauchope is right. Photo credit: University of Sydney

Project lead and PhD candidate Mareshell Wauchope with a native bush rat. Photo credit: University of Sydney

A native bush rat (Rattus fuscipes) or bogul on North Head in Sydney. Photo credit: University of Sydney

Rather than simply releasing animals, the Sydney team has incorporated a series of behavioural experiments into the project.

Across both reserves, researchers are testing whether familiar scent cues can help animals remain close to their release sites, and whether releasing socially familiar groups alongside extra? Accompanying? shelter and feeding improves survival and establishment.

Each animal has been microchipped, shave-marked and monitored using a combination of live trapping, camera traps and radio tracking.

Dr Finnerty said the project addresses one of the biggest challenges in conservation reintroductions.

“This project has reintroduced the native bush rat – a regionally common but locally extinct native mammal – into two urban reserves while testing practical strategies that could improve the success of future wildlife reintroductions into fragmented urban landscapes.

“It will help restore a missing native mammal to Sydney's urban ecosystems while generating evidence-based tools that conservation practitioners can use in future urban reintroductions.”

The research team hopes the project will generate practical evidence that can improve future urban rewilding programs in Australia.

BUILDING HEALTHIER URBAN ECOSYSTEMS

The project is part of a broader movement to restore ecological processes within cities, recognising an increasing need for conservation in residential areas.

The researchers are working closely with government agencies, councils and conservation organisations to coordinate invasive species management, habitat restoration and long-term ecological monitoring.

More than 30 student volunteers have already participated in fieldwork, gaining hands-on experience in wildlife ecology and conservation science.

The project is a collaboration between researchers from the University of Sydney and Macquarie University, together with Taronga Conservation Society Australia, Local Land Services, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Anderson Environment and Planning, and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Local government partners include Mosman, Northern Beaches, Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney, Hornsby, Willoughby and Lane Cove councils.

It has been funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant.

Monitoring of the newly established populations continues, with the research team preparing two scientific papers examining the effectiveness of the behavioural rewilding techniques being tested.

MORE INFORMATION

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

DECLARATION

The authors declare no competing interests. Funding was received from the Australian Research Council.

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB AND DOGS AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCE MUTUAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT

THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB (AKC®), A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, THE WORLD'S LARGESTPURE BRED DOG REGISTRY, AND A LEADING ADVOCATE FOR DOGS, AND DOGS AUSTRALIA, A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF ITS MEMBER BODIES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY HAVE ENTERED INTO A MUTUAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT.

This agreement strengthens international collaboration around shared priorities, expanding canine exhibitions and registrations, advancing education, promoting dogs as family companions, and supporting responsible breeding and ownership, while establishing a framework for cooperation to deliver meaningful value to breeders, dog owners, exhibitors, judges, and event officials in both the United States and Australia.

"Strong international partnerships are essential to ensuring a solid future for purebred dogs," said Gina M. DiNardo, President and CEO of the American Kennel Club. "We are honored to collaborate with Dogs Australia as we work together to advance responsible breeding, expand educational opportunities, support the growth of dog sports, and celebrate the extraordinary bond between people and dogs."

"Some of our clubs, breeders, judges and competitors already have contact with and enjoy association with AKC members" said Hugh Gent OAM President of Dogs Australia, the Mutual Cooperation Agreement will be of enormous benefit to both organisations, allowing us to share experience, embracing Canine Health, Research, Sporting Activities and collaboration on the many challenges facing our sport"Dogs Australia sport activities are wide ranging and thorough," said Doug Ljungren, AKC Executive V.P. for Sports A& Events. "We look forward to learning from each other and strengthening our programs."

Under the agreement, the AKC and Dogs Australia will explore opportunities to collaborate on events, encourage the registration of purebred dogs, promote responsible breeding practices, and share knowledge to enhance the education of judges, exhibitors, breeders, and event officials. The organizations will also work together to promote dogs as valued family companions while advancing canine health and welfare through the exchange of research, resources, and best practices.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club is a not-for-profit organization which maintains the largest registry of purebred dogs in the world and oversees the sport of purebred dogs in the United States. The AKC is dedicated to upholding the integrity of its registry, promoting the sport of purebred dogs and breeding for type and function. Along with its more than 4,900 licensed and member clubs and its affiliated organizations, the AKC advocates for the purebred dog as a family companion, advances canine health and well-being, works to protect the rights of all dog owners and promotes responsible dog ownership. More than 26,000 competitions for AKC-registered purebred and mixed breed dogs are held under AKC rules and regulations each year including conformation, agility, obedience, rally, tracking, herding, lure coursing, coonhound events, scent work, hunt tests, field and earthdog tests.

Affiliate AKC organizations include the AKC Humane Fund, AKC Canine Health Foundation, AKC Reunite, the AKC Museum of the Dog, and the AKC Purebred Preservation Bank. For more information, visit **www.akc.org.**

ABOUT DOGS AUSTRALIA

Dogs Australia is a not-for-profit organisation advocating for the preservation of purebred dogs through ethical breeding. It champions the highest standard of animal welfare through education and fostering dog-loving communities. Internationally recognised and established in 1958 as the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC), the organisation promotes responsible dog ownership; maintains the ORCHID* heritable canine diseases database; funds research into canine diseases; and supports state and territory-based member bodies. Dogs Australia promotes breed conformation shows and community sports for dogs that fulfil a breed's natural instincts.

For more information, please visit our website: **https://dogsaustralia.org.au/**

PAWS FOR THOUGHT: MOST EXPENSIVE DOGS TO INSURE REVEALED

NEXT TIME YOU FIND YOURSELF ASKING, 'HOW MUCH IS THAT DOGGY?' YOU MIGHT WANT TO FACTOR IN INSURANCE, WITH NEW COMPARE THE MARKET RESEARCH REVEALING A STAGGERING $875 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHEAPEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE BREEDS TO INSURE.

The research, looking at ten of Australia's most popular breeds, found the French Bulldog was the most expensive to cover with annual premiums for a six-month-old puppy starting from $1,194.

Border Collies were the cheapest breed to cover with options starting from $319 a year – less than $1 a day.

Pet insurers calculate premiums based on a range of factors including health risks, lifespans and historic claims data. Generally, conventional breeds, purebreds and 'designer dogs' have well-documented hereditary conditions.

For example, French Bulldogs have a flat-faced anatomy that makes them more prone to severe breathing issues, spinal and joint diseases, and skin and eye complications – with procedures potentially costing hundreds, if not thousands in some cases.

Dog Breed Type	Daily Cost	Monthly Premium*	Annual Premium*
French Bulldog	$3.27	$99.00	$1,194.00
Labrador	$2.11	$64.00	$771.00
Golden Retriever	$1.72	$52.00	$628.00
Dachshund	$1.53	$46.00	$559.00
German Shepherd	$1.53	$46.00	$559.00
Staffordshire Bull Terrier	$1.35	$41.00	$494.00
Maltese Cross	$1.22	$37.00	$445.00
Groodle	$0.97	$29.00	$355.00
Cavoodle	$0.94	$28.00	$343.00
Border Collie	$0.88	$26.00	$319.00

**rounded to lowest dollar amount.*
Source: Compare the Market

Compare the Market spokeswoman Sarah Orr said the ongoing cost of health bills and potential emergencies was an important consideration to make before purchasing a pet.

"Fancy breeds often fetch bigger price tags, but what a lot of people probably don't account for is bigger vet bills too – especially in breeds with known hereditary conditions," Ms Orr said.

"Pet insurance can be a great financial safety net for many pet owners – but of course animals with a higher-risk of potential problems may have to account for that with a higher premium.

"For lower-risk varieties, cover can often be found for less than a cup of coffee (or a puppuccino) each day.

"If you're deciding what kind of dog may be right for your family, our pet insurance research is a great way to understand some of the potential ongoing costs, and an indication of where insurers see risk."

REFERENCES

https://www.comparethemarket.com.au/pet-insurance/information/breeds/

DISCLAIMERS

Pet insurance premiums were quoted through the Compare the Market website – based on a six-month-old male desexed dog with no pre-existing conditions, living in Alderley, QLD, 4051. We took the lowest quoted annual premium and divided this to find the monthly cost.

The quotes had included variables of a $12,000 annual limit, with an 80% benefit percentage and a $200 excess for a next-day (14 July 2026) policy commencement date. The top 10 breeds listed were based on Compare the Market's pet insurance comparison tool and may vary from other sources.

Quotes are indicative only and can vary based on your pet's unique circumstances.

Always read the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) and Target Market Determination (TMD) to check for the inclusions, exclusions and restrictions before purchasing and determine if the policy is suitable for you.

PHYTOPHTHORA DIEBACK LINKED TO HABITAT LOSS AND LOWER DIGGING ACTIVITY AMONG WA QUENDAS

NEW RESEARCH FROM MURDOCH UNIVERSITY HAS FOUND THAT PHYTOPHTHORA DIEBACK IS INDIRECTLY REDUCING THE HABITAT QUALITY AND DIGGING ACTIVITY OF QUENDAS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S JARRAH FORESTS.

Quenda. Photo credit: Murdoch University.

A new study from Murdoch University has found that the introduced plant disease Phytophthora dieback is indirectly hindering quendas in Western Australia's jarrah forests, by reducing their habitat quality and consequently decreasing their digging activity.

The impact of Phytophthora dieback on native plant communities has been widely studied across Australia.

One of the plants most affected by dieback is the iconic Australian grasstree, which provides shelter and habitat for a range of native animals via their dead leaves which form around the trunk of the plant.

There is mounting evidence that the loss of plant species due to dieback such as the grasstree is leading to negative flow-on effects on fauna.

"Quendas and other related bandicoot species prefer habitat with dense shrubby vegetation like grasstrees, which provides refuge from predators and habitat for nesting," said lead author Dr Tom Mansfield.

"We wanted to understand whether dieback was changing the way quendas use the landscape, such as their foraging activity and their access to habitat and food resources."

Over a year-long field study, the research team surveyed five heavily dieback-infested bushland reserves in the Shire of Mundaring, east of Perth, and compared healthy areas with dieback infested areas. They measured shrub cover, the abundance of grasstrees, the amount of bare ground, and quenda digging activity by counting their foraging pits.

The study found that compared with healthy forests, dieback-infected areas had 46% less low shrub cover, 45% fewer habitable grasstrees, and 40% more bare ground.

They also found that quenda digging activity was 33% lower in dieback-infested areas.

"The results supported our theory that dieback creates less favourable habitat for quendas, leading to reduced foraging activity," Dr Mansfield said.

"One more promising finding was that quendas still entered infestations to dig, and they may be using surviving grasstrees and shrubs as habitat," he said.

"So, they may enter infestations more if habitat is provisioned with restoration or installation of refuges."

"We found inconclusive evidence that food resources such as truffle-like fungi were fewer, but the cover of graminoids and herbs which may form bulbs and tubers for quendas to eat were not impacted."

"Together, this suggests that quendas are spending less time in dieback-degraded areas because they may be more exposed to predators, rather than because there's less food available."

Dr Mansfield said the quenda's reduced digging activity was concerning.

"Quendas are ecosystem engineers, with their diggings providing a range of ecosystem benefits," he said.

"Every time they dig for food, they turn over soil, help water soak into the ground, bury seeds, and spread beneficial fungi that support healthy forests."

"They are one of the few remaining digging mammals still performing these functions in south-west WA, so if dieback continues to remove the shrubs and grasstrees that provide refuge for quendas, there may be cascading effects throughout the ecosystem as these natural processes are diminished."

Dr Mansfield said the findings provide practical guidance for future dieback management and habitat restoration efforts.

"Our findings suggest that restoring shelter habitat - particularly dense understorey vegetation and grasstrees - could help make dieback-affected forests more suitable for quendas again," he said.

"Local and small-scale initiatives like revegetation groups and fauna-friendly gardens can go a long way to counter the habitat impacts that dieback has on fauna like quendas."

"Protecting surviving grasstrees, preventing further disease spread, identifying dieback-resistant plants for restoration, and exploring the use of artificial refuges within dieback-degraded areas should be priorities if we want to maintain healthy quenda populations and the ecosystem benefits they provide."

Dr Mansfield expressed his appreciation to the Shire of Mundaring Environmental team for their support and proactive drive to manage and understand the impact of dieback across their reserves.

MORE INFORMATION

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

The paper, Exotic Plant Pathogen Reduces Habitat and Foraging Activities of a Digging Mammal, was published in the journal Austral Ecology (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/aec.70254)

Animal Referral & Emergency Network

Careers in Specialist & Emergency Veterinary Care

Our specialist and emergency hospitals span Australia, forming a connected national network of highly skilled teams delivering world-class veterinary care.

Wherever you are in your veterinary career, you'll find opportunities to thrive with us. Our hospitals offer diverse career pathways for veterinarians, nurses, animal attendants and support teams. You'll be guided by experienced mentors and connected to a community dedicated to delivering the highest standards of care.

Our hospitals are deeply embedded in the communities they serve, with teams who understand local vets, pets and families - while contributing to a broader network shaping the future of veterinary care across Australia.

AEC animalemergencycentre

- Mount Waverley, VIC
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ARH Animal Referral Hospital

- Homebush West, NSW
- Greater Western Sydney, NSW
- Baulkham Hills, NSW
- West Gosford, NSW
- Wollongong, NSW
- Essendon Fields, VIC
- Sinnamon Park, QLD
- Canberra, ACT

Greencross Vet Centre GP & Emergency / Adelaide Veterinary Services & Referral Centre

- Norwood, SA

mvsc Melbourne Veterinary Specialist Centre

- Glen Waverley, VIC

CARE Centre for Animal Referral & Emergency

- Collingwood, VIC, 3066

VRH veterinary referral hospital

- Dandenong, VIC

Greencross Vet HOSPITAL

- Werribee, VIC, 3030

Explore current opportunities:

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INLAND MARINE TURTLE INTENSIVE CARE FACILITY SUPPORTS INJURED SEA TURTLES

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INLAND MARINE TURTLE INTENSIVE CARE FACILITY IS PROVIDING VETERINARIANS WITH A SPECIALISED SEAWATER FILTRATION SYSTEM TO STABILISE AND TREAT SICK AND INJURED SEA TURTLES IN TANKS.

Located at WA Wildlife, the facility is unique because it operates away from the coast, requiring marine conditions to be recreated inland for animals undergoing treatment and recovery. The system includes temperature-controlled saltwater tanks, mechanical filtration, ultraviolet sterilisation and protein skimming, all designed to maintain water quality while supporting veterinary care.

