

YEAR IN REVIEW 2008



A helping hand for marine mammals

PhD-student Kristen Walker has always been interested in the well-being of wild animals, but it was her love of marine mammals in particular that brought her to UBC's Animal Welfare Program and eventually led her to study Steller sea lions.

An endangered species in the US and Canada, Steller sea lions are the focus of conservation research that often involves the capture and marking of individual animals. However, no published research has specifically assessed the pain and distress associated with marking marine mammals, and little is known about the longer-term effects of these procedures on the animals' health, growth, reproduction and survival.

"If we are working to protect populations of endangered species, I believe we should also be addressing animal welfare concerns at the individual level," Kristen said. "The impacts of our research can greatly affect the quality of an animal's life."

By coordinating her studies with conservation researchers, Kristen will use behavioural and non-invasive physiological measures to learn more about the long-term impact of common marking methods, especially branding and the surgical implantation of tracking devices. The findings will then be used to create humane handling recommendations for captive and field research. Kristen also plans to develop a protocol to assess pain and wound healing that will help to identify and reduce marking effects during field research.

Kristen is doing her research at the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward, Alaska which uses research, animal rehabilitation and education to help conserve coastal marine life. The work is being co-supervised by Prof. Jo-Ann Mellish, an Alaska-based expert on Steller sea lions.



Seeking consensus on farm animal welfare

As farmers and activists in various US states battle over banning stalls for sows and cages for hens, the welfare of farm animals has become a topic for conflict and passionate debate.

But beyond the heated words, are there not deep values shared by Canadian producers and consumers of animal products? And couldn't these form the basis of practices that would be supported by both groups?

The short answer is: we don't know because we have never asked. But that is about to change.

Dr. Cathy Schuppli and PhD-student Jeff Spooner have spent the past year criss-crossing the country interviewing willing ranchers, farmers, and the public to find the core values that all groups share.

The study is using confidential 90-minute interviews rather than quantitative surveys. Spooner explained that this method brings out "the personal narratives" that provide real insight into the values and beliefs of participants. "Ultimately," he noted, "it should lay the groundwork for practices and policies that will be broadly supported by different stakeholders."

With the study of cattle ranchers nearing completion, Schuppli commented on the warmth and openness that they encountered. "The ranching community has been extremely helpful and welcoming," she commented. "We hope we will now be able to convey their insights to a broader audience."

Farmers, urban or rural residents willing to participate in the study should contact Dr. Cathy Schuppli at 604-827-5527 or schuppli@interchange.ubc.ca.

We are grateful to our donors for their generosity over the past year, including:

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Dr. Dan Weary
Dr. Susan Mackey-Jamieson
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Visiting scientist works to improve dairy cow health

Every year the UBC Animal Welfare Program hosts several visiting scientists from a wide range of countries.

Núria Chapinal, for example. Núria joined the Program as a Postdoctoral fellow in November 2006 after completing her Masters and a PhD focusing on the welfare of pregnant sows at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain.

Interested in doing some of her doctoral research overseas, Núria originally came to UBC in the summer of 2004, and has now returned to work for two years at the UBC Dairy Research and Education Centre in Agassiz.

"UBC's Animal Welfare Program is unique and I wanted to take advantage of its comprehensive approach to animal welfare issues. Being offered the opportunity to work with such a highly regarded scientific team was a big privilege," she said.

With her current research focused on the detection and prevention of lameness in dairy cattle, Núria hopes to find feasible and cost effective methods for identifying the condition. One of her projects is to validate an automated method to detect cows that are distributing their weight unevenly on their four legs. If effective, this method could drastically improve early detection of lameness.

"Lameness is a serious welfare concern and a common problem for cows," she said. "Early detection would allow producers to treat cattle before hoof and leg problems become serious".

Workshop explores links between wildlife conservation and animal welfare

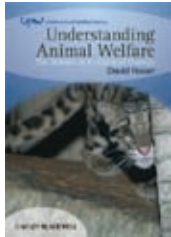
In November, the Animal Welfare Program hosted a unique workshop that attracted top wildlife conservation and animal welfare researchers from around the world. Funded by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies and co-sponsored by the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada, the workshop brought together a network of scientists to discuss practical ways to combine conservation and animal welfare. The ideas and personal contacts generated by the workshop network will allow students and scientists to pursue both conservation and animal welfare concerns simultaneously. The discussions resulted in a preliminary set of Guiding Principles for activities affecting wild animal welfare and conservation. For more information, please visit www.interactions.pwias.ubc.ca



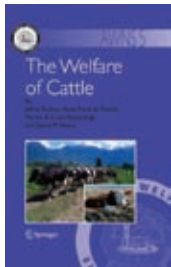
Books

This year saw two new books by Program faculty members.

David Fraser's *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in its Cultural Context* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) provides a readable introduction to animal welfare science and its applications. It was written for students, veterinarians, animal care professionals, and others whose work involves animal welfare.



The Welfare of Cattle (Springer publishing, 2008), by Program faculty and adjunct faculty members Jeff Rushen, Anne Marie de Passillé, Dan Weary and Marina von Keyserlingk, is the definitive scientific review of animal welfare research on this important species. Intended for researchers, veterinary and animal science students and producers, the book provides a thorough and critical review of the most up-to-date research in the area.



Stratton Lecture: Improving the Lives of Animals

- Five Animal Welfare Program graduates were welcomed back as guest speakers at the Peter Stratton Memorial Lecture in May as part of the Program's 10th anniversary celebrations.
- Cassandra Tucker, Carol Morgan, Sara Dubois, Julie Huzzey and Leanne McCannachie each discussed their own approaches to improving the lives of animals through academia, veterinary medicine, the humane movement, the dairy industry and philanthropy. The talks attracted an audience of 150 and provided a fascinating overview of the diversity of work being done by alumni of the Program.

Awards

Prof. Marina von Keyserlingk was awarded UBC's prestigious Killam Teaching Prize for 2007/08. The award is given annually to faculty members nominated by students, colleagues, and alumni in recognition of excellence in teaching.

Prof. David Fraser was awarded one of the nine Distinguished Faculty Awards given by the UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems to celebrate its 90-year history. The award recognizes "outstanding service to the Faculty, UBC and the community".

We need your help!

Donations are urgently needed to help sustain the award-winning UBC Animal Welfare Program. Through the generosity of our donors our goal is to raise sufficient funds to support the Animal Welfare Program into perpetuity. We continue to depend on individual donations to reach this goal and to maintain our work for animals. To learn more about the Program's needs, and how you can help, please contact the Development Office at 604 822 8910 or lfs.development@landfood.ubc.ca.

Donations can be sent to the UBC Animal Welfare Program Fund, c/o Director of Development, Suite 248 – 2357 Main Mall, Vancouver BC, Canada V6T 1Z4.

Please visit our website for more information <http://www.landfood.ubc.ca/animalwelfare>