



# through **THEIR EYES**

Strengthening our relationship  
with animals

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ANIMAL WELFARE SEMINAR **2024**  
**ONLINE** FEBRUARY 21 - 22



## Program

### Understanding Animals' Needs and Wants

Wednesday 21 February (All times are in AEDT)

12:30 Welcome to Day 1

**Chair:** Dr Suzanne Fowler  
Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia

**Official welcome:** Richard Mussell  
Chief Executive Officer, RSPCA Australia

12:45 Challenge, choice, and control provide opportunities for animals to have a good life

**Speaker:** Dr Kat Littlewood  
Veterinary Specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics, & Law and Lecturer in Animal Welfare, Massey University, NZ

13:25 The life cycle of an assistance animal and touch points impacting welfare

**Speaker:** Dr Tiffani Howell  
Senior Research Fellow, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University

14:05 What about the equine in Equine-Assisted Services?

**Speaker:** Associate Professor Carlie Driscoll  
Head of Audiology, Director of Animal-Assisted Interventions Research Alliance, The University of QLD

14:45 Break

15:00 When you're not welcome: The not so 'forever' home

**Speaker:** Fiona De Rosa  
PhD candidate, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University

15:40 Dying well. Is there scope to improve the welfare of companion dogs and cats during euthanasia appointments?

**Speaker:** Dr Anne Quain  
Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Veterinary Science

16:20 Close

### When Things Go Wrong

Thursday 22 February (All times are in AEDT)

12:35 Welcome to Day 2

**Chair:** Dr Suzanne Fowler  
Chief Science Officer, RSPCA Australia

12:45 When things go seriously wrong: What happens when we don't meet animals' needs

**Speaker:** Dr Rebecca Ledger  
Animal Welfare and Behaviour Consulting, Vancouver, Canada

13:25 Whose problem are 'behaviour problems'?

**Speaker:** Dr Gabrielle Carter  
Veterinary Specialist in Animal Behaviour, RSPCA Victoria

14:05 Shine a light on the shadows: The animal victims of domestic and family violence (DFV)

**Speaker:** Associate Professor Kristin Diemer  
Principal Research Fellow, Department of Social Work, School of Health Sciences, The University of Melbourne

14:45 Break

15:00 Communication to improve animal welfare outcomes

**Speaker:** Dr Mia Cobb  
Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Science Centre, Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne

15:40 Can sport, relaxation, tradition and entertainment involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals?

**Speaker:** Prof. Bas Rodenburg  
Professor of Animal Welfare, Utrecht University, The Netherlands

16:20 Wrap up





# SPEAKERS



## DR KAT LITTLEWOOD

Veterinary Specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics, & Law and Lecturer in Animal Welfare, Massey University, New Zealand



Kat is a Lecturer in Animal Welfare within Tāwharau Ora (School of Veterinary Science) at Massey University in New Zealand. She is a registered veterinary specialist in Animal Welfare Science,

Ethics, and Law. She is a One Welfare expert interested in the social acceptability or 'Social License to Operate (SLO)' of how animals are managed.

Kat is passionate about enhancing veterinarians' understanding of their role as animal welfare experts. She also works to operationalise the Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment and training. The most recent update of The Model includes consideration of how human-animal interactions might impact the welfare of animals.

Kat's research employs social science approaches to improve our understanding of complex human-animal interactions and ethically challenging situations. She aims to develop a nuanced understanding of why and how people manage animals. Major research themes: Understanding how different people conceptualise animal welfare; Exploring how human values, attitudes, and behaviours influence animal welfare; Developing systematic scientific strategies to evaluate animal welfare; and Implementing animal welfare policy and standards.

## ABSTRACT

### Challenge, choice, and control provide opportunities for animals to have a good life

Animal welfare represents how an animal experiences their life. It means we must focus on an animal's overall mental experiences (or feelings). Animal welfare is a subjective concept that cannot be directly measured. Instead, welfare indicators are used to cautiously infer these mental experiences from resource provisions, management factors, and animal-based measures. The Five Domains Model is a holistic and structured framework for gathering these indicators and assessing animal welfare.

'Positive welfare' and a 'good life' can only result when animals have more positive than negative experiences in their lives. The more recent version of the Five Domains Model can be used to evaluate not only negative experiences but also how positive experiences may arise. This can be achieved by understanding animals' behavioural interactions that result in positive mental experiences. For animals closely controlled by humans, active interventions are often necessary to facilitate such positive experiences. Providing animals with opportunities for challenge, choice, and control can help them have a good life.