"Providing intensive care for marine turtles inland is a challenge and requires carefully controlled water quality, temperature and circulation similar to the ocean," says Dr Dulana Herath, aquatic biologist and founder of PASES Aqua.

"It is not simply a matter of filling a tank with seawater. The system must consistently break down nutrients from animal waste, and recreate suitable marine water quality parameters while also being practical for daily veterinary use."

A UNIQUE INLAND CHALLENGE

Unlike coastal rehabilitation settings, the inland location creates additional logistical and environmental challenges. Seawater must be trucked to site, stored and used within a controlled treatment system. At the same time, saline wastewater cannot be discharged into the surrounding environment.

Because the facility is located on a wetland, used saltwater and backwash water must be captured and properly removed rather than released on-site.

"One of the major challenges was making sure the system could function effectively in a wetland setting," says Dr Herath.

"You cannot allow saltwater discharge to affect a sensitive freshwater environment, so the wastewater management component was a critical part of the design."

WATER TREATMENT DESIGNED FOR TURTLE REHABILITATION

The facility's water treatment process begins in the main rehabilitation tank and moves through several treatment stages before returning to the turtles.

Water passes through a centrifugal filter to remove heavier suspended solids, followed by additional filtration media. It is then treated using a titanium heater and ultraviolet sterilisation system before being directed through a commercial protein skimmer, which removes dissolved organic waste and other contaminants commonly found in closed saltwater systems.

This process helps maintain stable water conditions for turtles that may already be under stress from injury, illness or rehabilitation.

"When marine animals are in care, water quality becomes a fundamental part of treatment," says Dr Herath.

"A stable and well-managed aquatic environment reduces additional stress on the animal and supports the work of the veterinary team."

PROTECTING THE SURROUNDING WETLAND

A dedicated intake tank stores incoming saltwater, while a separate discharge tank collects used water and backwash water generated during maintenance. This allows the system to be operated without releasing saline water into the surrounding wetland.

The careful handling of intake and discharge water was essential to ensuring the facility could operate responsibly in its location."

This project required us to think not only about the needs of the turtles, but also about the surrounding ecosystem," says Dr Herath.

"The rehabilitation system had to support marine wildlife recovery without creating negative impacts on the freshwater wetland environment around it."

SUPPORTING TURTLE RECOVERY INLAND

The facility has now been operating successfully for approximately one year, with the system continuing to perform reliably while supporting turtle care and recovery.

Its development demonstrates that specialist marine wildlife rehabilitation infrastructure can be established inland when water quality, temperature control, system design and environmental protection are all properly considered.

"This facility shows that effective marine turtle intensive care can be provided inland when the right infrastructure is in place," says Dr Herath.

"It is a good example of how engineering and environmental management can come together to support wildlife rehabilitation in challenging locations."

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.pasesaqua.com.au/

ANIMAL PROTECTION GROUPS WELCOME PEAK VETERINARY BODY'S CALL TO PHASE OUT MULESING

AUSTRALIA'S LEADING ANIMAL PROTECTION ORGANISATIONS HAVE UNITED TO WELCOME THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION'S (AVA) NEW POLICY THAT STRONGLY ADVOCATES FOR THE PHASE-OUT OF MULESING (OTHERWISE KNOWN AS LIVE LAMB CUTTING), WHICH WOULD ULTIMATELY SPARE MORE THAN 10 MILLION AUSTRALIAN LAMBS FROM THE PAINFUL PROCEDURE EACH YEAR.

Humane World for Animals Australia, FOUR PAWS Australia, Animals Australia and the Australian Alliance for Animals described the policy as one of the most significant animal welfare policy developments on the issue in recent years.

Australia's peak veterinary body has called for a phase out of mulesing and recommended the Animal Welfare Task Group expedite the review of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep, "particularly the chapters on mulesing and other surgical husbandry procedures", marking a major milestone in the national conversation on sheep welfare.

The AVA has recognised that the future of sheep welfare lies in transitioning away from live lamb cutting, by prioritising accelerated genetic selection for low-wrinkle sheep who are naturally resistant to flystrike. Its policy calls for collaboration between industry, veterinarians, and government extension officers to achieve the transition as quickly as possible.

Humane World for Animals Australia's Program Manager for Animal Welfare, Georgie Dolphin, said the policy development represents a turning point for sheep welfare reform in Australia

"Australia's peak veterinary body has made it clear: the future lies in breeding flystrike-resistant sheep, not cutting lambs," said Ms Dolphin.

Alliance for Animals Director of Policy, Dr Jed Goodfellow, called on the Federal Government and Agriculture Minister Julie Collins to act on the AVA's recommendations.

"The need for an urgent review of the National Standards and Guidelines for Sheep to establish a practical phase-out timeframe could not be clearer," Dr Goodfellow said. "The industry has had over 20 years to agree to a pathway away from this archaic practice but is clearly incapable of doing so – it's time for governments to act."

Animals Australia CEO, Glenys Oogjes said effective flystrike prevention was essential, but live lamb cutting is not, and never has been, an acceptable solution.

"Flystrike is a serious welfare risk in the Australian environment," said Ms Oogjes. "But routinely subjecting lambs to an extremely painful procedure is not the answer. Breeding sheep who are naturally resistant to flystrike provides a practical, permanent way forward. The AVA's policy underscores the growing expert consensus that genetic solutions provide the most effective and ethical long-term response to flystrike risk."

FOUR PAWS Australia's Programs Lead, Louise Ward, said the AVA's position sends a powerful signal that Australia must move beyond this outdated, century-old practice.

"Australia is now the only country where live lamb cutting remains widely used as a primary flystrike prevention method, putting more than 10 million lambs through this torturous procedure every year," Ms Ward said. "The AVA's call for a phase-out shows that breeding flystrike-resistant sheep is the economically sustainable and welfare-focused path forward, that will bring

Approximately 10 million lambs undergo live lamb cutting in Australia every year. Photo credit: Four Paws

Australia into the 21st century and into alignment with global expectations. It's time for the government to develop a national transition away from live lamb cutting."

Ms Dolphin said the AVA's position reflects growing international market expectations for more ethical wool production as well as consumer demands for better animal welfare:

"Australian wool producers are increasingly hearing from global markets that demand for certified non-mulesed wool is growing and supply is not keeping pace. The Australian wool industry has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by embracing the transition already being successfully undertaken by many farmers.

"At the same time, the Australian government has a responsibility to ensure one of our key export industries doesn't irrevocably suffer from divestment as we see a rapid increase in awareness about live lamb cutting worldwide and a growing demand for products that are ethical in origin. The government should follow the AVA's recommendations and accelerate reform of the national Sheep Standards and Guidelines and commence the review process without delay."

The organisations have sent a joint letter to the federal and state agriculture ministers calling for an urgent review of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep as a pathway to a mandatory national phase-out of live lamb cutting.

PET CULTURE CO. PARTNERS WITH HOLOGENIX, LLC TO LAUNCH THE LIVELY LONGER DOG RANGE POWERED BY CELLIANT® INFRARED TECHNOLOGY

AUSTRALIAN PET WELLNESS BRAND INTRODUCES A NEW APPROACH TO CANINE COMFORT, RECOVERY, AND EVERYDAY WELLBEING.

Photo credit: Pet Culture Co

Pet Culture Co. is proud to announce its partnership with Hologenix, LLC®, creator of the innovative CELLIANT® infrared technology, to launch the Lively Longe range—a premium collection of dog wellness products designed to support comfort, mobility, and recovery through advanced infrared fabric technology.

Born from the personal journey of founders Anne and son, Jesse, Pet Culture Co. was inspired by their beloved Boxer, Tyson. After knee surgeries, rehabilitation, medications, and searching for ways to keep Tyson comfortable as he aged, they realised there was a need for a more proactive approach to canine wellness. That search led them to CELLIANT®.

Unlike conventional fabrics, CELLIANT® is engineered to convert the body's natural heat into infrared energy, which is reflected back into the body to help support local circulation, comfort, and the body's natural recovery processes. Trusted across human wellness and performance products, the technology now sits at the heart of Pet Culture Co.'s mission to help dogs live active, comfortable lives.

"Our goal has always been simple—to create the products that will make a difference, the ones we wished we'd had for Tyson" said Anne, Founder of Pet Culture Co.

"We know what it's like to watch your best friend slow down and feel powerless to help. Discovering CELLIANT® completely changed the way we thought about canine wellness"

The Lively Longer collection combines premium design with advanced infrared technology, transforming everyday rest into an opportunity to support wellbeing. Every product has been thoughtfully developed to provide exceptional comfort while incorporating CELLIANT® infrared fabrics to help support dogs through every stage of life—from active companions to ageing seniors.

The launch of the Lively Longer™ range reflects Pet Culture Co.'s broader mission of helping dogs thrive through innovative wellness technology and thoughtful design.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of our work has been seeing how naturally animals gravitate toward products made with CELLIANT infrared technology," said Seth Casden, founder and CEO of Hologenix, LLC. "We've seen this across applications ranging from equine therapy to dog beds, and because pets have no understanding of the technology itself, those responses have always been especially compelling. Pet Culture Co shares our passion for improving quality of life through thoughtful innovation."

From premium recovery beds and mats to a uniquely designed wearable infrared product, every item is created with one purpose: helping dogs stay comfortable, mobile, and live lively, longer.

ABOUT PET CULTURE CO.

Pet Culture Co. is an Australian pet wellness company dedicated to creating premium products that combine innovative fabric technology. Inspired by the legacy of their Boxer, Tyson, the company develops thoughtfully designed products that help support canine comfort, mobility, and recovery using premium CELLIANT® infrared fabrics.

ABOUT CELLIANT

Hologenix, LLC, headquartered in Pacific Palisades, California, is a materials science company innovating products that energize all aspects of life. Its flagship product, CELLIANT®, is a science-backed infrared (IR) technology that improves health and wellness by promoting restful sleep and enhancing performance and recovery. CELLIANT's natural blend of IR-generating minerals is embedded into fibers, yarns and fabrics, powering bio-responsive textiles. CELLIANT is a key ingredient used by world-class brands in products spanning apparel, sleepwear, bedding, upholstery, uniforms and medical supplies. CELLIANT is rigorously tested by a Science Advisory Board composed of experts in photobiology, nanotechnology, sleep medicine, and diabetes and wound care. To date, there are 11 peer-reviewed published studies that collectively demonstrate CELLIANT's effectiveness and the benefits of infrared energy. For more information, visit celliant.com

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://petcultureco.com/

GAPONLY® NOW ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY CLINICS THROUGH NEW GAPONLY® VET PORTAL

GAPONLY®, AUSTRALIA'S REAL-TIME PET INSURANCE CLAIMING NETWORK POWERED BY PETSURE, HAS EXPANDED ACCESS THROUGH THE NEW GAPONLY VET PORTAL, WITH PAYMENTS BY TYRO HEALTH. THE PORTAL IS THE NEXT STEP IN GAPONLY'S COMMITMENT TO MAKING PET INSURANCE CLAIMING FASTER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR VETERINARY CLINICS ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

GapOnly® is already used in around 85% of Australian veterinary clinics as part of everyday clinical workflows, processing more than 3,000 claims every day, on average, in less than five minutes. The new GapOnly Vet Portal closes the gap for the remaining clinics not on the network, bringing real-time claiming through GapOnly® to every veterinary clinic that wants it. For pet owners with a GapOnly® enabled pet insurance policy, it means broader access to GapOnly® at more clinics across Australia.

For veterinary clinics already using GapOnly®, the new Vet Portal provides a foundation for ongoing innovation. Over time, that will enable continuous improvements that will progressively simplify claims, modernise payments and drive toward 30-second processing, 24/7.

Dr Maria Neale, General Manager of GapOnly®, said the GapOnly Vet Portal, with payments by Tyro Health, reflects a continued focus on improving how pet insurance works in practice.

"This solution signals GapOnly's ongoing modernisation as technology advances. By combining Tyro Health's payments expertise with GapOnly®, we are making real-time claiming faster, simpler and more accessible, while continuing to lift the experience for clinics and pet owners."

The payments capability brings Tyro Health's payments infrastructure into the GapOnly® experience, supporting the gap payment, settlement and reconciliation process. This allows GapOnly® to stay focused on real-time claim assessment, while reducing complexity for clinics in how payments are managed.

Adriano Perillo, CEO of Tyro Health, said the launch demonstrates how practical payments innovation can expand access to real-time claiming and help veterinary clinics reduce complexity in the business side of care.

"Vet teams should be able to focus on care, not paperwork, disconnected payment processes, or end-of-day reconciliation. We've been able to take Tyro Health's deep claiming and payments capability, and apply it to pet health in a practical way. By bringing that capability into the GapOnly Vet Portal, we're helping clinics simplify the financial side of the vet visit, while giving pet owners a simpler way to pay," Mr Perillo said.

GapOnly® has made a clear commitment: claims processed in under 30-seconds, always on, available across every clinic in Australia. This step helps build the infrastructure needed to get there.

Through PetSafetyNetTM, PetSure's initiative that supports veterinary treatment for Australians who cannot access veterinary treatment, every GapOnly® claim contributes $1 toward support. To date, more than $1 million has been provided, helping over 1,800 pets and their owners, with that support growing with every claim processed.

This step expands access today, while building toward a better real-time claiming experience for clinics and pet owners over time.

ABOUT GAPONLY®

GapOnly® is a PetSure solution. We are Australia's real-time pet insurance claiming network, embedded across more than 1,800 veterinary clinics nationally and available with over 20 GapOnly® enabled pet insurance partners. We process pet insurance claims in real time at the vet, enabling pet owners to pay only the gap between their veterinary invoice and their insurance benefit on eligible claims, with cost clarity before they leave the clinic.

ABOUT TYRO

In 2003, Tyro set out to make payments the easiest part of doing business. Today, we're still into business big time, powering more than 76,000 merchants across Australia with in-store, online and on-the-go payment solutions. Working with more than 450 partners, we create seamless payment experiences for hospitality, retail, services and health providers, with integrated banking and lending solutions designed to help unlock the potential of every business.

ABOUT PETSAFETYNET™

PetSafetyNetTM is a collaborative programme co-designed by PetSure, VetChat and VetPartners. It provides eligible pet carers with access to free 24/7 veterinary telehealth through VetChat and, where needed, referrals to participating vet clinics for subsidised urgent or essential in-clinic care. The programme is available across participating locations in Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria.

DISCLAIMERS

CREDABL LAUNCHES HELPING HAND GRANTS 2026 WITH $50,000 IN CASH GRANTS FOR AUSTRALIAN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS.

