2024 Animal-Assisted Services Conference and Expo (Hybrid event)

Event Schedule

Thu, Feb 15, 2024

7:00 AM

Video Replay - 2021 Opening followed by "More Than Puppy Love -Conceptualizing Human Animal Interactions"

② 7:00 AM - 7:10 AM, Feb 15

Video Replay

Animal-Assisted Services

Disability

Replay Canine-Assisted Psychology Equine-Assisted Psychology

The field of human -animal interactions (HAI) and more specifically animal assisted services (AAS) has greatly evolved over the past half century. Our association with animal companions and health has a long history. Specifically, the field of AAS is becoming a more recognized form of complementary therapy. Both areas of investigation and practice have evolved from mainly misunderstood/sensationalized relationships between humans and animals and have emerged as more legitimate fields of study and service. What was once first thought of as somewhat novel and unusual is now generating more enthusiasm not only by the general public but also by the growing numbers of interdisciplinary scientists and practitioners interested in studying and applying the inherent value of human animal interactions.

The field of animal assisted services is quickly approaching a paradigm shift, adjusting its image to incorporate more evidence-based research and aligning its purpose for the new future. Within this presentation, I will address the contemporary critical issues that confront the field today. The presentation will include a brief overview of the major milestones that the field has undergone. Attention will be given to highlighting several critical issues including the state of research in the field, suggestions for fostering best clinical practices and explaining why and how they work as well as guidelines for animal welfare. The presentation will conclude with my perceptions for the field's future trajectory, which will include the need for a shift in public policy and acceptance.

📢 Speaker



Dr Aubrey Fine Professor Emeritus California State Polytechnic University

7:15 AM

Video Replay - ATL Code of Conduct and Ethics

2 7:15 AM - 7:30 AM, Feb 15

♥ Video Replay

Animal-Assisted Services Replay Standards and Ethics

As a result of consulting with key stakeholders there was an overwhelming need for standards to be developed for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector. Through an extensive review and consultation process led by Carlie Driscoll, ATL has developed a Code of Conduct and aims to work together inclusively with service providers to achieve positive change.

Speaker



Carlie Driscoll Associate Professor

University of Queensland

7:30 AM

Video Message from ATL Ambassador Rachael Leahcar

② 7:30 AM - 7:45 AM, Feb 15

♀ Video Replay

Replay

7:45 AM

Video Replay - ATL Ambassador Rachael talks about Jarvis and Ella

② 7:45 AM - 8:00 AM, Feb 15

♥ Video Replay

Assistance Animals Replay

8:00 AM

Rachael Leahcar sings "Use Somebody Live"

② 8:00 AM - 8:05 AM, Feb 15

♥ Video Replay

Replay

9:00 AM

Conference Registration, Networking and Exhibitors

② 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM, Feb 15

Conference Meeting Area

Networki...

10:00 AM

Conference Opening

① 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Welcome

♥ Speaker



Brian Zanker

Chair

Animal Therapies Ltd

10:30 AM

Keynote - Strengthening Our Field: Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice from Multiple Perspectives and Disciplines

① 10:30 AM - 11:25 AM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Mental Health

Standards and Ethics

Animal-Assisted Services

Animal Assisted Services have come a long way, from a place where they were frowned upon to their current popularity. As is often the case, rapid growth often outpaces the foundations of emerging practices, including theory, practice methodologies, ethics, and research that provides evidence of effectiveness and value. AAS are no different, and the widespread nature of interest has led to greater public acceptance, novel program development, but also questionable or outdated practices. AAS is unique in that another area of consideration must not be overlooked: the welfare of the animals involved. Present-day knowledge of animal sentience and well-being has expanded considerably and must be incorporated into AAS. This presentation will cover the gains as well as the challenges that must be met to ensure that the field not only survives, but thrives. This is by necessity a multidisciplinary effort where collaboration, thoughtfulness, and continuous improvement are necessary.