## DR TIFFANI J HOWELL

Senior Research Fellow,  
School of Psychology and Public  
Health, La Trobe University



Tiffani Howell is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Psychology and Public Health at La Trobe University. She has extensive experience in research on animal welfare, pet-owner relationships,

and assistance dogs, publishing over 80 peer-reviewed articles in international journals. She recently completed a four-year trial, funded by the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs, to understand the effectiveness of assistance dogs as an adjunct to treatment for veterans with PTSD. Other recently completed projects include understanding the benefits and disadvantages of owner-trained assistance dogs, awareness of assistance dog public access rights among the general public, whether social interactions within the community increase when people with an intellectual disability go on outings with a therapy dog, and the impact of courtroom dogs for survivors of sexual and family violence. In 2022, along with 75 co-authors, she published an article that defines commonly used terms in animal-assisted services.

## ABSTRACT

### The lifecycle of an assistance animal and touch points impacting welfare

Assistance animals are highly trained to provide necessary disability support to their handler, and to a standard of hygiene and behaviour that enables them to legally access public places off limits to most animals. They are usually, but not exclusively, dogs. They are typically trained by experienced training providers, but there is a growing number of people who are training their own assistance dogs. The general public believes that assistance dogs experience good welfare due to being highly valued by their handler for the work they do. Nonetheless, there are aspects of their training, working life, and beyond, that have the potential to result in negative animal welfare outcomes.

This talk will provide an overview of the laws that provide protections to assistance animals, highlighting the fact that most existing legal statutes do not mention, let alone provide guidance on, their welfare. It will also describe the typical lifecycle of an assistance dog, from selection, through to training, working life, and retirement, and the ways in which their welfare could be impacted at each of these stages. Finally, it will discuss the pros and cons of owner-trained versus provider-trained, assistance dogs, regarding the dog-handler relationship and animal welfare.

## ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CARLIE DRISCOLL

Head of Audiology, Director of  
Animal-Assisted Interventions  
Research Alliance,  
University of Queensland



Associate Professor Carlie Driscoll is Head of Audiology in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at The University of Queensland. Carlie has an extensive research track record in the

fields of paediatric hearing screening, diagnostic audiology, and animal-assisted interventions, having published 120 scientific articles, 3 edited books and 12 book chapters. She has supervised 14 PhD students, in addition to over 80 coursework research students.

Currently, Carlie is a member of UQ's Centre for Hearing Research and Director of the UQ Animal-Assisted Interventions Research Alliance. She is an Editorial consultant for 11 international health journals and sits on the Editorial board of the Journal of the American Academy of Audiology, as well as People and Animals: The International Journal of Research and Practice. She is also Chair of the Animal Therapies Ltd National Scientific Advisory Group, and a Board Director of this peak professional body.

## ABSTRACT

### What about the Equine in Equine-Assisted Services?

Australia has seen a rapid growth in animal-assisted services, whereby animals are included in health, education, and human services for the purpose of therapeutic gains. Animal-assisted therapies, education, and activities seek to provide a range of benefits, in physical and mental health, in addition to behavioural change and quality of life. These services are being provided by a very wide variety of professionals, with very diverse training and expertise. And they are involving a broad range of different animal species.

It is imperative in this complex and relatively young industry that the interests and welfare of the animals involved in such interventions are considered and prioritised. In this regard, the audience will be introduced to the 2023 ethical and conduct standards of Animal Therapies Ltd., which build upon the earlier standards published by the University of Queensland's Animal-Assisted Interventions Research Alliance. The standards detail best-practice requirements for all persons engaged in the sector and have been designed to promote safe and ethical practice, including protection of the animals' welfare. This presentation will emphasise the minimum conditions for several species with a focus on horses, and also introduce some new research initiatives in equine welfare within animal-assisted services. With understanding each other, a little compromise and of course love and compassion.

## FIONA DE ROSA

PhD Candidate, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University



Fiona is an urban planner with a focus on the integration of 'pets' into different spaces and places and has long been interested in how 'pets' use, interact and move through spaces with humans.

She is currently undertaking a PhD titled Interconnections between humans, animals and place: A multispecies ethnography of animal inclusion in residential aged care homes.

This project explores human-animal relations within this unique multispecies space through a 'more-than-human' lens. This approach is an attempt to move beyond a human understanding of human-animal relations to include an appreciation of the animal's perspective/experience.

