

Purina Petcare and Texas A&M Veterinary Gastrointestinal Laboratory Join Forces to Advance Pet Microbiome Health

Five-year partnership to yield new diagnostic and nutritional tools through \$2 Million Purina PetCare Research Excellence Fund

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, April 19, 2023 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- The veterinary industry can anticipate exciting new breakthroughs in the frontier of pet microbiome health thanks to a new partnership between Nestlé Purina PetCare Global Research and the Gastrointestinal Laboratory at Texas A&M University's School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences.

The partnership is made possible through a \$2 million Purina PetCare Research Excellence Fund, which will run from 2023 through 2028 and will support diagnostic and interventional research conducted at the Texas A&M Microbiome Research Laboratory. The fund will also facilitate training of future research leaders in the understanding of the pet microbiome.

In addition to supporting the Microbiome Research Laboratory, Purina has supported a new endowed chair position, the Purina PetCare Endowed Chair for Microbiome Research, at the Texas A&M GI Laboratory. The recipient, Jan Suchodolski, MedVet, DrVetMed, PhD, AGAF, DACVM, serves as a Professor and Associate Director for Research at the GI Lab.

Partnership to yield unique pet health management approaches

Texas A&M researchers and Purina scientists have long shared an interest in the pet microbiome. Research at the Texas A&M GI laboratory for over 25 years has focused on gastrointestinal function testing, GI pathogens and intestinal microbial ecology, with an emphasis on how intestinal pathogens upset the balance of the intestinal microbiome and how the application of probiotics and prebiotics can help this imbalance.

Nestlé researchers, meanwhile, were among the first in the world to study the interaction of probiotic bacteria with host intestinal cells to activate immune signaling, and Purina was the first pet nutrition company to offer shelf-stable probiotic supplements for dogs and cats to support dietary management of GI conditions and anxious behaviors.

"In recent decades, scientists have learned a great deal about the intestinal microbiome and its role in long-term pet health. This has led to discoveries such as a new way of evaluating the microbiome of individual animals," says Dr. Suchodolski, referring to the PCR-based Microbiome Dysbiosis Index developed by his group at the Gastrointestinal Laboratory. "Through the Purina PetCare Research Excellence Fund, we look forward to seeing how learnings such as these will help us discover new strategies for veterinarians to use in our approach to the management of patients with chronic GI disease and other conditions believed to be associated with dysbiosis."

The shared goals of Purina and the Texas A&M GI laboratory are to understand the intestinal microbiome of dogs and cats and how it relates to overall health. Through this partnership,

researchers from Texas A&M and Purina will collaborate to push the field of companion animal microbiome research forward with the goal to develop new diagnostics and nutritional solutions for pets. The Purina PetCare Research Excellence Fund also allows Texas A&M to continue its role as a global expert in the microbiome and build its investment in the training of future research leaders in this space.

"We believe the research projects and training made possible through our Research Excellence Fund and the newly endowed chair at the GI laboratory will shape a future where the veterinary profession has safe, novel tools to diagnose and nutritionally manage a range of pet health conditions that result from microbiome imbalance," says Sheri Smithey, senior vice president, Global Petcare R&D at Purina. "We are confident this Purina PetCare Research Excellence Fund will yield benefits to veterinarians and their patients for many years to come."

"I am most excited that this partnership with Purina will further elevate the excellent research and training for which Drs. Suchodolski and Jörg Steiner (University Distinguished Professor and GI Lab director) have attracted international acclaim," said Dr. Michael Criscitiello, Texas A&M VMBS associate dean for Research & Graduate Studies.

About the GI Lab at Texas A&M University

The GI Lab at Texas A&M University was established in 1997 after a move of its original founder to Texas A&M University. We focus on improving the health and well-being of companion animals by providing unique diagnostic services to veterinarians who care for these pets worldwide and through innovative research of all aspects of companion animal and comparative gastroenterology as it relates to etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and management of gastrointestinal diseases, whether they affect the stomach, intestines, liver, or the exocrine pancreas. The GI Lab team comprises 9 faculty members (5 small animal internists, 2 microbiologists, and 2 anatomic pathologists), more than 10 graduate students, and about 40 staff members. Together, we aim to enhance gastrointestinal and overall health in companion animals.

About Nestlé Purina PetCare


Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 10,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 46 million dogs and 68 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit [purina.com](https://www.purina.com) or [subscribe here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

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