Animal Welfare Seminar 2024

Through their eyes: Strengthening our relationship with animals

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Seminar program

Click the thumbnail below to download the Seminar program (PDF 331KB):



RSPCA

Program

through THEIR EYES

Strengthening our relationship with animals

ANIMAL WELFARE SEMINAR 2024

ONLINE FEBRUARY 21 - 22

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

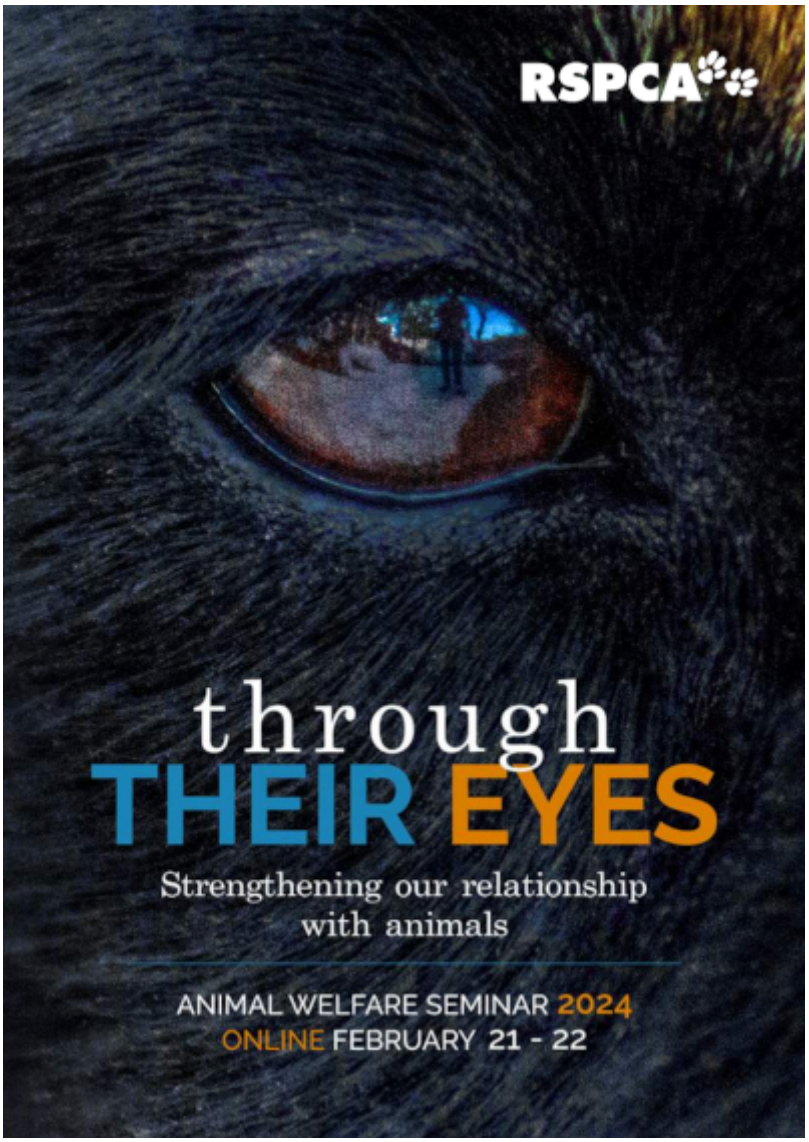
When Things Go Wrong

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

Speaker bios

Click the thumbnail below to download the speaker bios (PDF 749KB):



Presentation abstracts

Abstract - Carter

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.

Dr Gabrielle Carter
Veterinary Specialist in Animal Behaviour
RSPCA Victoria

Abstract - Cobb

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.

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

Abstract - De Rosa

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!

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

Abstract - Diemer

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.

Kristin Diemer

Abstract - Driscoll

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.

Associate Professor Carlie Driscoll
Head of Audiology, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
The University of Queensland

Abstract - Howell

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.

Dr Tiffani J Howell
Senior Research Fellow
School of Psychology and Public Health
La Trobe University

Abstract - Ledger

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 Rebecca Ledger
Animal Behaviour & Welfare Consulting
Vancouver, Canada

Abstract - Littlewood

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 Kat Littlewood
Registered Veterinary Specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics, & Law
Massey University, New Zealand

Abstract - Quain

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.

Anne Quain
Senior Lecturer
Sydney School of Veterinary Science

Abstract - Rodenburg

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.

Prof. Bas Rodenburg
Professor in Animal Welfare, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Presentation and Q&A videos

Presentation and Q&A videos from the RSPCA Animal Welfare Seminar 2024.

Day One

Presentation and Q&A videos from Day One of the RSPCA Animal Welfare Seminar 2024.

Challenge, choice and control provide opportunities for animals to have a good life - Dr Kat Littlewood

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/Aoo1Ps_1dVc?si=5YJxeCyeI7a6jy_S

The life cycle of an assistance animal and touch points impacting welfare - Dr Tiffani Howell

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/mN7TWD3rMqI?si=L3aTFWWI9xZgpbYd

What about the equine in equine-assisted services? - Assoc Prof Carlie Driscoll

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/7l8STt9Q-nw?si=9eNzqwFnShefn9lR

When you're not welcome: the no so 'forever' home - Fiona de Rosa

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/hvnX6oHXKPs?si=S4anMWOwME1HWO2q

Dying well. Is there scope to improve the welfare of companion dogs and cats during euthanasia appointments? - Dr Anne Quain

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/bPpUzUwYGlc?si=7SCXVbhvVpWHuhoA

Day Two

Presentation and Q&A videos from Day Two of the RSPCA Animal Welfare Seminar 2024.