Fiona has operated her own consultancy for over ten years, working with local councils to prepare animal management plans and design professionals to create 'pet spaces' including enclosed dog parks. She also has experience working with all levels of government in a range of areas.

## ABSTRACT

### When you're not welcome: The not so 'forever' home

The place of pets in modern society has changed over the years. Pets have moved from the kennel to the couch, given individual names and considered to be 'family'.

However, this situation can easily change. When pet owners relocate to other housing types such as a residential aged care home, private rental, or retirement village, they are often met with exclusionary pet or NO pet policies (or specific pets only). In Australia, only 18% of residential aged care homes consider allowing older people to move in with their pets (AWLA, 2018).

At this juncture in their life, many older people are forced to decide whether to have a bed/place in the new 'home' or give up their pet. Forced separation can have severe implications for both the pet and owner. Pets are removed from their familiar home, life, and owner and either taken to an animal shelter, rehomed or euthanised.

In Australia, 'pet' policy (exclusion or inclusion) is left to the aged care providers, and this is highly discretionary. Although some aged care homes use the term 'pet friendly' what does this really mean? What does it mean for the pet?

Animal experiences are often overlooked in scholarship and practice, and there is a need to place greater importance on the animal side of 'pet-friendly' to address this oversight if we are to understand human-animal relations in multispecies spaces.

To get a glimpse into the animal side of human-animal relations in residential aged care spaces, research methods will have to move beyond surveys or interviews!

## DR ANNE QUAIN

Senior Lecturer,  
Sydney School of Veterinary Science



Anne Quain is a senior lecturer in the Sydney School of Veterinary Science. She is a Member of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists Animal Welfare Chapter and a Diplomat

of the European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Medicine in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law.

She is the co-author of Veterinary Ethics: Navigating Tough Cases (5M) with Dr Siobhan Mullan, and co-editor of The Vet Cookbook (Centre for Veterinary Education), a collegial collaboration to promote wellbeing in the veterinary sector.

She has written over 70 academic articles and book chapters, and completed her doctoral thesis on ethically challenging situations encountered by veterinary team members.

She also works in private practice as a general practitioner.

## ABSTRACT

### **Dying well. Is there scope to improve the welfare of companion dogs and cats during euthanasia appointments?**

The majority of companion animals registered with veterinary practices are ultimately euthanased by veterinarians. Being able to perform euthanasia humanely is a Day One Competency of veterinary graduates. Like all veterinary interventions, euthanasia techniques impact the welfare of animals. Though most dogs and cats in Australia are euthanased using barbiturates, there is wide variation in euthanasia practices, including the use of pre-euthanasia medication or sedation.

This session provides a brief discussion on the evolution of expectations around euthanasia and euthanasia technique. It provides an overview of current practices employed by Australian veterinarians when euthanasing dogs and cats based on surveys. Based on this data, it provides some recommendations aimed at improving the welfare of dogs and cats during the euthanasia consultation.



## DR REBECCA LEDGER

Animal Welfare and Behaviour  
Consulting, Vancouver, Canada



Dr Rebecca Ledger is an animal behaviour and animal welfare scientist, based in Vancouver, BC. She has an undergraduate Honours degree on Biology from the University of London, an MSc in Applied Animal Behaviour &

Animal Welfare from the University of Edinburgh, and a PhD in the behavioural assessment and management of aggressive dogs from Brunel University. Previously, she also held the position of Research Assistant at the Waltham Centre of Pet Nutrition, researching behavioural development in animals, Manager and Acting General Manager of Animal Behaviour & Animal Welfare for the BC SPCA, Lecturer at Brunel University, and Visiting Scholar at the University of British Columbia. These are roles where Rebecca has supervised many students in animal behaviour and animal welfare at BSc, MSc and PhD level.

Dr Ledger has written many peer-reviewed scientific journals and 150+ articles for the popular press.

At present, Rebecca is a part-time faculty member of Langara College, teaching courses in animal behaviour, animal welfare and animal law in various programs, including the Animal Control Officers Basic Training. She is retained regularly by humane societies, pet owners, Crown and Defence counsel across Canada, to provide expert opinion in legal cases involving animal cruelty and animal behaviour (>210 cases since 2010). In addition to her legal work, Rebecca also operates a clinical animal behaviour referral clinic, where she sees dogs and cats with behavioural problems on veterinary referral.