CREDABL HAS ANNOUNCED THE RETURN OF ITS FLAGSHIP HELPING HAND GRANTS PROGRAM, WITH $50,000 IN CASH GRANTS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT DOCTORS, DENTISTS AND VETERINARIANS MAKING A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE TO THEIR PRACTICES, PROFESSIONS AND COMMUNITIES.

Now in its fourth installment, Helping Hand Grants continues Credabl's commitment to supporting healthcare professionals beyond finance by investing in the people, ideas and practices helping shape the future of Australian healthcare.

At the heart of the 2026 program are five Helping Hand Grants of $10,000 cash each, recognising healthcare professionals and practices demonstrating leadership, innovation, purpose and positive impact.

2026 HELPING HAND GRANT CATEGORIES

- **Purpose in Practice,** sponsored by Credabl
- **Community Impact**, sponsored by Aintree Group
- **Innovation in Care**, sponsored by BusiHealth
- **Emerging Leader**, sponsored by Nuestar
- **Sustainability & Wellbeing**, sponsored by Tyro Health

Applications are open to eligible medical, dental and veterinary professionals across Australia, from established practice owners to emerging leaders, who are making a positive contribution to their profession, practice, team, patients or wider community.

Since launching in 2020, Helping Hand Grants has invested more than $150,000 in grants, coaching and professional support for Australian healthcare professionals. Previous recipients have used the support to improve patient care, strengthen local communities, advance innovation and invest in practitioner and team wellbeing.

Credabl CEO Stafford Hamilton said Helping Hand Grants had evolved into one of the organisation's most meaningful initiatives.

"Every day, we see the incredible impact healthcare professionals have on the communities they serve. When we help one doctor, dentist or veterinarian grow, innovate or overcome a challenge, we're helping every patient they will care for in the years ahead. That's the ripple effect we're proud to support through Helping Hand Grants."

"This year marks another exciting evolution of the program. With five $10,000 grants available across five distinct categories, we're creating more opportunities to recognise the different ways healthcare professionals are making an impact, whether that's through their communities, leadership, innovation, wellbeing or the way they bring purpose to their practice."

Helping Hand Grants 2026 is supported by category sponsors Aintree Group, BusiHealth, Nuestar and Tyro Health, alongside Credabl. Together, the organisations share a commitment to supporting the people behind Australia's healthcare practices and recognising the work being done to strengthen the future of the sector.

APPLICATIONS

Applications can be made by practice owners, practice managers and their team members. For more information or to apply, visit: https://www.credabl.com.au/helping-hand-grants

KEY DATES

Applications open:
Tuesday 1 September 2026

Applications close:
Monday 30 November 2026

Recipients announced:
March 2027

Dugongs feed on seagrass meadows. Photo Credit: James Cook University TropWATER

URGENT ACTION NEEDED AS GULF DUGONG NUMBERS DECLINE, **TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND RESEARCHERS WARN**

RESULTS FROM THE 2025 GULF OF CARPENTARIA DUGONG AERIAL SURVEY HAVE REVEALED A SHARP DECLINE IN NUMBERS COMPARED WITH THE LAST SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 2007, SPARKING A CALL FROM TRADITIONAL OWNERS FOR URGENT ACTION.

Charles Darwin University Senior Research Fellow Dr Rachel Groom and James Cook University TropWATER's Dr Chris Cleguer, Senior Researcher, are calling for researchers to work with Traditional Owners to monitor and protect dugong populations.

In 2007 an aerial survey recorded 471 dugongs in the area, in 2025 only 305 were recorded.

The decrease in the population is most concentrated in the southeast Gulf region, where the survey recorded 231 dugongs in 2007 and 63 dugongs in 2025.

In the Northern Territory, numbers have remained relatively stable, with 242 dugongs recorded in 2025, compared with 240 in 2007.

Yanyuwa Traditional Owner Shaun Evans said that dugong populations cannot be protected without looking after Sea Country as well.

"We need the resources and authority to look after Country properly," Mr Evans said.

"Dugongs are really important to Yanyuwa people. They are part of our culture and our Country."

Dr Groom said that a coordinated response from Traditional Owners, rangers, scientists and government representatives was key to ensuring this vulnerable species was protected.

"The message from the Gulf Dugong Workshop in Borroloola is clear - Traditional Owner knowledge, Ranger observations and science need to be brought together," Dr Groom said

."Communities need the authority, information and resources to respond when Country is changing."

"The survey is an important warning signal, but without collaborating to get the whole picture we cannot confirm why this change has occurred."

Dr Cleguer said regular monitoring was critical, with the existing surveys providing only a snapshot of dugong populations 18 years apart.

"We cannot wait another 18 years for the next Gulf-wide survey," Dr Cleguer said.

"Just as importantly, we need to support Traditional Owners to lead ongoing monitoring of dugongs and Sea Country between these regional surveys."

The 2025 Gulf of Carpentaria surveys were funded by the Australian Government under the National Environmental Science Program and the Queensland Government.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: cdu.edu.au

PETSAFETYNET™ PASSES $1 MILLION IN VET CARE AS PROGRAM TRANSFORMS ACCESS FOR PET CARERS

NEARLY 2,000 PETS HELPED IN UNDER TWO YEARS. MANY SAVED FROM ECONOMIC EUTHANASIA.

PetSafetyNet™, the collaborative program co-founded by PetSure, VetPartners and VetChat, has passed $1 million in vet care funded since its launch in October 2024, helping nearly 2,000 pets and their families across selected locations in New South Wales, Victoria and the entire state of Tasmania.

The milestone, reached in under two years, marks a significant proof point for a program designed to tackle one of the most overlooked challenges in Australian pet ownership: the growing number of people who cannot access urgent veterinary care for their pets.

PetSafetyNet™ addresses multiple barriers to care, including financial hardship, physical mobility, transport limitations and mental health challenges. The program begins with a free 24/7 veterinary telehealth consultation through VetChat, providing expert guidance around the clock so no pet carer has to feel alone when their pet is unwell. In many cases, subsidised in-clinic care may be available through a network of participating vet clinics.

Of the nearly 2,000 pets that received care, many were facing economic euthanasia, which is the decision to end a pet's life due to financial constraints rather than medical necessity, before PetSafetyNet™ stepped in.

'In less than two years, PetSafetyNet™ has helped close to 2,000 pets access over $1 million in veterinary care, proving what's possible when communities come together to support people and their pets.

Access to pet healthcare is not a veterinary issue, it's a community one. When financial hardship puts essential treatment out of reach, it takes a collective effort to ensure pets receive the care they need. We believe access to pet healthcare shouldn't depend on circumstance.

This milestone belongs to our veterinary partners, community organisations and the many people behind the scenes who help turn compassion into action every day." said Dr Simone Maher, Chief Veterinary Officer at PetSure and Program Director of PetSafetyNet.

PetSafetyNet™ is available to eligible pet owners in select areas across New South Wales, Victoria and throughout Tasmania. The program is funded through a $1 contribution from every GapOnly® claim processed by PetSure, and partner clinics provide services at a discounted rate. This innovative funding model distributes the financial responsibility across multiple collaborators.

PetSafetyNet™ was co-designed by VetPartners, one of Australia's largest networks of veterinary clinics. VetPartners brings together local teams committed to providing quality care in their communities, and their support - as well as that of all our clinical partners - is central to making PetSafetyNet™ possible on the ground.

Sinead Ryan, Chief Executive Officer at VetPartners shared, 'Passing $1 million in funded care in under two years is a reminder of what's possible when the right people work together. VetPartners' clinic teams show up for their communities every day and PetSafetyNet™ extends that reach to families who need it most. We're proud to be part of it, and we want to see it grow.'

For Amy and her cat Nessie, PetSafetyNet™ meant the difference between an impossible decision and a second chance.

After eight years without a single vet visit beyond her kitten vaccinations, Nessie developed a haematoma on her ear that required urgent surgery. Amy, who spent 16 years working in veterinary medicine herself, knew immediately what was needed, and knew she couldn't afford it. She called her real estate agent to ask for a week off rent. Her children gave their pocket money. It still wasn't enough.

When Amy called Spreyton Veterinary Services in Tasmania, the receptionist asked if she'd heard of PetSafetyNet™. Within minutes, she was connected to a vet via telehealth, and Nessie was booked in for surgery the next day.

"I think I stood there crying... because I didn't have the full amount. For that reason alone I'm so grateful for PetSafetyNet™."

Nessie's story is one of nearly 2,000 that have contributed to this milestone. Read about Nessie and other pets that have benefited from the program here.

PetSafetyNet™ is currently available in participating areas of NSW (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Maitland, Port Stephens, Central Coast, Port Macquarie-Hastings and Kempsey), throughout Tasmania and a few select areas in Victoria. Pet owners can check eligibility in two minutes at **petsafetynet.com.au.**

ABOUT PETSAFETYNET™

PetSafetyNetTM is a collaborative programme co-designed by PetSure, VetChat and VetPartners. It provides eligible pet carers with access to free 24/7 veterinary telehealth through VetChat and, where needed, referrals to participating vet clinics for subsidised urgent or essential in-clinic care. The programme is available across participating locations in Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria.

DOUBLE DOLPHIN STRANDING HIGHLIGHTS GROWING RISKS IN WA ESTUARIES

TWO DOLPHIN STRANDINGS WITHIN MINUTES OF EACH OTHER IN BUNBURY'S LESCHENAULT ESTUARY LAST WEEK HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE GROWING RISKS INCREASINGLY SHALLOW ESTUARIES POSE TO RESIDENT DOLPHIN POPULATIONS.

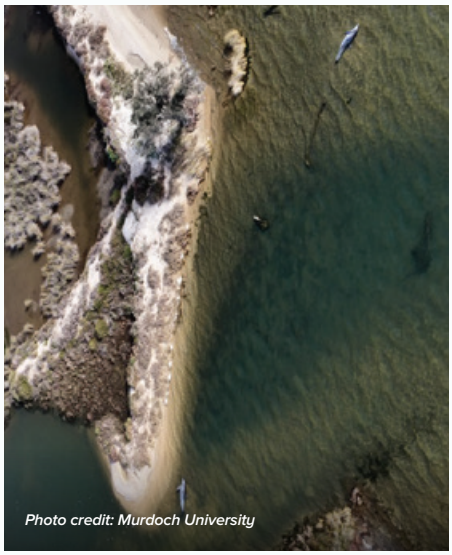


Photo credit: Murdoch University

Harry Butler Institute Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Krista Nicholson witnessed the incident while conducting boat-based surveys in Bunbury with community research group Estuary Guardians Mandurah.

Dr Nicholson is a population ecologist whose research focuses on dolphin strandings in the Peel-Harvey estuary in Mandurah.

The team was tracking Mandurah resident dolphins known to travel between the Peel-Harvey and Leschenault estuaries when they spotted several animals foraging in shallow water.

"Like the Peel-Harvey Estuary, the Leschenault is a shallow system where dolphins regularly forage close to shore," Dr Nicholson said.

As the dolphins moved out of direct view, the team launched a drone to continue observations and identify individual animals from distinctive markings, including white scarring sometimes caused by previous strandings.

"We observed four dolphins spread across the area. Two dolphins moved away while the remaining pair continued feeding near a narrow channel entrance," Dr Nicholson said.

"One dolphin, now identified as local Bunbury resident 'Smiley', suddenly swam across a deeper pool into very shallow water and became stranded.

"We noticed he had rolled on his side and remained stationary. After a few minutes, we contacted the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions."

Almost simultaneously, another dolphin known as 'Star' became stranded while attempting to exit a nearby wetland channel.

Both Star and Smiley are local Bunbury dolphins who have been recorded living in the Leschenault estuary since 2007.

"Within minutes, the two dolphins were lying on their sides, lifting their heads to breathe as large schools of fish swam nearby," she said.

Dr Nicholson said staff from Parks and Wildlife Service responded quickly, carrying both dolphins back into deeper water.

The animals were later observed foraging normally, appearing unaffected by the incident.

Dr Nicholson said dolphin strandings were becoming increasingly common in Western Australia.

"As the climate dries, so do our estuaries," she said.

"Resident dolphin communities follow fish into very shallow areas and can become trapped between sandbars as tides recede or stranded while travelling across shallow sections.

"Changes in water levels, tidal flows and extreme weather events may increase the risks dolphins face while foraging in these habitats."

The Peel-Harvey Estuary supports a resident population of around 90 dolphins, making the community particularly vulnerable to losses.

"Our research shows the Peel-Harvey population can lose, on average, only one adult female per year if it is to maintain its current numbers," Dr Nicholson said.

"Because we have not observed any immigration into the estuary, the loss of dolphins through live strandings will inevitably contribute to long-term population decline."

Dr Nicholson said early detection remains critical, particularly during warmer months.

"Many dolphins in Mandurah carry distinctive white scars caused by severe sunburn sustained during strandings," she said.

"Some animals die days or even weeks later from complications including dehydration, sunburn, and injuries associated with being stranded.

"With such extensive waterways across the South West and Peel region, community vigilance is vital. The sooner stranded dolphins are detected and reported, the greater their chances of survival."

Anyone who encounters a stranded dolphin should contact the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055 immediately.

MORE INFORMATION

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

MACQUARIE VETERINARY HOSPITAL ANNOUNCES EXCITING MOVE TO BRAND-NEW, PURPOSE-BUILT FACILITY IN THE HEART OF MACQUARIE PARK/NORTH RYDE

AFTER NEARLY 50 YEARS CARING FOR LOCAL PETS AND THE FAMILIES WHO LOVE THEM, MACQUARIE VETERINARY HOSPITAL IS THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE ITS MOVE TO A BRAND-NEW, PURPOSE-BUILT VETERINARY CLINIC LOCATED JUST AROUND THE CORNER FROM ITS LONG-STANDING HOME IN NORTH RYDE. THE NEW HOSPITAL WILL OFFICIALLY OPEN IN SEPTEMBER AT THE LACHLAN'S SQUARE SITE IN MACQUARIE PARK

Macquarie Veterinary Hospital Moving to Lachlan's Square. Photo credit: Macquarie Veterinary Hospital

Led by Dr Matt Buchanan Pascall and Dr Michael Stephen, the team at Macquarie Veterinary Hospital is celebrating this milestone as a major step forward for the beloved community clinic. The move brings expanded space, easier access, and plentiful parking, while keeping the same passionate team and trusted continuity of care that generations of local pet owners have relied on.