Please note: due to the sensitive nature of materials presented in Dr Rebecca Ledger’s talk, we do not have permission to share the recording.

Whose problem are 'behaviour problems'? - Dr Gabrielle Carter

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/rpoOPqHp8Ks?si=bxxvSklLtrj2-o-w

Shine a light on the shadows: the animal victims of domestic and family violence (DFV) - Assoc Prof Kristin Diemer

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/-52oQIT3blY?si=wViAt3M3RuPaS397

Communication to improve animal welfare outcomes - Dr Mia Cobb

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/7uIxATSRYaw?si=FWypKb3XfaQLcGp7

Can sport, relaxation, tradition and entertainment involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals? - Prof Bas Rodenburg

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/pyyWQtympk8?si=xCcEiKq64eSkjMo1

Presentation slides

Speaker	Slides
Gabrielle Carter	Gabrielle Carter - Whose problem are behaviour problems.pdf
Mia Cobb	Mia Cobb - Communication to improve animal welfare outcomes.pdf
Fiona De Rosa	Fiona De Rosa - When you're not welcome - the not so forever home.pdf
Kristin Diemer	Kristin Diemer - Shine a light on the shadows - the animal victims of domestic and family violence.pdf
Carlie Driscoll	Carlie Driscoll - What about the equine in Equine-Assisted Services.pdf
Tiffani Howell	Tiffani Howell - The life cycle of an assistance animal and touch points impacting welfare.pdf
Rebecca Ledger	**Please note:** due to the sensitive nature of materials presented in Dr Rebecca Ledger's talk, we do not have permission to share the presentation slides.
Kat Littlewood	Kat Littlewood - Challenge, choice, and control provide opportunities for animals to have a good life.pdf
Anne Quain	Anne Quain - Dying well. Is there scope to improve the welfare of companion dogs and cats during euthanasia appointments.pdf
Bas Rodenburg	Bas Rodenburg - Can sport, relaxation, tradition and entertainment involving animals be enjoyable for both humans and animals.pdf

Further information

> For more information, consult the following articles on the RSPCA Knowledgebase:

- What are the Five Domains of Animal Welfare?
- What is animal sentience and why is it important?
- What is good animal welfare?
- What are the potential animal welfare issues associated with assistance animals?
- What is an assistance animal?
- What is reward-based dog training and why does the RSPCA support it?
- What can I do if I am having difficulty finding a pet-friendly rental?
- RSPCA Policy A05 Euthanasia of companion animals
- What are the penalties for animal cruelty offences?
- What is the Australian legislation governing animal welfare?
- How can our animal welfare laws be improved?
- How are RSPCA Inspectors accountable under law?
- Who do I contact to report an animal welfare issue with domesticated horses?
- Who do I contact to report an animal welfare issue with farm animals?
- RSPCA Policy GP5 Human and animal welfare
- How do I communicate with my dog?
- What does my cat’s body language mean?
- Should I hug my dog or cat?
- Is there a link between domestic violence and animal abuse?
- What is the RSPCA’s view on petting zoos and other types of animal encounters?
- What is the RSPCA’s view on performing animals?
- What are the animal welfare issues with Thoroughbred horse racing?
- What is the RSPCA’s view on whips in Thoroughbred racing?
- What are the animal welfare issues with greyhound racing?
- What is the RSPCA’s view on pigeon racing?
- What are the animal welfare issues with rodeos?
- What are the welfare risks of animal tourist attractions and selfies with animals?
- What are the animal welfare issues with chick hatching in schools?

- RSPCA Policy GP1 Good animal welfare
- What does my dog's body language mean?
- What are the key things I should understand about horse behaviour?
- How do I communicate with my dog?
- What are the welfare concerns associated with the use of bits and tie-downs in riding horses?
- What is a restrictive noseband and how does it harm horses?
- Should I stable my horse?
- RSPCA Knowledgebase: Humane Control Methods

Further reading

- Howell T et al. Defining Terms Used for Animals Working in Support Roles for People with Support Needs. Animals 2022, 12(15), 1975.
- Stonebridge M, Evans D, Kotzmann J. Sentience Matters: Analysing the Regulation of Calf-Roping in Australian Rodeos. Animals 2022, 12(9), 1071.
- Dixon S, Evans D, Vindevoghel T, Ward M, Quain A. Behaviours Expressed by Rodeo Calves during Different Phases of Roping. Animals 2023, 13(3), 343.
- Rizzuto S, Evans D, Wilson B, McGreevy P. Exploring the Use of a Qualitative Behavioural Assessment Approach to Assess Emotional State of Calves in Rodeos. Animals 2020, 10(1), 113.
- Ledger R, Mellor D. Forensic Use of the Five Domains Model for Assessing Suffering in Cases of Animal Cruelty. Animals 2018, 8(7), 101.
- Paterson R, Boller E, Kim Y, Hammond K, Diemer K. What can veterinary professionals do? Measuring the effect of one domestic violence training pilot program on veterinary professionals' capacity to recognize, respond, and refer human victims of domestic violence. Front. Vet. Sci. 2024, 11.
- RSPCA Research Report - The Welfare of Dolphins in Captivity (PDF)
- RSPCA Information Paper - The Use of Whips in Thoroughbred Racing (PDF)

Links to other resources

- La Trobe University: Animal Assisted Therapy for Healthcare Professionals (Course)
- About the new Aged Care Act - Australian Government
- Sophie's Legacy
- Beyond Blue

- Lifeline

Science Update

- More information about the RSPCA Australia Science Update newsletter
- Sign up for the RSPCA Australia Science Update, eNews, and more