## ABSTRACT

### When things go seriously wrong: What happens when we don't meet animals' needs

Animal cruelty legislation exists in most countries to protect animals from unnecessary harm, occurring commonly through acute acts of violence, or from the long-term neglect of an animal's various nutritional, environmental, health and behavioural needs.

Animal cruelty legislation typically defines harm in terms of pain, injury, disease, distress and suffering. While these terms encompass both physical and psychological forms of harm, still, historically, the vast majority of animal cruelty prosecutions have focused on cruel acts where there is direct evidence of harm, such as the presence of a physical injury (fractures, contusions etc). Indirect evidence is also utilized to infer the potential for harm, such the absence of food and water, the absence of adequate shelter, or the absence of veterinary care.

Since 2014, the Five Domains Model (5DM) has been incorporated into animal cruelty cases in Canada to expand on how investigations are undertaken, providing a range of benefits. After having successfully applied the 5DM to the analysis of hundreds of animals involved in cruelty files, a process that provides a systematic way to ensure that welfare assessments are undertaken in a comprehensive manner has emerged.

Canadian case studies, where the 5DM has been applied in Canada, will be discussed.

## DR GABRIELLE CARTER

Veterinary Specialist in Animal Behaviour, RSPCA Victoria



Dr. Gabrielle Carter is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviour and registered Veterinary Specialist in Animal Behaviour in Australia. She has lectured

throughout Australia, educating trainers, veterinarians, veterinary nurses, and the public. Her skills have led her to not only work to help owners improve their pet's behavioural wellbeing, but also to advocate for pets in court hearings and cruelty cases and consult with industry bodies and welfare organisations regarding animal behaviour and welfare.

Gabrielle has a long association with the RSPCA, starting as a new veterinary graduate and returning after working in private practice to the role of Chief Veterinarian, and more recently as the Animal Behaviour and Rehabilitation Specialist. As part of her RSPCA work, she runs Good Pet Behaviour, where she works with a team of behaviour consultants and veterinarians offering private behaviour consultations.

## ABSTRACT

### Whose problems are 'behaviour problems'?

Is it 'bad' owners or 'bad' dogs and cats?

This presentation will reframe how we look at behaviour problems, and use of the 'bad' label.

Behaviours can be undesirable from the animal's perspective, from the owner's perspective and sometimes from both perspectives. From my perspective as a veterinary specialist in animal behaviour, most behaviour problems stem from the animal and/or the owner trying to get their needs met, and to adapt or cope successfully in their environment.

We will navigate how to balance the needs of pets and care-givers to maintain a safe, secure and lasting human-animal bond, especially in the face of undesirable behaviours (from both pets and care-givers). We will explore why dogs and cats may behave in undesirable ways, considering the roles of physical health, mental health, learning and care-giver behaviour. We will conclude that building a successful relationship with our pets starts with understanding each other, a little compromise and of course love and compassion.



## KRISTIN DIEMER

Principal Research Fellow,  
Department of Social Work, School  
of Health Sciences, The University  
of Melbourne



Kristin Diemer is a Principal Researcher at the University of Melbourne with a specialty research program identifying the needs of, and harm to animals in the context of domestic and

family violence. She is also the Board Chair for Lucy's Project, a charity on the Prevention of Harm Registry that raises awareness of the connection between animal abuse and domestic violence. At Lucy's Project, we Collaborate with human and animal services, Advocate for animals and raise awareness, Research the issues and incidence of violence to animals, and Educate frontline services and the general public about the issues (CARE). We are currently funded in large part by the generous support of the NSW Government. Kristin has a long history of researching family violence and is passionate about raising awareness of the needs of animals in this context. Threat and harm to animals is a common form of coercive control of victims of family violence, and animals need to be equally considered as victims. We can never fully or adequately address the needs of human survivors of violence unless we pay attention to the needs of the animals in their lives.

## ABSTRACT

### Shine a light on the shadows: The animal victims of domestic and family violence (DFV)

Animals are family, right? So, let's talk about the animal victims of domestic and family violence (DFV). Lucy's Project recognises the human-animal bond and CARE – Collaborates, raises Awareness of, Researches and Educates – about the animal victims of violence. This presentation will explore the harm caused to animals, both mental and physical, when domestic and family violence is perpetrated. These impacts can be immediate, such as injury or trauma sustained by the animal, or more long term such as veterinary needs, housing insecurity, being surrendered or fostered and separation from family. Animal cruelty is one of the most significant indicators of dangerous perpetrators and the risk to both humans and animals is currently under-recognised.