▼ Speaker



Dr Rise VanFleet

Founder

International Institute for Animal-Assisted Play Therapy®

11:30 AM

PAWSS: Pets Assisting Wellbeing for Students and Staff

② 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Mental Health Research Physical Health Animal-Assisted Activities

University students are at risk of experiencing stress, anxiety, homesickness, and depression, while staff often experience high levels of work-related stress. There is evidence that positive interactions with dogs can increase wellbeing and reduce stress. This project investigated the impacts of a puppy visitation program on student and staff wellbeing. Participants (N = 32) attended La Trobe University's DogHub, spending 20 minutes in a session pseudo-randomly selected for their first visit, interacting with either a puppy and handler or the handler alone. A week later, they swapped the condition in a crossover design. We measured heart rate, blood pressure, subjective stress levels, and wellbeing, before and after both sessions. In the first visit, participants who interacted with the puppy experienced a greater reduction in perceived stress, a greater increase in heart rate, and a smaller increase in systolic blood pressure than those who visited the handler alone. Although there were no significant mean differences in the second visit, there were trends suggesting similar effects of the puppy condition. Playing with puppies may be subjectively stress-relieving, but physiologically arousing. This study lends further evidence to the phenomenon of 'dogs on campus', helping improve wellbeing outcomes for the campus community.

▼ Speaker



Tiffani Howell Senior Research Fellow La Trobe University

My Healing Horses Equine Assisted Narrative Inquiry - an emerging field of lived experience

② 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Mental Health Practitioner

Narrative inquiry gives us the opportunity to tell a story, to connect with the inner-most recesses that drives us. In some settings, narrative inquiry can be more relevant to the individual in their ability to navigate their learning and therapeutic journey. Connected to narrative inquiry is how an individual responds and interprets therapeutic experiences with animals, namely horses. Making meaning from biofeedback from equine assisted learning and psychotherapy can occur before, during and after therapy. There seems to be a cross over between interpretation, learning and subjectivity within equine assisted therapies that could help individuals better understand their own engagement and responses to the therapy process. Lived experience by the presenter connects the equine therapy process with narrative inquiry through art, writing and music expression. Hence the term - equine assisted narrative inquiry. This presentation explores how a client can be supported in their equine therapy process with guided narrative inquiry utilising art, writing and music expression connected to their equine encounter. The scope of this emerging study is broad. More research needs to be done to gauge previous studies and currency in this area. The presenter conveys her lived experiences and formal education for her presentation and provides examples of personal artwork and music recordings connected to therapeutic equine encounters. It is hoped that an interest is sparked in this emerging area of research to create a professional conversation for how it may be developed further in Australia.

📢 Speaker



Jemma Elle Michael Masters in Counselling and registered teacher My Healing Horses

12:05 PM

Horse Welfare and Mental State During Equine Assisted Services in Australia: survey of practitioner perspectives and practices

① 12:05 PM - 12:35 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Research Standards and Ethics

Published research to date in EAS has concentrated on the human emotional state (positive and negative) responses during human-horse interactions. Research addressing the mental state of horses and their welfare has had minimal consideration. Previous studies that have included assessment of stress in program horses had limitations regarding sample size of humans and horses; the methods used for physiological responses of horses; and the variability of interpretation of the behavioural and physiological biomarkers of stress in horses. We aim to investigate practitioners' perspective on equine welfare and mental state of the horses used in EAS programs in Australia. And to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on the horse, client and practitioner demographics, work expectations on horses, identify welfare concerns within the industry and what methods are currently in practice to monitor welfare and mental state of program horses. To contribute to research that considers the horses' mental state of mind and improve equine psychological welfare needs as equally as other welfare needs, while they are involved in assisting the humans' mental state and wellbeing. Bringing Science to the Stable to support practitioners' frontline knowledge and needs in their practice. This will ultimately provide improved human-horse intervention outcomes.

Speaker



Amanda Hancock

MPhil Candidate Animal Welfare & Animal-Assisted Services The University of Queensland

Human Rights: An introductory conversation about human rights and the assistance animal community

① 12:05 PM - 12:35 PM, Feb 15

♀ Lax Gate 1-3

Assistance Animals Disability

Everyday across Australia, assistance animal handlers face significant barriers to daily life - refusal of services from transport to shopping, health care access and more. The consequences at the grass roots level can be devastating to those individuals.

But the conversation is much bigger than one dog one human - and bigger even than the whole of our assistance animal community. It's a conversation involving all of the 1 in 5 Australians with disability. When discrimination happens - the barriers to remedy and to a fair and just resolution are sometimes higher and harder than the original discrimination. How do we change this?