"We're incredibly excited to welcome our community into a modern space that truly reflects the standard of care we've always strived to deliver," said Dr Matt Buchanan Pascall. "After almost 50 years in our current home, this purpose-built hospital gives us the chance to elevate the experience for both pets and their people."

DESIGNED WITH PETS IN MIND – A FULLY FEAR FREE APPROACH

The new facility has been thoughtfully crafted using Fear Free principles, ensuring a calm, low-stress environment from the moment pets walk through the door. This includes:

- A layout designed to minimise anxiety and reduce wait times
- Quiet, spacious consult rooms
- Smooth patient flow and separate areas for different species
- Purpose-built spaces that support stress-free handling and care

"Fear Free design is at the heart of the new hospital," added Dr Michael Stephen. "Every detail has been selected to make visits easier on pets and their families. It's all about creating a positive, comfortable experience."

A NEW HOME, THE SAME HEART

Macquarie Veterinary Hospital remains the same warm, community-focused team that has been a fixture in North Ryde for almost five decades. The new hospital simply provides:

- More capacity
- Improved technology and equipment
- Enhanced comfort for pets
- Expanded services

All existing patient records, ongoing treatments, and bookings will seamlessly transfer to the new location.

A CELEBRATION FOR THE COMMUNITY

As a clinic deeply woven into the North Ryde community, the team is excited to share this next chapter with local families. An open day celebration is planned for September 19th, giving clients a chance to explore the upgraded facility and meet the team in their new space.

Free community grand opening event on Saturday, 19 September, from 10am to 2pm at Lachlan's Square.

The family-friendly celebration will have something for everyone, including:

- Free five-minute veterinary consultations
- Activities and fun for pets
- Face painting for kids
- Competitions and giveaways
- Local market stalls
- Family-friendly activities
- And plenty of opportunities to meet the Macquarie Veterinary Hospital team

Everyone is welcome, whether you're an existing client, a long-time member of the Macquarie community, or have never visited the hospital before.

The event is an opportunity for the team to celebrate the community that has supported Macquarie Veterinary Hospital for almost 50 years and to introduce the new generation of the hospital to local families.

OPENING SOON

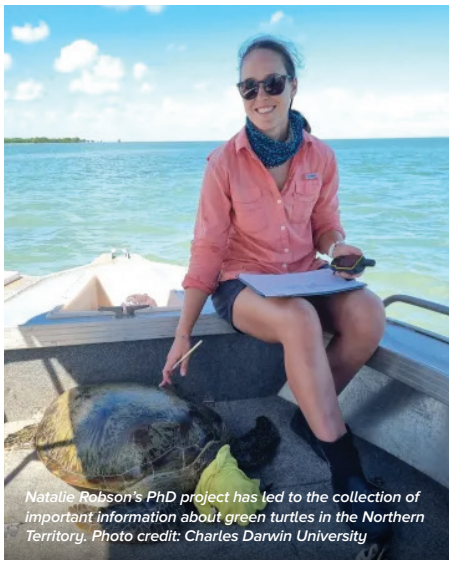
The new Macquarie Veterinary Hospital will open at 15 Halifax Street, Macquarie Park in September. Until then, the clinic continues operating as usual from its current location. Pet owners can follow updates and behind-the-scenes sneak peeks at **www.macquarievets.com.au**

BACKGROUND

Macquarie Veterinary Hospital has been a cornerstone of the North Ryde community for nearly 50 years, providing high-quality veterinary care to generations of local pets. Led by Dr Matt Buchanan Pascall and Dr Michael Stephen, the hospital offers a warm, Fear Free approach and a full range of general veterinary services, backed by a team deeply committed to personalised, compassionate care.

SHELL YEAH: PHD PROJECT GIVES CRITICAL INSIGHTS INTO VULNERABLE SPECIES

A STUDY INTO THE FORAGING HABITS OF GREEN TURTLES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY HAS USED AN INNOVATIVE SURVEYING TECHNIQUE WHICH COULD BECOME A CRITICAL TOOL IN MONITORING MARINE HABITATS IN REMOTE AND CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTS.



Natalie Robson's PhD project has led to the collection of important information about green turtles in the Northern Territory. Photo credit: Charles Darwin University

Green turtles are listed as a vulnerable species in Australia and are the subject of Natalie Robson's recently completed PhD with Charles Darwin University's (CDU) Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods (RIEL).

This study aimed to map the foraging habits of green turtles across two areas, Trepang Bay (Garig Gunak Barlu Marine Park) and Field Island (Kakadu National Park), using ground-truthed remote sensing techniques.

Ground-truthing is the process of verifying and gathering real-world data on site to confirm the accuracy of data collected remotely, in this project Sentinel-2 satellite imagery, and was the first time this method was used for mapping subtidal habitats in the Northern Territory.

The result was efficient, accurate and cost-effective monitoring which revealed a diverse array of marine habitats in these areas including coral reefs, algal reefs and seagrass meadows.

Dr Robson said the technique offered unique insights into the foraging habits of these creatures, and filled in significant gaps of knowledge for scientists and Traditional Owners.

"I'd heard rumours that we only had really patchy seagrass out here, and when I got down to it some of the sites had some really beautiful seagrass meadows," she said.

"We found that turtles aren't necessarily using those big seagrass areas as much as we would think being herbivores, and that they seem to be feeding on the coral reef sections of those shallow areas. Their diet seems to be quite diverse up here.

"They've adapted and are feeding over a broad range of habitats, which is quite different to what's been found in other areas."

This paper is one part of the research project, which focused on working in partnership with eight Indigenous ranger groups across the Northern Territory to study how green turtles move, where they feed, and what threats they face, to understand the habitat use and genetics of these creatures.

The result of this effort was the collection of a significant and much-needed baseline of habitat mapping data, which can be found on the national habitat repository Seamap Australia, publications, and the project's website.

The website features maps and results, distilling the information to be used as a resource for rangers.

Dr Robson said aside from building this database, one of the project's key outcomes and a highlight was to help build the capacity of marine rangers to conduct habitat mapping and support their knowledge of turtle behaviour with science.

"One of the guys I worked with put it really well and said it was like filling in the pieces of the puzzle," Dr Robson said.

"They understood these things were important and they were connected, but it was figuring out the why. Science helped to fill those gaps a bit and help those connections.

"A highlight was getting a much deeper understanding of the importance of turtles to Indigenous people, not just through food but culturally as well. Because we did Ranger exchanges, I got to hear a lot of cool stories told from different perspectives and how those were similar or different across the region. I learned so much just from sitting and listening."

Dr Robson, who has worked with turtles for more than 10 years, said the knowledge gained from this project could be used to provide insights into other species, and for conservation.

"We have biologically important areas for foraging turtles, so I'm hoping to add our data into that, so these areas get assigned as biologically important," she said

"The rest of the project was looking at all the threats and understanding and what are the threats, how they're impacting the habitats that we have, and then what can we do? What kind of monitoring and ongoing management can be done?"

MORE INFORMATION

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

Marine habitat mapping of green turtle (Chelonia mydas) foraging grounds in the Northern Territory, Australia was published in Marine & Freshwater Research. (https://connectsci.au/mf/article/76/9/MF25031/200211/Marine-habitat-mapping-of-green-turtle-Chelonia)

HEAT STRESS INCREASES KOALA HOSPITALISATION AND MORTALITY

FIRST EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE LINKING HOT DAYS AND DEATH AMONG ENDANGERED POPULATIONS.

Dr Valentina Mella with Koala. Photo credit: University of Sydney

New research from the University of Sydney has provided the first associative link between heat stress and koala mortality.

Published in Biology Letters today, the results highlight how even moderate temperature rises can increase hospital admission and mortality risk in koalas. They underscore the need to identify and mitigate heat-related threats to wildlife as the climate continues to warm.

A team of researchers led by Dr Valentina Mella from the Sydney School of Veterinary Sciences, drew on hospital admission records of almost 12,000 koalas in New South Wales between 2020 and 2022. They mapped these (and deaths after admission) against the seven-day and 14-day average temperature leading up to, and following, each admission date, and the location of each koala rescue.

Data was collected from three koala hospitals and one rescue service in New South Wales.

“From there, we were able to assess the probability of each admission and death being associated with temperature,” said Dr Mella.

The findings show the risk of admission and mortality among adult koalas increased once the seven-day maximum daily temperature exceeded 27 degrees Celsius. Koalas exposed to temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius in that timeframe were 1.5 to 3.5 times more likely to be admitted to hospital or die compared to those at 25 degrees Celsius temperatures (25 degrees was the mean seven-day temperature during the study period).

Populations in inland north-west NSW were shown to be particularly vulnerable to heat stress.

“Our findings show a continued rise in air temperature and increased frequency of droughts are a serious threat to koalas in inland north-west New South Wales. Adding weight to this is confirmation the inland koala population in Gunnedah in the Liverpool Plains, once considered the koala capital of the world, is now functionally extinct,” said Dr Mella.

“This research provides the most comprehensive link between rising temperatures and koala mortality,” said Dr Mella.

"Previous evidence relied on observational data, which is less robust and more anecdotal and individualised," she said.

> *“This research provides the most comprehensive link between rising temperatures and koala mortality”*
> *Dr Valentina Mella*

Heat stress occurs when elevated core temperature from heat generation within the body outweighs a mammal’s ability to lose body heat. Tree dwelling species like koalas are often most vulnerable to heat stress due to their limited heat tolerance and limits to where they can forage.

Some factors favour the species. Koalas have a low metabolic rate, reducing how they generate heat internally, and their dense fur insulates them against temperature extremes. Their highly efficient kidneys conserve water, crucial for regulating high body temperatures.

Koala behaviours are also adapted to deal with heat, including actively seeking shade and tree-hugging.

“Koalas can handle hot weather in the short-term but their coping mechanisms aren’t sustainable in the long term,” said Dr Mella.

Another major finding of the paper was koalas with chlamydiosis, the most significant disease among the species, and those in unsuitable environments were more likely to be admitted and die due to high temperature. This indicates temperature can compound the negative effects of disease and habitat destruction.

Understanding how temperatures affect koalas is vital for mitigating future declines during heatwaves and crucial for the conservation of declining populations. Although focused on koalas, the results are important for other tree-dwelling mammals vulnerable to thermal stress.

As a result of this research, Dr Mella said wildlife rescuers can be more prepared to monitor koala populations at risk by using forecasting tools, recognising symptoms of heat stress, and learning appropriate first-aid responses.

“Without proactive intervention, the continued rise in extreme heat events could push already vulnerable koala populations closer to extinction,” she said.

Declaration: The authors declare nocompeting interests. Read the paper at: https://royalsocietypublishing.org/rsbl/article/22/5/20260117/481892/Hot-days-increase the-risk-of-heat-stress-related

MORE INFORMATION

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

THE ABCS OF VETERINARY DENTISTRY: **THE POWER OF R?**

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As we move through the dental alphabet, this issue brings us to the letter R. In this article, we continue our journey into the discipline of restorations.

The tooth crown is composed primarily of enamel and dentine (Figure 1). The forces of mastication placed on animals' teeth, the materials dogs choose to chew, and the obvious difficulty in supervising chewing following treatment mean that restorative veterinary dentistry is generally much more concerned with **health and function than aesthetics.**

Loss of tooth crown structure is most commonly caused by trauma. Trauma may result from chewing inappropriate items such as hooves, horns, antlers, bones or other hard objects, or from an external force such as a car, cricket bat or rock.

Fractures may involve loss of enamel alone without dentine exposure (Figure 2), or loss of enamel and dentine without exposure of the pulp (Figure 3). These are classified as **uncomplicated crown fractures**. When dentine is lost and the pulp is exposed, the injury is classified as a **complicated crown fracture.**

This article will concentrate on uncomplicated fractures and other defects that may be treated using composite restoration.

RESTORATIVE DENTISTRY

Restorative dentistry, as the name implies, involves the use of various materials to replace lost crown structure. Operative dentistry is the branch of dentistry concerned with the functional—and, where appropriate, aesthetic—restoration of the hard tissues of individual teeth.

This area of dentistry continues to change rapidly due to advances in materials, bonding systems and technology. Veterinarians can take advantage of many of these developments when restoring animals' teeth. The challenge is keeping pace with the available materials and understanding which products are most appropriate for veterinary patients.

The ideal restorative material should:

1. Be bacteriostatic.
2. Form a strong bond to enamel and dentine.
3. Form an effective seal between the restorative material and tooth.
4. Have high compressive and tensile strength.
5. Provide acceptable aesthetics.
6. Have a coefficient of thermal expansion similar to that of tooth structure.
7. Be non-irritant to the pulp and surrounding soft tissues.
8. Resist fatigue.
9. Demonstrate minimal distortion or shrinkage during setting.
10. Wear at approximately the same rate as the surrounding tooth structure.

Unfortunately, no single restorative material possesses all these properties. Many materials, however, possess enough of them to be useful for restoration of damaged tooth crowns.

The primary goal of veterinary dental restoration is to **restore health and function to a compromised tooth while preserving as much healthy tooth structure as possible.**

There are three broad groups of dental restorative materials:

1 Amalgam
2 Composite
3 Glass ionomer

Composite and glass ionomer materials are the most commonly used in contemporary veterinary dentistry.

COMPOSITES

Composite restorative materials are composed of an acrylic resin matrix, filler particles and a coupling agent that binds the filler particles to the resin matrix.

Composite material may be supplied as a two-paste system, known as a **chemical-cure**. When the two pastes are mixed, a chemical reaction generates free radicals that initiate polymerisation and setting of the material.

More commonly, composites are available as a single-component light-cure composite. These materials contain a photoinitiator system that is activated when exposed to blue light, generally within the wavelength range of approximately 450–490 nm. Activation generates free radicals that initiate polymerisation.

Light-cure composites provide a significant clinical advantage because the material remains workable until it is exposed to the curing light. Once activated, polymerisation occurs rapidly.

However, the curing light must adequately penetrate the composite. For this reason, deeper restorations should generally be placed and cured in **increments of approximately 2mm**, rather than attempting to cure one large volume of material.

KEY NOTE: *Composite should be placed in thin increments and each layer adequately light-cured. Trying to cure a deep restoration as a single mass risks inadequate polymerisation of the deeper material.*

The traditional classification of composites is based largely on filler particle size. These include:

1 Micro-filled composites – approximately 0.04–0.4 µm
2 Macro-filled composites – approximately 8–12 µm
3 Small-particle composites – approximately 1–5 µm
4 Hybrid composites – containing a mixture of particle sizes

Micro-filled composites use very small filler particles and can therefore be polished to a very smooth surface. However, because they contain a relatively higher proportion of resin, they generally have lower mechanical strength than more heavily filled composites.