We will explore what needs to be improved to better meet the needs of animals affected by DFV as well as what is being done to help animals today. Let's also talk about the benefit of animals and children staying together through trauma and the positive impact that can have. We'll briefly acknowledge the cycle of violence and how adversely children can be affected by witnessing animal abuse.

- We will explore the risks to both human and animal life when animals are abused
- We will discuss the therapeutic benefits of keeping humans and animals together through DFV crisis
- Highlight some of the initiatives of Lucy's Project and other organisations to tackle these issues
- Explain some of the dynamics of animal abuse in a DFV context.

## DR MIA COBB

Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Science Centre, Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne



Dr Mia Cobb is an interdisciplinary animal welfare researcher and science communicator, based at the University of Melbourne's Animal Welfare Science Centre. After completing

a Bachelor of Science at Monash University, Mia worked in animal shelter and working dog facilities for over a decade. Recognising the growing importance of animal welfare assurance to our sustainable partnerships with animals, she shifted focus to research and advance the welfare of Australia's working and sporting dogs. Her PhD explored how people's attitudes and kennel management practices relate to the welfare of working dogs.

In 2020, Mia was recognised as a global leader in human-animal interaction science through her appointment as one of 16 Fellows of the US-based Wallis Annenberg Petspace Leadership Institute. She is currently interested in how the intersections of animal welfare science, human psychology, science communication, and emerging technologies can help animals and people lead happier lives. You might also recognise Mia from the ABC series *A Dog's World* with Tony Armstrong. Mia's family shares their home with a large mutt named Rudy, a rehomed pandemic pup named Luna and three hens who are named after characters from the musical *Hamilton*.

## ABSTRACT

### Communication to improve animal welfare outcomes

Effective communication plays a crucial role in advancing animal wellbeing. We use it to convey complex information, foster understanding, and inspire action to improve animal welfare. In an environment where 'animal welfare' can be interpreted to mean different things, establishing a shared understanding is critical to productive discussions and practical outcomes. This presentation will be of interest to individuals and groups involved in animal welfare and its assurance. Effective communication is essential in bridging gaps, influencing human behaviour change, and working together to meet our shared ethical obligations to provide the animals in our care with a good life.

We will explore proven science communication and human behaviour change communication strategies. This will include practical tips on ethical considerations, tailoring communication to the audience, identifying barriers, the importance of message framing, and the use of stories. These techniques can help develop communication styles to achieve change, whether the goal is to promote best practice animal care, encourage sustainable practices, or drive social and policy changes.



## PROF. BAS RODENBURG

Professor in Animal Welfare,  
Utrecht University, The Netherlands



Bas Rodenburg is Professor in Animal Welfare at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Utrecht University in The Netherlands. He is also Special Professor in Animal Welfare

at Wageningen University. He coordinates research and education in animal welfare. The research of Bas Rodenburg aims at improving the methodology for assessment of animal welfare. This also focuses on the use of sensors to monitor behaviour and welfare of individual animals housed in social groups. In his own work, Rodenburg advertises the OneWelfare approach in the context of farm animal production to ensure that animal welfare receives appropriate attention in the development of sustainable animal production systems. Bas is involved in European projects such as ChickenStress, PPILOW, aWISH and Best Practice Hens. Bas Rodenburg is a member of the Dutch Council on Animal Affairs and was a member of the forum that wrote the report on animal welfare during sports and activities.

## ABSTRACT

### Can sport, relaxation, tradition and entertainment involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals?

Humans engage in many activities that involve animals. This can be for sports, relaxation or because of local traditions. Examples are sports with horses or dogs, animal shows and exhibitions, pigeon racing, fishing, etc. Some activities may be neutral or even positive from an animal welfare perspective, while others clearly affect animal welfare negatively. There is increasing societal debate in The Netherlands on the welfare of the animals that are used for these activities. At the same time, many people enjoy these activities.

For farm animals, the Dutch Council on Animal Affairs has recently proposed the six principles for humane livestock farming, modeled on the Five Domains proposed by Mellor et al. (2016): 1) respect for the intrinsic value of the animal, 2) good housing, 3) good feeding, 4) good health, 5) ability to perform natural behaviour and 6) positive emotional state. Based on these six principles, a process is currently ongoing in The Netherlands to see how we can redesign animal husbandry from the perspective of the animal. Could we use the same methodology to assess the other activities we do with animals? This can provide a valuable framework for organisers of animal activities to think about possible improvements of their activities that will benefit animal welfare.



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