This presentation will briefly introduce a human rights conversation – looking at the context of the Disability Royal Commission, and some of its key recommendations. We will contextualise Australia's current human rights law and commitments, identify some of the significant barriers to remedying these human rights breaches for assistance animal handlers.

We will ask - how do we shift and grow our conversations and advocacy as a community of providers, consumers, carers and family to continue to lobby, entreat and engage with government and businesses to remove the barriers - to advance the acceptance, accessibility and understanding of our assistance animal handler community Australia.

Lunch and Networking

① 12:35 PM - 1:20 PM, Feb 15

Networki...

Lisa Robinson

Achies Director best (robotic) friend? Examining the value of robotic dogs in a counselling program for child sexual abuse

② 1:25 PM - 1:55 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Animal-Assisted Counselling Paediatric Research Trauma Mental Health

Research has shown that animal-assisted counselling can facilitate decreased symptomology among trauma survivors, as well as increased engagement in and completion of therapeutic treatment. Bravehearts, a child protection organisation that aims to treat and prevent childhood sexual abuse, is currently implementing and evaluating a therapy dog program within its child-focused counselling service. Alongside the traditional therapy dog program, Bravehearts has introduced a robotic dog component, to examine its utility as a cost-effective and practical alternative for practitioners that are unable to introduce animals into their service. Although studies have indicated that robotic animals may provide a useful alternative to therapy dogs, research has not yet examined the use and effectiveness of robotic animals in counselling for children with trauma. This research involves recruitment of Bravehearts' counselling clients aged 4-12 years to participate in the robotic dog trial, with data collection methodologies including session surveys and clinician interviews examining impact on the delivery and nature of therapy and impacts for child clients. This presentation will provide an overview of the preliminary outcomes of the robotic dog trial and outline methodologies established for a comparative evaluation of the traditional therapy dog program.

12:35 PM

1:25 PM

📢 Speaker



Rebekah Chapman Senior Researcher

Considerations for incorporating canine assisted therapy into occupational therapy practice.

① 1:25 PM - 1:55 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Canine-Assisted Occupational Therapy

Mental Health

Physical Health

Practitioner

Setting up practice

There is an increasing number of Occupational Therapists wanting to incorporate canine assisted therapy into their already existing occupational therapy practice. For canine assisted therapy to maintain its professionalism and integrity, there are key considerations to bear in mind before bringing a therapy dog into the workplace. This presentation will share experiences and provide information to help guide Occupational Therapists and other health professionals who aspire to incorporate canine assisted therapy into their practice but are uncertain of where to begin.

♥ Speaker



Melissa Smith Occupational Therapist WHR Allied Health

2:00 PM

Animal-assisted therapy in exercise physiology and psychology private practice: what do clinicians have to say?

2:00 PM - 2:30 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Animal-Assisted Exercise Physiologist | Canine-Assisted Psychology

Physical Health

Standards and Ethics

Research

Aims Overarching aim: In this study we propose to explore the value proposition of AAT in exercise physiology and psychology private practice in Australia. Specific aims: In this study we will: Capture the views of Australian exercise physiologists and psychologists in private practice regarding the benefits and drawbacks, risks and challenges, of including animals in their service delivery. Interview Australian exercise physiologists and psychologists currently including AAT in their private practice clinical service delivery to gain an in depth picture of current practices. · Seek structured reports from Australian exercise physiologists and psychologists currently including AAT in their private practice clinical service delivery to capture the costs (financial and otherwise, direct and indirect) of AAT. Justification and significance This study will provide us with a comprehensive overview of AAT as currently practised in Australia by accredited exercise physiologists and registered psychologists. These reports will be used to make recommendations regarding AAT within exercise physiology and psychology, including recommendations for professional oversight or regulation of AAT, and recommendations for animal, practitioner, and client wellbeing. Further, this study will begin the process of critically probing whether therapy animals genuinely enhance clinical service delivery in exercise physiology or psychology, going some way to identifying whether AAT may be considered an evidence-based therapy option within these allied health disciplines.