Macro-filled composites contain larger particles and offer greater strength and hardness, but they are more difficult to polish to a smooth surface.

Hybrid composites offer a useful compromise. By combining different filler particle sizes, they provide good strength while still allowing the restoration to be finished and polished to a relatively smooth surface. For this reason, hybrid and modern universal composites are particularly useful for many veterinary dental applications.

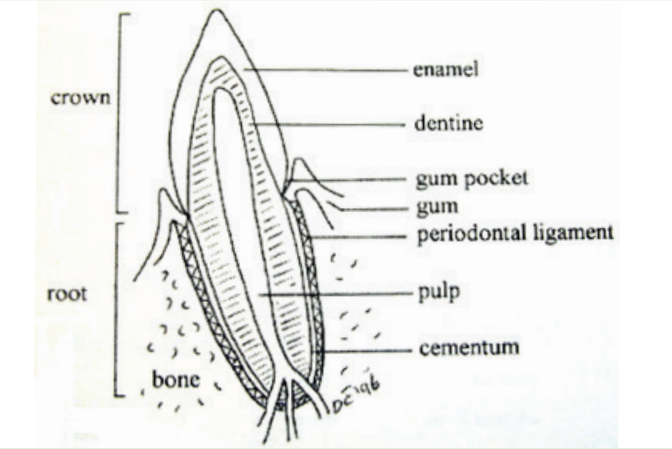

Figure 1. *Diagram tooth*

BONDING AGENTS

Composite restorative materials do not simply adhere predictably to untreated tooth structure. Successful restoration therefore relies heavily on appropriate preparation of the enamel and dentine and the use of a suitable bonding system.

Bonding agents are essentially low-viscosity resin systems that penetrate the prepared enamel surface and the collagen network of appropriately conditioned dentine. Following polymerisation, this creates micromechanical retention between the tooth and restorative material.

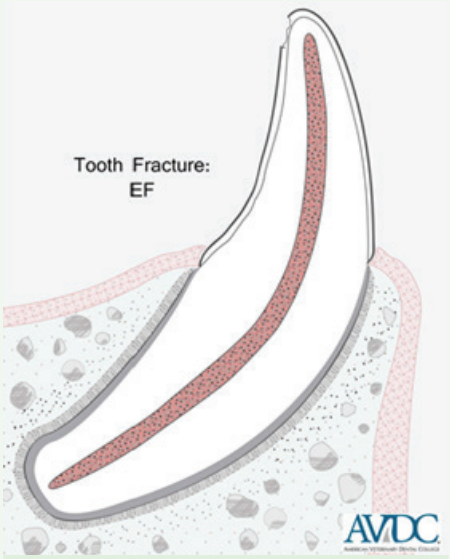

Figure 2. *Uncomplicated tooth fracture enamel loss. Photo credit: AVDC.*

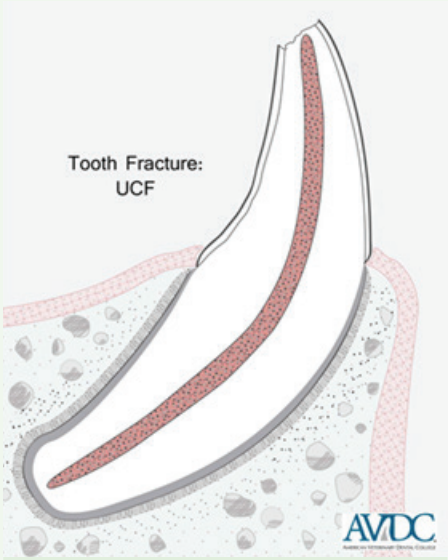

Figure 3. *Uncomplicated tooth fracture enamel dentine loss. Photo credit: AVDC.*

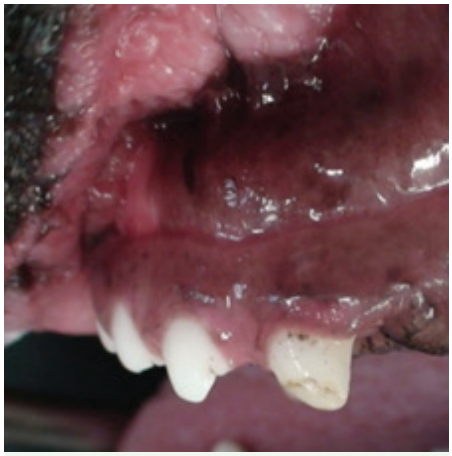

Figure 4. *Left maxillary third incisor tooth - pre restoration*

Figure 5. *Right maxillary canine tooth - pre restoration*

Figure 6. *Right maxillary fourth premolar tooth - pre restoration*

Once the tooth has been prepared for bonding, **moisture contamination becomes the enemy of the restoration.** Saliva, blood and handpiece oil may all interfere with bonding and reduce the longevity of the restoration.

Good isolation is therefore essential. Cotton rolls, gauze, suction and careful positioning can be used to maintain a clean, controlled operative field.

KEY NOTE: *The quality of a composite restoration depends as much on isolation and bonding technique as it does on the composite material itself.*

ACID ETCHING

Acid etching traditionally involves the application of approximately **35–37% phosphoric acid** to prepared enamel and, depending upon the bonding system being used, dentine.

Etching creates microscopic irregularities in enamel that allow the bonding resin to penetrate and form resin tags. In dentine, appropriate conditioning removes or modifies the smear layer and allows the bonding system to interact with the exposed collagen network.

It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for the specific bonding system being used, particularly regarding whether dentine should be etched, how long the etchant should remain in contact with the tooth and the degree to which the dentine should subsequently be dried.

TYPES OF FRACTURE REPAIR

Every dog presented for a consultation should have its oral cavity examined as part of the physical examination. In addition to periodontal disease, the teeth should be checked for fractures, abrasion, attrition, enamel hypoplasia or hypomineralisation, and other abnormalities.

These are common conditions that can be identified in general practice and, with appropriate case selection and training, many can also be treated in general practice.

Some of the common conditions we see in our clinic include uncomplicated crown fractures caused by chewing trauma (Figure 4 - loss of the cusp of the left maxillary third incisor tooth from chewing on a rock), abrasion of the caudal aspect of the canine teeth associated with cage or bar chewing (Figure 5 - loss of the caudal aspect of the right maxillary canine tooth), and developmental enamel defects such as enamel hypoplasia (Figure 6 - loss of the enamel on the buccal surface of the right maxillary fourth premolar tooth adjacent to the gingival margin).

Where the pulp remains healthy and there is adequate remaining tooth structure, these defects may be suitable for treatment using a bonded composite restorative procedure.

Fractures involving loss of enamel and dentine following trauma (Figure 7), abrasion (Figure 8) and enamel hypoplasia (Figure 9) can all provide excellent indications for composite restoration.

Importantly, the purpose is not simply to make the tooth look better. Exposed dentine contains thousands of dentinal tubules that communicate toward the pulp. Sealing exposed dentine therefore helps protect the underlying pulp and provides a smoother, more functional tooth surface.

KEY NOTE: *Before restoring a fractured tooth, determine whether the pulp is healthy. The pulp should be examined to determine it is NOT exposed. A radiograph should be taken to ensure the periapical and periradicular tissues are healthy. A composite restoration is not a treatment for a tooth with irreversible pulp disease or pulp necrosis.*

PROCEDURE FOR COMPOSITE RESTORATION

The following provides a general clinical sequence. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for the particular etching, bonding and composite systems being used.

1. Assess the defect

Examine the fracture, abrasion, attrition or developmental defect and determine whether restoration is appropriate. Assess the remaining crown structure and, importantly, determine whether there is evidence of pulp exposure or pulp disease.

Intraoral dental radiographs should be obtained.

2. Determine the type of restoration required

Decide whether the defect requires sealing with a bonding agent alone or replacement of missing crown structure using composite restorative material.

Figure 7. *Left maxillary third incisor tooth - post restoration*

Figure 8. *Right maxillary canine tooth - post restoration*

Figure 9. *Right maxillary fourth premolar tooth - post restoration*

3. Prepare the tooth

Use a high-speed diamond bur to remove unsupported, rough or sharp enamel margins and create an appropriate surface for restoration. Water cooling should be used on a vital tooth to prevent thermal injury to the pulp.

Avoid contamination of the prepared surface with materials that may interfere with subsequent bonding.

4. Clean the tooth

Remove any calculus accumulation using an appropriate scaler, followed by cleaning of the tooth surface with a slow-speed prophy cup and suitable prophylaxis material. Thoroughly rinse the tooth before beginning the bonding procedure.

5. Acid etch

Apply phosphoric acid etchant according to the manufacturer's recommendations for the bonding system being used. When using a traditional etch technique, the etchant is thoroughly rinsed from the tooth.

Dry the enamel thoroughly. Dentine, however, should generally remain slightly moist rather than being desiccated. Excessive drying may collapse the collagen network and reduce penetration of some dentine bonding systems.

Properly etched enamel typically develops a characteristic frosted appearance.

6. Apply the bonding agent

Apply the bonding agent using a small brush or microbrush and actively work it over the prepared enamel and dentine according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Air-thin the bonding agent as recommended and then polymerise it using an appropriate dental curing light.

Curing time depends upon both the bonding material and the output of the curing light. Modern LED curing units may require considerably shorter exposure times than older halogen units, so the manufacturer's recommended curing time should always be followed.

7. Place the composite restoration

Place the composite using a suitable plastic composite instrument, generally in increments no greater than approximately 2 mm.

Each increment is individually light-cured before the next layer is added.

It is often useful to slightly overbuild the restoration and subsequently contour it back to reproduce the normal anatomy of the tooth.

8. Finish and polish

Contour the composite using appropriate finishing burs, discs or polishing instruments.

When working on a vital tooth with rotary instrumentation, adequate cooling is essential to prevent overheating and possible pulpal injury.

The completed restoration should have a smooth transition between composite and natural tooth structure without sharp margins or obvious areas that will trap plaque.

9. Final seal and inspection

Inspect the margins carefully. A final resin surface sealant is applied and light-cured.

Check the restoration for smoothness, integrity and appropriate contour.

RESTORATION IS MORE THAN FILLING A HOLE

Composite restoration is a useful technique that can be incorporated into general veterinary dental practice. The objective is not simply to replace a piece of missing tooth. Successful restorative dentistry requires appropriate **case selection, assessment of pulp health, tooth preparation, isolation, bonding, restoration and finishing.**

Perhaps most importantly, we also need to consider why the tooth was damaged in the first place. If the patient fractured a tooth chewing an antler, hoof or other excessively hard object, restoring the tooth without addressing the chewing behaviour leaves the restoration—and potentially other teeth—at risk.

Restorative dentistry allows us to preserve teeth that might otherwise continue to deteriorate, seal exposed dentine, improve function and maintain the natural dentition.

And that makes **R for Restoration** a particularly useful addition to the ABCs of Veterinary Dentistry.

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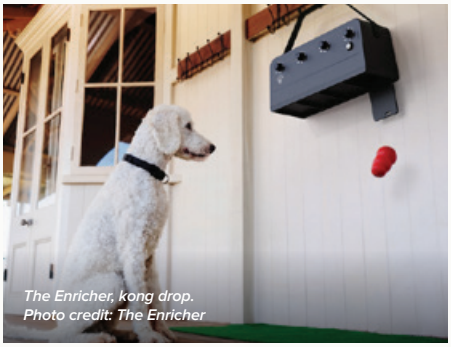
LESS BARK, MORE CALM: AUSSIE FOUNDER TAKES ON DOG ANXIETY

AN AUSTRALIAN DOG TRAINER HAS CREATED A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND DEVICE THAT DELIVERS DAY-LONG AND VARIED ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS.

The Enricher.
Photo credit: The Enricher



The Enricher, kong drop.
Photo credit: The Enricher

Prior to The Enricher there was no practical way for owners to deploy enrichment programs for extended periods. An enrichment program needs novelty and variation to have impact - the same activity every day at the same time does not engage a dog.

The Enricher overcomes this by having four timed compartments that release activities at pre-set intervals. Each compartment can hold puzzles or toys that often contain treats which can be released at different times every day, even when we are not at home, reducing the dog's boredom and subsequent anxiety.

Our modern lifestyles means that dogs spend many hours waiting for us – waiting for walks, waiting for interaction, waiting for the next opportunity to engage with the world. Contradicting their need for varied and frequent physical and mental stimulation has meant an increase in the number of dogs experiencing anxiety with the condition thought to impact one in every four to six dogs.

The innovator behind The Enricher is Grant Shannon, an International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultant (IAABC) dog trainer with more than a decade of experience in his field. The Founder of Dogs Connect, an organisation that specialises in placing and supporting wellbeing dogs in everything from schools to emergency service environments, Shannon is only too aware of the consequences of inadequate mental stimulation.

Speaking of The Enrichers' development, Shannon said: "At Dogs Connect, we were drafting ten-page enrichment plans for dogs and we needed a device that would ensure that the activities continued for the full day, even when a dog's carer is unable to be present. Dog guardians care deeply about their companions. The lack of enrichment is not because people don't care, they care deeply. It is because they have not been shown practical ways to integrate enrichment into their dogs' lives."

Australia has one of the highest pet ownership rates in the world with an Animal Medicines Australia's survey finding 49% of households had at least one dog in 2025.

Despite our national love of dogs they are not coping with many experiencing anxiety as they are faced with a more challenging modern world. While medication can be helpful and required, this dulls both the lows and the highs of a dog's emotional range. Instead, The Enricher has been designed for daily use to provide emotional support to dogs every day including when they are unavoidably home alone.

GRANT SHANNON, FOUNDER OF DOGS CONNECT AND THE ENRICHER

Grant is an International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultant (IAABC) dog trainer and experienced enrichment specialist and behaviour science practitioner who has spent his career helping dogs and their carers build better relationships. Grant has more than a decade of experience in the industry and specialises in the integration of wellbeing dogs into challenging working environments.

DOGS CONNECT

Dog Connect supports schools, hospitals, justice settings and emergency services to integrate wellbeing dogs into these environments. A world-first mental health and wellness program, Dogs Connect assists organisations to integrate a permanent wellbeing dog into their workplace community by working with both the dog and the team to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

MORE INFORMATION

The Enricher is available now from theenricher.com.au and is priced at $379 with free nationwide delivery.

