Purina Awards Research Grants to Better Understand the Human-Pet Bond

Four Grants Awarded to Help Scientists from the U.S., Canada, and Austria Investigate the Unique Connection Between People and Pets

ST. LOUIS, Nov. 27, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- As part of its ongoing effort to understand pets and the incredible bond that we share with them, Purina has awarded $120,000 in research grants to four distinguished scientists from around the globe, all geared towards uncovering the profound ways dogs and cats can enhance our lives. Through the company's bi-annual Purina Sponsorship for Human-Animal Bond studies program, Purina provides up to $30,000 in research funding per project to scientists seeking to study facets of the human-pet bond and improve our collective understanding of the healing power of pets.

"Science is most impactful when it is shared, and we are committed not only to studying the human-pet bond at Purina through our in-house research, but through partnerships with renowned institutions and by supporting individuals who share our passion for pets and commitment to pet welfare," said François Martin, M.A., Ph.D., Manager, Global Pet Behavior and Welfare at Purina. "Working with researchers worldwide helps us better understand the impact and importance of our relationships with pets and how we can continue to improve the unique bond that we share with them."

The 2024 Human-Animal Bond Studies Research Grant Winners:

Genetics of Canine Hyper-Sociability & Impact on Adoptability of Shelter Dogs
Researcher: Bridgett M. vonHoldt, Princeton University, USA

This study by vonHoldt's team builds on previous research that identified DNA fragments associated with "hyper-sociability" in dogs. By collecting genetic material from saliva samples of 1,000 dogs, and marrying it with behavioral data, the team hopes to revolutionize the adoption process at shelters and rescue organizations by using genetics to help match dogs with their ideal human companions.

The Effect of Touch in Human-Canine Interactions
Researcher: Katrina Merkies, University of Guelph, Canada

Merkies and her team will delve into the physiological and behavioral responses of both humans and canines by exploring solicited versus forced touch interactions with dogs. The outcomes of the study will be used to improve Animal Assisted Interaction programs by ensuring that participating dogs consent to being petted and that the interactions between people and therapy dogs are mutually beneficial.

Attachment to Pets Among Women with a History of Childhood Abuse
Researcher: Magdalena Żebrowska, Medical University of Vienna, Austria

Żebrowska's study will examine the attachment to pets among middle and older aged women with a history of childhood abuse to better understand if this attachment acts as a buffer to protect survivors from psychological and social disorders. It is hopeful that the findings will shed light on the pivotal role of pet attachment on the well-being of childhood abuse survivors.

Can Dogs Improve Students' Wellbeing Without Harming Their Own

Researcher: Tracy A. Doucette, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada

Doucette's study will evaluate the impact of the WOOFS therapy dog program, a program envisioned to provide stress-relief as part of a student mental health outreach initiative at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). This multidimensional assessment covers both the effects on students and on the dogs with a goal of creating animal assisted therapy interventions on campus.

Purina, and its dedicated team of 500 pet experts, including pet nutritionists, behavior scientists and veterinarians, invests more than $100 million annually in research. These efforts continue to drive breakthroughs and innovations to help pets live longer, healthier lives.

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 Dog Chow, 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 or subscribe here to get the latest Purina news.

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