1 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18672155/

2 https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.2 au/news-and-media/australias-most-comprehensive-pet-survey-shows-nearly-three-quarters-of-australian-homes-now-have-a-pet/

LORT SMITH EXPANDING SURGICAL CAPABILITIES TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH PETS IN NEED OF ADVANCED VETERINARY CARE

LED BY SPECIALIST SURGEON DR BEN MIELKE, OUR NEW SPECIALIST SERVICES MEAN LORT SMITH WILL BE ABLE TO CARE FOR MORE COMPLEX CASES IN-HOUSE, PROVIDING FAMILIES WITH CONTINUITY OF CARE WITHIN A HOSPITAL THEY ALREADY TRUST.

The new specialist services will cover Neurosurgery, ENT (Ear, nose and throat), Urogenital, and Musculoskeletal Surgery and Traumatology. They will commence on August 10

''It's another step in our commitment to providing quality vet care for everyone,'' said Chief Veterinarian, Dr Jessica Wilde. It also deepens the support we provide to referring veterinarians with patients who need advanced surgical care.

Dr Mielke joins us at an incredibly exciting time for the organisation as we officially launch specialty services at Lort Smith Animal Hospital. The introduction of specialist surgical services will allow us to support more complex cases, improve continuity of care for patients, and create even greater opportunities for collaboration, learning, and professional development across our teams.''

Dr Meilke, a European Board-Certified Specialist Surgeon, brings an exceptional combination of academic achievement, specialist expertise, and genuine passion for patient care, education, and clinical development.

He has three key areas he plans to focus on:

1. Training the future generation of aspiring surgeons
2. Provide accessible specialist veterinary care to a wider client base
3. Create a world-leading reputation in veterinary surgery

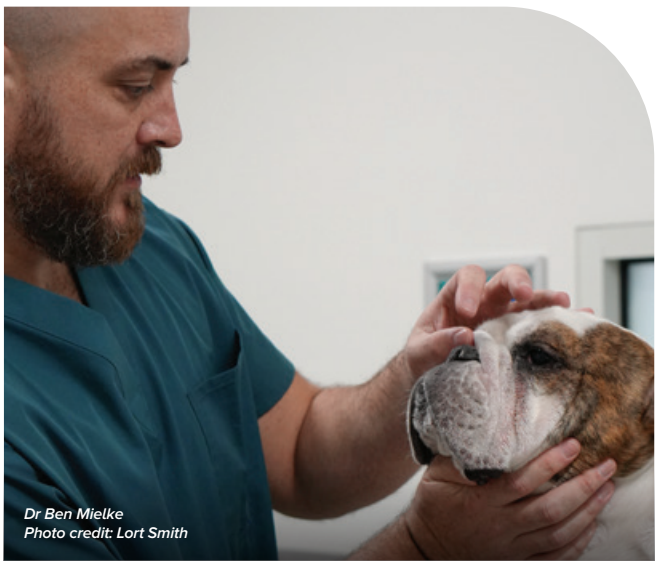
''I have always been fascinated with how things work. As a surgeon I am often able to fix things that are broken, remove things that are not where they are supposed to be and help people in what can be really hard times,'' said Dr Mielke.

''Understanding how the problem develops allows us to create solutions on how to fix and solve all sorts of medical conditions. There was one particular case that I remember thinking afterwards; "This doesn't feel like work". Ever since then I pursued the goal of becoming the best surgeon I can possibly be. The more I learn the more I realise there is to learn.''

SOME FUN FACTS ABOUT DR MIELKE

1. Away from his veterinary work Dr Mielke says he is the proud pet dad to ''a very friendly, slightly silly, black Labrador called Herman. He loves the beach and eating the kids Lego. I also have three chickens; Frida, Hermione and Rosemary. They love digging up our garden and chasing the children.''
2. He loves a dip in icy waters. ''I swim every Saturday morning in the bay, regardless of the weather, with a friend I have had since I was two. We are not very brave but we are always there.''

Dr Ben Mielke
Photo credit: Lort Smith



Dr Ben Mielke
Photo credit: Lort Smith

MONASH STUDY REVEALS SNAKE BODIES ARE MORE THAN LONG TUBES, THEY HAVE DISTINCT VERTEBRAL REGIONS

SNAKES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PERCEIVED AS A LONG BODY WITH A HEAD ATTACHED. NOW NEW RESEARCH FROM MONASH UNIVERSITY HAS REVEALED THAT THEY ARE MORE COMPLEX CREATURES, HAVING SOME OF THE MOST INTRICATE SPINES IN THE REPTILE CLASS.

Australian Eastern Brown Snake in defence stance

Led by PhD candidate, Ammresh, from Monash University's School of Biological Sciences, the study, published in the Journal of Morphology, used three dimensional Geometric Morphometrics (3DGM) on three Australian snake species: the eastern brown snake, copperhead and tiger snake. 3DGM is a biological tool used to provide an in-depth investigation of morphological change, in this case looking in depth at each vertebra's shape, to study how it changes along the body.

"By looking at the 3D shape change in every single vertebra, we get to see a never-before-seen picture of how shape change happens throughout the column," Ammresh said.

Instead of a long, simple tube the snakes' bodies revealed a short cervical and lumbar region, with most of the elongation happening in the thoracic region and three modules detected within the thoracic region.

According to Ammresh, the elongated form of the snake "is one of the most striking examples of deviation from the basic tetrapod body plan, evolving independently multiple times across the vertebrate tree – for example caecilians, skinks, geckoes, amphisbaenians, and snakes in response to a wide range of ecological pressures and locomotory demands," he said.

In humans the spine is divided into three regions; a cervical region, or neck, which supports the head and gives mobility to look around. After that is the thoracic region, with ribbed vertebrae to protect the internal organs. Finally, we have the lumbar region in the lower region, designed to support our upper bodies.

According to Ammresh, vertebrae have distinct shapes based on the functions they serve, and we can see this in a host of different animals. "When it comes to snakes, however, the story becomes a bit more complicated. Snake vertebrae similarly change shape throughout the column, but the boundaries between these regions aren't as clear cut," he said.

In 2015 a seminal paper in Nature came out, finding snakes' vertebra do in fact have regions – four, in fact: the cervical, anterior thoracic, posterior thoracic and lumbar regions.

What the researchers found was not a uniform gradient of change along the vertebral column, but rather some areas of rapid change and some areas without, finding that snakes do in fact have regions within their bodies, where there are sections of vertebrae that have a similar regional shape, then a rapid transition zone into the shape of another region.

"By looking at this much detail, we found five regions within a snake's body – not four. We also found that snake necks are shorter than once thought. While previous research thought of the neck as long, up to 15 per cent of the body, we show it's more likely to be around five per cent of body length," Ammresh said.

"This means snake necks are around 7 to 12 vertebrae long, similar to their lizard cousins. This suggests that while snakes elongated other parts of their body, their necks retained a more ancestral form, remaining short throughout evolution."

Importantly the researchers also found a previously undescribed region, which they coin the middle thoracic region, nestled in between the anterior and posterior and thoracic regions.

Ammresh said that this finding contributes to an emerging theory, where limbless animals have undergone shifts in their vertebral columns. Basically, if you don't have any limbs, the only way for you to adapt to your environment is by changing your entire body.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.monash.edu/

Read the research paper: https://doi.org/10.1002/jmor.70147

CSIRO DEVELOPS NEW WAY TO MEASURE RESILIENCE IN MERINO SHEEP

WE'VE BEEN ASKING ANIMALS TO BE AS PRODUCTIVE AS POSSIBLE, BUT WE HAVEN'T ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD WHY SOME COPE BETTER WITH CHALLENGES THAN OTHERS.

A new resilience test for merino sheep is using hereditary markers to help producers identify which animals are better able to cope with stressors in their environment.

The genomic tool, known as ImmuneDEX, measures a resilience trait called immune competencies, by comparing how individual sheep respond to a standard vaccine challenge, where all animals receive the same vaccine to assess differences in their immune response.

It has been developed through a collaboration between CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, in collaboration with Neogen, the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) and Sheep Genetics, a national genetic information and evaluation service operated by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

The work builds on previous projects in Merino sheep, supported by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI), examining the genetics of traits related to resilience and immune competence.

CSIRO Senior Scientist Mrs Amy Bell said the work examines an aspect of animal performance that has been difficult to measure in the past.

"We've been asking animals to be as productive as possible, but we haven't always understood why some cope better with challenges than others," Bell said.

"Sheep face a range of stressors from disease to climate and flock management, and this work gives us a way to measure how well they respond to aspects of those challenges."

Researchers assessed immune responses in a large population of Merino sheep, enabling them to build a clearer picture of how resilience varies between individual animals.

The research showed that some sheep consistently responded better than others, and that this ability had a genetic component, meaning it could be improved over time through selective breeding.

The findings showed that this measure of resilience is linked to animal health but has little to no correlation to key production traits relating to wool characteristics and bodyweight.

Bell said this allows a component of resilience to be considered alongside existing breeding priorities.

"Selecting for productivity doesn't necessarily mean you're selecting animals that cope well with stressors," she said.

"We now know that this trait is heritable and has favourable genetic relationships with animal health traits."

The project is now entering its second phase, allowing producers to access and use ImmuneDEX as part of their breeding programs.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.csiro.au/

Merino sheep at CSIRO's Chiswick Research Station where research has been taking place. Photo credit: CSIRO


Each individual sheep's resilience was measured through a standard vaccine challenge, where all animals receive the same vaccine to assess differences in their immune response. Photo credit: CSIRO


The Merino flock at CSIRO's Chiswick Research Station where research has been taking place. Photo credit: CSIRO

VICTORIAN DOG FOOD BRAND FREEZES PRICES FOR 12 MONTHS AS COST-OF-LIVING BITES

5 HOUNDS SAYS IT WILL ABSORB RISING PRODUCTION COSTS RATHER THAN PASS THEM ON TO CUSTOMERS, WITH NO PRICE INCREASES ON ITS FRESH DOG FOOD FOR 12 MONTHS FROM 1 JULY 2026.

As household budgets continue to tighten across Australia, one Victorian pet food company is bucking the trend – guaranteeing all customers the same price on its dog food for the next 12 months.

Rather than lifting prices in response to rising production costs, 5 Hounds has committed to absorbing increases in ingredients, packaging, freight and manufacturing costs to give dog owners certainty at a time when many household expenses continue to climb.

Pets are a significant part of family life for many Australians. According to Animal Medicines Australia's latest Pets in Australia report, 86% of pet owners say their pets have had a positive impact on their lives. Australians also spend more than $21 billion a year caring for their pets, with food alone accounting for 46% of that spend.

Veterinarian and founder of 5 Hounds, Dr Will Maginness, said the decision was shaped by thousands of conversations with dog owners over the past 18 months.

"Fresh feeding shouldn't become harder just because the cost of everything else is going up," he said. "As a family-owned business, we get to make decisions based on what we believe is right – not what shareholders expect."

His comments come as the Australian Food and Grocery Council warns of mounting cost pressures across the food manufacturing sector, from ingredients and packaging to freight and energy.

"It would have been easy to pass our rising costs on," Dr Will said. "We'd much rather help families keep feeding their dogs fresh food than make it harder for our customers to stay with us. We know budgets are under pressure, so we've made a promise: no price increases for 12 months. It's our way of saying thank you for trusting us with your dogs."

Dr Will Maginness - 5 Hounds. Photo credit: 5 Hounds

Customers welcome price certainty

For Western Australian customer Caroline Clarke, whose French Bulldogs Coconut and Freddie struggled for years with fussy eating and allergies, the guarantee brings extra peace of mind.

"5 Hounds has been a game changer! We still can't believe there hasn't been one single bit of wastage. Their meals get eaten straight away with bowls licked clean. Coconut always skips for her meals now," she said.

"Knowing the price won't increase for the next 12 months means so much to our family. French Bulldogs can be costly to care for, and knowing I can keep feeding them food they love, which is good for them, is so comforting."

For pensioner Kathy, whose dog Buddy is on the 5 Hounds diet, the Price Lock Guarantee provides welcome financial relief.

"I'm on the aged pension and want my boy to eat healthy, and the price lock guarantee helps," she said.

The 12-month Price Lock Guarantee applies to new and current 5 Hounds customers from 1 July 2026.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit https://5hounds.com.au/

ABOUT 5 HOUNDS

5 Hounds is an Australian veterinary-led dog wellness company focused on preventive healthcare through diagnostic monitoring and species-appropriate nutrition to support long-term canine health. Through healthy, convenient dog food subscriptions, 5 Hounds provides personalised meal plans crafted by vets to support every dog's unique health needs. Discover more at https://5hounds.com.au

ACOUSTIC SUPERHEROES: HOW SEALS MASTERED HEARING ON LAND AND AT SEA

NEW RESEARCH FROM AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM OF SCIENTISTS HAS IDENTIFIED HOW A SPECIALISED TISSUE IN THE EARS OF SEALS ENABLES THEM TO HEAR BOTH UNDERWATER AND ON LAND.

The study, published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, reveals that the earliest marine seals evolved amphibious hearing over 26 million years ago. Amphibious hearing is the ability to hear effectively in both air and water. The findings suggest that amphibious hearing is fundamental to the lives of seals.

Lead author, Dr James Rule from the School of Biological Sciences at Monash University, conducted the research during his time as a postdoctoral researcher at London's Natural History Museum and said pinnipeds (true seals, eared seals and walruses) have a unique superpower.

"Seals have a superpower, the ability to hear and communicate on land and in the ocean. How they hear sounds underwater, and when this remarkable ability evolved, has until now remained a mystery," Dr Rule said.

"Our research found that amphibious hearing in seals originated roughly 26 million years ago. Most mammals are unable to hear properly underwater, but seals evolved ears specialised for hearing underwater without compromising their ability to hear on land. This evolutionary innovation facilitated the remarkable vocal diversity of pinnipeds, which allows them to communicate both on land and in the ocean.

"This ancient origin means that amphibious hearing is as fundamental to being a seal as their flippers," Dr Rule said.

Together with evolutionary analysis of 3D scans of seal ears acquired by CT-imaging, data from both modern and fossil museum specimens and recent advances in pinniped evolution, researchers were able to understand the origins of their amphibious hearing and thus their complex underwater communication.

Dr Natalie Cooper, a Merit Researcher at the Natural History Museum, said historical archives hold the keys to solving modern ecological crises.

"This research really shows the power of museum collections to allow us to answer exciting questions about evolution. We analysed anatomical specimens that were preserved for generations, and they provided the exact evolutionary clues we needed to map how these mammals adapted to hearing in two different environments," Dr Cooper said.

"This work is highly relevant as we begin to understand how noise pollution might influence species in our oceans. The underwater world is getting louder every day due to commercial shipping, sonar, and offshore construction. If we don't understand the baseline of how a seal's unique hearing functions naturally, we can't accurately measure the damage this anthropogenic noise is causing. These museum vaults are effectively helping us protect the future of marine life," Dr Cooper said.

The study is the largest dataset yet assembled of the ears of living and extinct pinnipeds, and their terrestrial relatives. The international team of researchers investigated whether proposed adaptations for amphibious hearing within pinnipeds differ from their nearest terrestrial relatives, when and how amphibious hearing evolved, and how pinnipeds balance the physical constraints of two markedly different auditory environments.

Professor Alistair Evans, Head of the EvoMorph Research Group, which specialises in the biology that influences the evolution, development and function of animals, said the research highlights just how rich and complex a seal's sensory experience truly is.

"Seals are the only creatures in their class to have evolved this sensory flexibility. It allows them to transition seamlessly between two entirely different acoustic worlds without a single drop in performance, giving them an evolutionary edge whether they are resting, hunting or communicating," Professor Evans said.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.monash.edu/

Read the research paper: https://royalsocietypublishing.org/rspb/article/293/2075/20260178/482529/The-origin-and-evolution-of-amphibious-hearing-in

WHEN THE CLINIC PHONE RINGS: A PRACTICAL WAY TO REDUCE MISSED ENQUIRIES WITHOUT OVER-AUTOMATING RECEPTION

BY: **MATTHEW WALKER**

THE PHONE IS PART OF THE CARE EXPERIENCE

In a busy veterinary clinic, the phone often rings at the same moment as an arrival, a payment, a treatment-room request or a team hand-off. Missing an enquiry is rarely a sign that reception does not care. More often, it is a sign that too many important tasks are arriving through one channel at once.

The practical aim is not to turn every call into a script or to replace the judgement of experienced people. It is to make sure each caller receives a useful next step, while the clinic protects the work that needs a person in the room. That starts with a clear picture of the calls that create pressure, the information that is genuinely useful, and the points where a human must take over.

START BY MAPPING THE CALLS THAT CREATE PRESSURE

Before changing a roster, a phone system or a reception process, review a short sample of real calls. Look for the times of day when calls ring out, are rushed or become difficult to return. Then group them by the reason the person called, rather than treating every missed call as the same problem.

For many clinics, appointment enquiries, reschedules, repeat prescription process questions, referral enquiries, location questions and after-hours messages follow different patterns. Some need a booking pathway. Some need a concise message for a team member. Others need to be directed into an existing clinic-approved escalation process. Once those call types are visible, a practice can decide which ones deserve a faster callback and which ones are better handled through a structured hand-off.

SET THE CLINICAL BOUNDARY BEFORE DESIGNING THE CALL FLOW

A good reception process is clear about what it can do and what it must not do. Administrative information can often be handled consistently: opening hours, approved booking steps, practice location, cancellation processes and how a message will be passed on. Clinical judgement, treatment advice and case assessment belong with the clinic's qualified team and its own approved protocols.

That distinction should be obvious in the wording used by reception, an answering service or an automated tool. The job is to capture approved information and move the caller to the right next step, not to interpret symptoms, make assurances or improvise an urgency decision. Clinics should document their own escalation rules, make them easy to find, and review them whenever team responsibilities or operating hours change.

CAPTURE THE MINIMUM USEFUL INFORMATION

Long intake scripts tend to create frustration for callers and more work for staff. A better approach is to agree on the smallest set of details that lets the next person act without having to start again. For an appointment enquiry, that might be the caller's name, a contact number, the reason for the call in the caller's own words, preferred times and any detail the clinic has specifically approved for capture.

For a message that needs a team member, the hand-off should say what happened and what the caller is asking for, not merely that someone rang. Plain language matters. A short, structured note is usually more useful than a long summary that mixes facts, assumptions and interpretation. If the caller needs a person to respond, the message should make that ownership clear rather than sitting in a general inbox with no next action.

MAKE CALLBACK OWNERSHIP EXPLICIT

Many missed enquiries are not lost at the moment the phone rings. They are lost later, when a message is visible to several people but owned by no one. The simple fix is to define who receives each type of hand-off, what a completed callback looks like and how the clinic will notice a message that has not moved.

This does not need to be complicated. A practice may decide that appointment enquiries go to a nominated reception queue, referral questions go to a named team member, and after-hours messages are reviewed through an existing rostered process. The important part is that each call type has one accountable next step. A shared rule for closing the loop also helps: a callback is not complete because a note was created, but because the clinic has made and recorded the intended follow-up.

USE TECHNOLOGY FOR REPEATABLE, APPROVED ADMINISTRATION

Technology can reduce pressure when it supports work that is repetitive, clearly bounded and already approved by the clinic. Examples can include collecting appointment preferences, recording an approved message, confirming basic practice information or creating a structured hand-off for staff. It is most helpful when it gives people better context, not when it tries to make decisions that belong with the team.

The test is straightforward: can the process be explained clearly, checked later and stopped safely if it is not working as intended? If the answer is no, it is probably not ready to automate. Start with one common call type, keep the language simple, and ensure staff can see what the caller was told and what information was captured.

REVIEW REAL CALLS AND IMPROVE IN SMALL STEPS

The first version of a call process will not cover every edge case. That is normal. The useful habit is to review a small number of real calls each week, especially calls that required a callback, were transferred, caused confusion or did not reach the intended outcome. Ask whether the right information was captured, whether the hand-off was clear and whether the clinic's boundary was followed.

Use that review to make one improvement at a time. A changed question, a clearer hand-off field or a better escalation instruction can remove recurring friction without forcing the team to relearn the entire process. Over time, those small changes create a more reliable reception system and make it easier to train new staff around what good looks like.

A RELIABLE NEXT STEP MATTERS MORE THAN A PERFECT SCRIPT

The best call-handling process is not the one with the longest script or the most technology. It is the one that gives each caller a clear, appropriate next step and gives the clinic a clean way to follow through. When call types, boundaries, callback ownership and hand-offs are designed together, clinics can reduce missed enquiries without sacrificing the professional judgement and human care that callers expect.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Walker is the founder of Valory AI, a Brisbane-based managed AI phone reception service for Australian businesses. Valory maps call workflows, configures AI phone agents and helps teams launch safely.

valory.com.au

UQ BANKING ON A FUTURE **FOR KOALA DIVERSITY**

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND IS ESTABLISHING THE FIRST COORDINATED SPERM AND EGG BANK FOR THE STATE'S KOALAS.

Reproductive biologist Dr Andres Gambini said the project will be a vital genetic safety net for a species facing increasing population pressure from habitat loss and disease.

"Every year, many koalas are admitted to wildlife hospitals because of illness or injury and sadly, not all of them survive," Dr Gambini said.

"At the moment, their valuable genetics are lost forever.

"Losing genetic diversity can weaken future generations and decreases the ability of the species to adapt to challenges.

"This project will create a safe and systematic way to rescue and preserve koala spermatozoa and eggs to support future conservation programs."

The project builds on UQ's expertise in marsupial reproduction, including the birth of the first koala through artificial insemination and the production of kangaroo IVF embryos.

PhD candidate Patricio Dandy Palacios has spent the past year establishing protocols for the timely collection and transportation of ovaries and testes.

Wildlife reproduction specialist Associate Professor Steve Johnston said the bank of reproductive cells will be stored in liquid nitrogen cylinders at UQ Gatton.

"We will work with wildlife hospitals to harvest sperm and eggs from koalas that have died or can no longer breed because of trauma or disease," Dr Johnston said.

"The samples will be screened for genetic value and tested for Chlamydia pecorum, one of the major diseases affecting koala health and fertility.

"We have the technology now to remove the infection from the samples.

"In the future this material may be crucial to reintroduce genetics back into the population through artificial insemination or IVF embryos."

Dr Gambini said the koala bank does not replace existing conservation actions but adds an important new tool.

"Koalas need habitat protection, disease management and strong population monitoring," he said.

"But they also need a genetic backup system, and this sperm and egg bank can help preserve diversity while reproductive technologies continue to improve.

"We cannot wait until populations are smaller and genetic diversity is harder to recover.

"By preserving sperm and eggs today, we are giving future conservation programs more options to protect koalas tomorrow."

COLLABORATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project is proudly funded by the Queensland Government's Protecting Queensland's threatened species: Applied research grants program and involves researchers at UQ's School of Agriculture and Food Sustainability and School of the Environment. It is a collaboration with the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, RSPCA Queensland, Endeavour Veterinary Ecology and the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute.

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

WHY WET TREATS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR YOUR CATS AS THE WEATHER WARMS UP.

AS AUSTRALIA MOVES OUT OF THE COOLER MONTHS AND INTO WARMER DAYS, CAT OWNERS ARE OFTEN REMINDED OF AN IMPORTANT SEASONAL SHIFT: HYDRATION BECOMES EVEN MORE CRITICAL FOR FELINE HEALTH.

While cats are famously low-drinkers year-round, rising temperatures can quietly increase their risk of mild dehydration - particularly as heating is turned off and routines change.

This is where lickable treat options such as Delectables Squeeze Up treats and Delectables Lickable Cat Treats have carved out a unique role. Made up of around 90% water, these treats are a simple way to support fluid intake while also serving multiple everyday purposes, including rewarding cats, assisting with medication delivery, helping manage weight, and providing a highly palatable snack even for fussy eaters.

They can contribute up to 14% of a cat's daily water intake, helping to ease a common concern for cat owners around low hydration in a simple and highly palatable format. Unlike traditional approaches that rely solely on water bowls or fountains, Delectables deliver fluid intake support through something cats already naturally respond to: flavour and interaction.

Despite the benefits, there is still a notable gap in everyday feline care. Around 20% of Australian cat owners aren't giving treats to their cats, meaning many cats are missing out on those small but meaningful moments of joy and connection that can also support wellbeing.

As warmer weather settles in, the focus on feline nutrition naturally becomes more centred on hydration and lighter, more functional treats. A recent survey shows that 65% of owners prioritise treats that support their cats' essential nutritional needs. Wet cat treats like Delectables fit this shift well, offering low-calorie, guilt-free options that help contribute to hydration and can also be frozen to create a cooler, more refreshing treat for cats as spring and summer roll in.

In a category where convenience and acceptability are key, Delectables has gained global recognition as the number one wet cat treat in the world and has recently launched in Australia, bringing its well-established range of lickable innovations to local cat owners.

The appeal of Delectables Squeeze Up and Lickables lies in their versatility. They can be served directly from the tube for interactive feeding, used as a topper over meals to encourage eating and moisture intake, or offered as a reward during handling, grooming, or veterinary visits.

After all, "why should dogs have all the fun?" says Delectables Australian Senior Brand Manager Louise Berecic.

WHY WET TREATS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR YOUR CATS AS THE WEATHER WARMS UP.

As Australia moves out of the cooler months and into warmer days, cat owners are often reminded of an important seasonal shift: hydration becomes even more critical for feline health. While cats are famously low drinkers year-round, rising temperatures can quietly increase their risk of mild dehydration.

The key? Ditch your dry food and make the switch to wet cat treats. At around 90% water, Delectables Wet Cat Treats do more than satisfy a craving. Each Lickable Treat contributes up to 14% of a cat's recommended daily water intake, delivering hydration support through something cats already naturally respond to: flavour and interaction with no water bowl monitoring required.

And on those scorching days - the treats can be frozen for a more refreshing treat, making them a guilt-free, low-calorie way to keep your cat cool, comfortable and feeling loved.

In a category where convenience and acceptability are key, Delectables has gained global recognition as the number one wet cat treat in the world and has recently launched in Australia, bringing its well-established range of lickable innovations to local cat owners.

Despite the benefits, around 20% of Australian cat owners aren't giving their cats treats at all - missing out on simple moments of joy and connection. Delectables Squeeze Ups and Lickables make it easy to change that, with the versatility to be served straight from the tube, used as a meal topper, or offered as a reward during grooming or vet visits.

After all, "why should dogs have all the fun?" says Delectables Australian Senior Brand Manager Louise Berecic.

MORE INFORMATION

For further information visit: www.delectablescattreats.com/en-au/

ABOUT DELECTABLES®

Delectables cat treats are designed to create moments of connection between cats and their pet parents. Made with high-quality ingredients and irresistible flavour, Delectables offers a range of innovative wet cat treats enjoyed by cats around the world.

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.

Distributed by K9 Gums Australia.
Phone: (03) 8795 0050.
Website: k9gums.com.au

Available from K9 Gums, Lyppards and Provet.

LIFE CHANGERS: THE POWER OF AN ASSISTANCE DOG

IN AUGUST WAS THE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE DOG WEEK, ASSISTANCE DOGS AUSTRALIA (ADA) IS CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF LIFE-CHANGING ASSISTANCE DOGS AND IS CALLING ON AUSTRALIANS TO SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION, AS DEMAND FOR THESE DEDICATED DOGS GROWS.

Photo credit: Conor Ashleigh

Every accredited assistance dog changes far more than one life. While providing greater independence, confidence and inclusion for its client, each dog also changes the lives of the family, volunteer puppy raisers, trainers, donors and supporters who help make that partnership possible.

Assistance Dogs Australia CEO, Tim Taylor, said every assistance dog represented thousands of hours of training, unwavering community support and a shared belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to live more independently.

"An assistance dog doesn't just change one life – it changes many," Mr Taylor said.

"Over the last 30 years, ADA has given hundreds of people newfound independence through their dog. An assistance dog can mean greater freedom, confidence and connection with the world around them.

“For the volunteers who raise them, the donors who fund them and the trainers who prepare them, there is an incredible sense of purpose in knowing they've helped create something truly life-changing. That's why we call them Life Changers."

One ADA client celebrating the 30-year milestone is Brisbane man Tim McCallum, who became a quadriplegic at age 18 following a spinal cord injury. He has had three assistance dogs and said each one of his dogs has given him something priceless - independence and the confidence to live life on his own terms.

"Each assistance dog has changed my life in different ways, but together they have given me decades of freedom and the courage to say yes to opportunities I never thought were possible," he said.

ADA currently breeds, trains and places highly skilled, internationally accredited assistance dogs with Australians with physical disabilities, autism and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Each assistance dog costs more than $60,000 to breed, raise, train and accredit, with the process taking around two years from puppy to placement.

Training begins in ADA's Puppy Kindergarten before puppies move into family homes with volunteer puppy raisers, where they develop their social skills and basic obedience. At around 14 months of age, they return to ADA for advanced training before being individually matched with a client and undergoing final accreditation.

With the exception of competitive grants, Assistance Dogs Australia receives no government funding and relies entirely on public generosity to continue providing its dogs free of charge.

Demand for these life-changing dogs continues to outstrip available dogs who are properly trained, with applications opening only as trained dogs become available.

Mr Taylor said ADA's goal is to increase the number of Australians it supports by 50 per cent by 2028, and is calling on the generosity of the Australian community.

“Australians can support ADA by making a donation, becoming a regular giver by joining our new Puppy Academy, purchasing a Play For Purpose raffle ticket, leaving a bequest or volunteering as a puppy raiser,” he said.

"International Assistance Dog Week is an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable people and dogs at the heart of our work, while reminding Australians that, through ADA, they can become Life Changers too."

International Assistance Dog Week also recognises the importance of internationally accredited assistance dogs and the rigorous standards that underpin them. These standards ensure assistance dog teams can confidently and safely access public spaces while protecting the welfare of both the dogs and the people they support.

ABOUT ASSISTANCE DOGS AUSTRALIA

Assistance Dogs Australia (ADA) is a national for-purpose charity dedicated to breeding, training and placing highly skilled and accredited dogs with Australians with physical disabilities, complex autism, or severe post-traumatic stress (PTS). Currently supporting more than 200 clients nationwide, these life-changing assistance dogs empower connection, promote inclusion and foster independence for Australians with disability.

With no government funding and each dog costing more than $60,000 to breed and train, the organisation relies on the generosity of individuals, corporate partners and philanthropic groups to continue its vital work.

CARNABY'S COCKATOOS EXPOSED TO DANGEROUS PESTICIDE CONCENTRATIONS IN THE WHEATBELT

A NEW MURDOCH UNIVERSITY STUDY HAS UNCOVERED ALARMING LEVELS OF PESTICIDE CONTAMINATION IN THE FOOD SOURCES OF ENDANGERED CARNABY'S COCKATOOS IN THE WHEATBELT — INCLUDING CONCENTRATIONS WELL ABOVE REGULATORY LIMITS FOUND IN SEED SPILLS NEAR GRAIN SILOS.

Cockatoo's forage on treated seed. Photo credit: Murdoch University

Carnaby's Hindlimb Paralysis Syndrome (CHiPS) has affected black cockatoos in WA since around 2012, causing weakness or paralysis in the legs. Although pesticides have long been suspected as a contributing factor, little was known about how or where the birds might be exposed in the wild.

Supervised by Dr Jill Shephard and Professor Kris Warren, PhD candidate Zoe Kissane from Murdoch's Harry Butler Institute, set out to determine whether Carnaby's cockatoos were ingesting harmful chemicals in agricultural seed, trialling new methods of identifying pesticide exposure.

Over three breeding seasons, wild Carnaby's cockatoos were fitted with GPS and ARGOS satellite tags across five Wheatbelt breeding sites.

Tagged birds were tracked and followed to identify where and what the birds were eating, and analysis of GPS data identified high-use forage locations.

Seed samples were collected at identified sites and were later tested to determine the presence and concentration of pesticide residues.

Senior Research Fellow Dr Jill Shephard who supervised the study said the new methods, using tracking data to link bird foraging locations to toxic seed, have identified pesticide exposure pathways that were previously unknown, and highlighted the importance of field-based methods rather than relying on laboratory studies to identify environmentally relevant pesticide exposure levels for wildlife.

The study identified 26 different pesticides found at seed spill locations, including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides which Carnaby's cockatoos were being exposed to, often when foraging opportunistically on spilled seed near grain silos.

Ms Kissane said one of the most surprising findings was the complexity of pesticide exposure.

"Around 80 per cent of seed samples contained one or more pesticide, and many samples contained mixtures of multiple pesticides rather than a single compound," she said.

"Additionally, some pesticide concentrations were also well above the acceptable maximum residue levels set by regulatory authorities, in some cases hundreds of times above what is considered acceptable in food and animal feed."

Pesticides such as imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin, difenoconazole and metalaxyl were detected, which are known neurotoxins associated with both acute and chronic health effects in wildlife and people.

Ms Kissane said they were particularly concerned to find that birds frequently revisited and foraged at contaminated seed spill sites, highlighting the potential for repeated and chronic exposure over time.

She also said the findings may have provided an important missing piece in understanding CHiPS.

"These results point to specific pesticides that may be contributing to CHiPS, providing us with new insight," she said.

Ms Kissane hoped the research encouraged greater recognition of the need to reassess how pesticides were regulated, monitored, and used in Australia.

"Many pesticides still in use in Australia are already restricted or banned in parts of Europe, the UK, and North America due to concerns about human and wildlife health, and our results suggest these risks may also be relevant in Australian agricultural landscapes," she said.

"From an industry perspective, relatively simple changes, such as improving grain handling practices at silos to minimise seed spills and minimising wildlife access to these spills, could help reduce exposure risks for wildlife."

"At the same time, I hope it encourages constructive conversations about alternative agricultural practices that reduce reliance on pesticides, lower risks to wildlife, and support healthy ecosystems."

MORE INFORMATION

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

The paper, Hazard identification and ecological risk assessment of pesticide exposure in wildlife using GPS telemetry: Case study on endangered Carnaby's Cockatoos, can be found in the Open Access journal Environmental Toxicology and Pharmacology.

DATA SHOWS BIGGEST DANGER TO WILDLIFE IS PEOPLE, NOT CATS

HUMAN-CREATED HAZARDS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST WILDLIFE RESCUES IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AND RESEARCHERS ARE CALLING FOR MORE PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO SAVE THREATENED SPECIES.

Gliders were among the most-rescued mammals in the study period.

A University of Queensland project analysed 11 years of records from the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Data Dashboard and found 52,475 cases related to 158 species listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.

Ecologist Dr Kate Dutton-Regester said human factors such as road accidents, unsafe urban environments and entanglement were behind most of the rescues.

“Entanglement in fruit tree netting, wire, fencing and marine debris was the cause of almost 12 per cent of cases, double the number caused by road accidents,” Dr Dutton-Regester said.

“Attacks by animals of all types accounted for 4.4 per cent of cases, with dog attacks more than 3 times as common as cat attacks.

“Concerningly, 20 per cent of cases have no known or recorded cause for the animals’ illness or injury, which could mean we are missing an emerging problem such as a disease.

“The records don’t measure all threatened wildlife deaths – only the cases which end up with carers – but they do reveal patterns and point to where more work is needed.”

Emeritus Professor Jacquie Rand said pet cats have been a major focus of public debate about wildlife loss, with containment and desexing measures promoted as conservation solutions.

“This data shows that human-driven threats deserve far greater attention because cat attacks accounted for just 0.6% of rescues,” Emeritus Professor Rand said.

“Our findings don’t say cats don’t matter in urban wildlife policy, but to get the best outcome for wildlife, the focus needs to shift to actions that address the bigger threats for wildlife.

“A sharper focus on the human factors behind the need for rescues would lead to less wildlife coming into care.

“For example, making sure mesh used in garden and orchard netting is small enough that gliders and bats heads and limbs don’t get caught.

“Maintaining wildlife corridors can help prevent tree-dwelling animals like koalas, gliders and possums being on the ground and ending up hit by cars, attacked by dogs or being stuck in places like buildings or backyards.

“Better road planning to avoid cutting through habitat and fencing, lighting or safe crossing devices have all been shown to reduce the number of animals hit by vehicles in known hotspots.”

Emeritus Professor Rand said the impact of rescue efforts goes beyond the animals.

“The outcomes for wildlife taken into care were poor, with a fatality rate of 59 per cent,” she said.

“Only 24 per cent of animals were released, while 18 per cent had another outcome such as remaining in supported care.

“Behind each of these figures is a team of dedicated veterinarians and animal care volunteers who can suffer stress and compassion fatigue.

“Burnout leads to people leaving the sector, reducing the capacity of wildlife rescue systems and robbing it of their knowledge and experience.

“Addressing the preventable reasons behind many rescues can benefit both animals and people.”

The research paper is published in Animals (https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/16/14/2174)

MORE INFORMATION

VISIT: https://uq.edu.au/

APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR 2026 SYBIL EMSLIE ANIMAL LAW SCHOLARSHIP

The Sybil Emslie Animal Law Scholarship, now in its tenth year, is accepting 2026 applications with an increased award of $2,500.

The longest running of its kind in Australia, the RSPCA Sybil Emslie Animal Law Scholarship, is now accepting 2026 applications. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the scholarship, the award has been increased to $2,500. Applications are open from today and will close at midnight, Friday 4 September 2026.

Administered by RSPCA Australia with funds contributed by animal welfare philanthropist Sybil Emslie's family and other donors, it will be awarded to an animal law student or lawyer with a strong academic record and a commitment to the practice of animal law through active and substantial engagement with animal protection organisations and initiatives.

In 2026 the scholarship purse has increased substantially, thanks to the generous philanthropic support of donors.

Applicants will be assessed against three criteria: enrolment in a law degree or enrolled or aspiring to enrol in a higher-research degree within an Australian law school, or, be a practising lawyer within an Australian jurisdiction; demonstration of commitment to the practice of animal law, and; demonstration of how their research or practising activity will benefit the development and application of animal law and animal protection more broadly.

The Scholarship celebrates the dedication and advocacy of Sybil Emslie, a lifelong supporter of animal welfare whose generosity and advocacy reflected a deep commitment to the protection and care of animals. Sybil's legacy continues through enduring support for initiatives that strengthen animal welfare and advance meaningful, long-term change.

More information on the Sybil Emslie Scholarship, including details on how to apply in 2026 and previous recipients, is available at: **https://www.rspca.org.au/about/scholarships/**

DAME JUDI DENCH AND STARS URGE END TO ICELAND'S WHALE SLAUGHTER

RICKY GERVAIS, LEONA LEWIS, RANKIN, MARY MCCARTNEY, TRACY EDWARDS AND SIR MARK RYLANCE EXPRESS THEIR 'DEEP SADNESS' AT WHALE HUNT

Dame Judi Dench and a host of other high-profile stars have written a letter urging Iceland to ban whale hunting, expressing their "deep sadness" that 18 fin whales have been slaughtered since this year's hunt began last month.

The letter to Icelandic Minister Hanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir follows the resumption of commercial whaling after a two-year hiatus. Co-ordinated by Humane World for Animals (formerly called Humane Society International) the letter was signed by Dame Judi Dench, singer songwriter Leona Lewis OBE, renowned photographers Mary McCartney and Rankin, Round the World sailor Tracy Edwards MBE, comedian Ricky Gervais and actor and playwright Sir Mark Rylance.

The celebrities wrote: "At our time of writing, we are distressed to learn from Humane World for Animals that 18 beautiful fin whales—including one pregnant female and her unborn baby—have been killed, and that one whale was shot four times with exploding harpoons and took an agonising 31 minutes to die."

Fin whales are classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as globally vulnerable to extinction. In 2023, an independent report released by the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority found that some whales killed in Icelandic hunts took up to two hours to die and that 41% of whales suffered immensely before dying, taking an average of 11.5 minutes to die.

Prior to this year's whale hunt starting, Minister Friðriksson made a pledge to introduce a legislative bill to ban whaling in the autumn.

The letter continues: "We stand with the very many people across Iceland who do not want to see this whale slaughter continue, who want to begin a new chapter in Iceland's relationship with whales, one built on respect, compassion and fealty for nature. When you recently pledged to introduce a bill to ban commercial whaling in Iceland, the world cheered you on. In doing so, you can turn the page on killing whales for a meat that has virtually no viable market and instead make Iceland a world leading destination for peaceful, harmonious whale watching tourism. Please let these be the last whales to die in Iceland's hunt.

Iceland, Japan and Norway are the only countries in the world to continue commercial whaling, defying a global moratorium by the International Whaling Commission enacted in 1986. In the past two decades, Iceland has killed more than 1,000 fin whales.

Humane World for Animals Australia's Campaigns Director, Nicola Beynon said: "It is distressing to see Iceland's whaling boats slaughter whales again. There is no humane way to kill a whale and they will very likely endure an agonising death for meat that virtually no one in Iceland wants to eat. This is not only the second largest animal on the planet but also a species classified as globally vulnerable to extinction. We urge Minister Friðriksdóttir to introduce the bill to ban whaling as soon as possible, but it is devastating that it will come too late for the whales hunted this year."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: humaneworld.org

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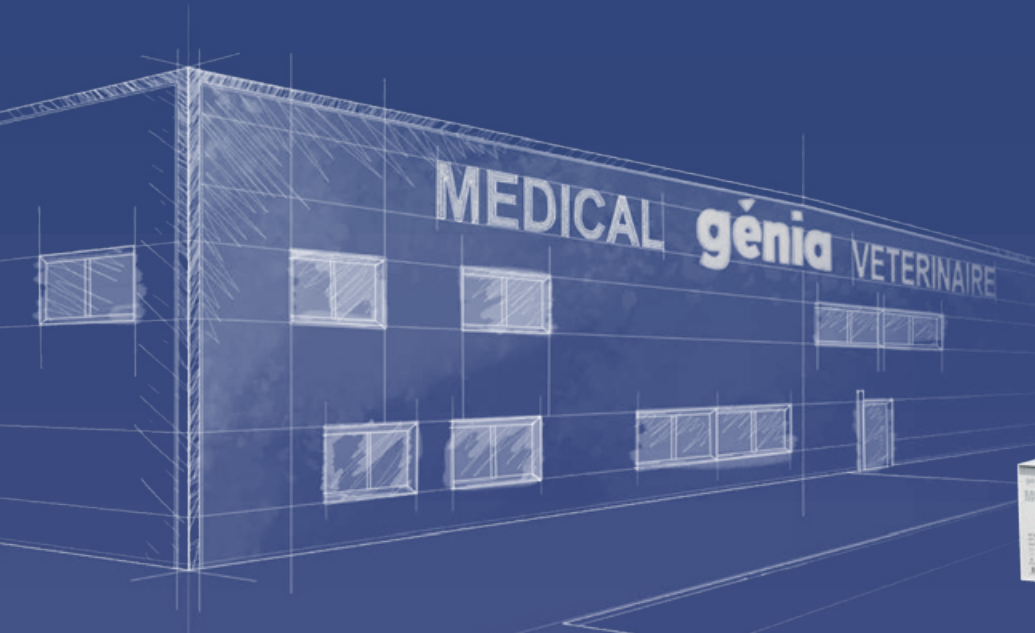

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