▼ Speaker



Lainie Cameron

Professor - Clinical Exercise Physiology University of Southern Queensland (School of Health and Medical Sciences)

The SEAK model of Outdoor Play Therapy

② 2:00 PM - 2:30 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Paediatric Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Practitioner Mental Health

Equine assisted therapy (EAT) is gaining much interest and popularity at the moment. To understand this very experiential therapy, many researchers have looked back to the involvement of animals in humans lives over thousands of years to understand this innate bond (part of the Biophilia hypothesis).

They also had to look back at horses living in the wild to understand their true nature. Combining these two fields of study with what is also understood about the importance of mind body connection, helps practitioner understand what they see everyday in their work.

This presentation is a brief explanation of these areas of study and links them to what we currently understand about the positive experiences that clients have being with well-trained practitioners and horses. The SEAK model delves into the intricate nuances focused on a child's experience of EAT.

Many children today have not grown up with animals and some do not even experience being out in nature on a daily basis. Modern society has children inside more, doing less, playing less, and it is harming our kids (known as nature deficit disorder). The SEAK model is not only addressing a child's direct therapeutic needs but can also looks at the benefits life of being outside, playing with animals, and learning skills from sentient beings that they can only communicate non-verbally. These animals can offer acceptance and connection in a way that no therapist could even offer, in a therapy session that is like no other.

▼ Speaker



Kim Wood

Animal Aided Play Therapist Heartwood Health Play Therapy

2:35 PM

Canine-assisted conversation and support group-therapy program for people with aphasia: a pilot study.

② 2:35 PM - 3:05 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Research Physical Health

People with post-stroke aphasia often experience chronic communication impairments, which can disrupt everyday life and significantly affect quality of life. Aphasia therapy has been shown to benefit communication and quality of life outcomes post-stroke, however, response to therapy greatly varies between individuals, highlighting the need to explore novel and adjunct therapy approaches to maximise therapeutic gains. Animalassisted therapy (AAT) has been suggested as a potential adjunct to traditional individual speech therapy sessions, however the potential benefits of AAT for people with aphasia (PWA) are yet to be examined in a conversation and support group-therapy setting. This pilot study examined the feasibility (recruitment retention and adherence to protocol), acceptability (satisfaction of PWA and family members) and potential effectiveness of a canineassisted conversation and support group-therapy program for PWA on measures of communication, mood, and motivation. Four people with aphasia (all males; mean age= 61 y/o) and two family members (both females; mean age= 71 y/o) participated in eight weekly aphasia group therapy sessions, using an A-B-C-C-C-B-A (A= baseline; B= therapy dog handler present; C= therapy dog and handler present) within-subject withdrawal design. Acceptability, feasibility, and effectiveness outcomes are currently being analysed and will be presented and discussed as part of this presentation.

📢 Speaker



Dr Marie McSween Post-Doctoral Research Fellow The University of Queensland

Delivery & Impact of Animal-Assisted Education programs in schools.

② 2:35 PM - 3:05 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Education Paediatric

Standards and Ethics Practitioner

Journey of the concept to deliver a program in a low socio-economic school with concerns for student wellbeing & to engage challenging students in their learning environment. Major considerations presented: Funding Buy-in of invested parties Risk management Program development & connection to the curriculum Succession planning of the program Expansion of the program within the school & to further schools Presentation will lead through all these challenges, show the results of research into the impact of the program & how the program is being expanded to more educational sites.

📢 Speakers



Judy Jenkin Founder Equine Assisted Learning Limestone



Sarai Jenkin **EAL Facilitator** Company

3:10 PM

Afternoon Tea and Networking

② 3:10 PM - 3:40 PM, Feb 15

Networki...

3:45 PM

The guidelines and policies influencing the conduct of Animal-Assisted Activities in Residential Aged-Care Facilities: A systematic integrative review.

② 3:45 PM - 4:15 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Research Animal-Assisted Activities

Many Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) have incorporated animal contact to relieve residents' loneliness and isolation. This paper identifies the policies and guidelines (focused on the Australian context) influencing the provision of Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) in RACF, an under-researched area. After registering the protocol with PROSPERO (registration # CRD42020150440), peer-reviewed and grey literature were searched, including a targeted Google search for Australian Guidelines. Databases included in the peer review search included CINAHL; Embase; Medline; Pubmed; Scopus and Web of Science; Google Scholar; PROSPERO, Proquest Dissertations; Theses Global; Animal Studies Repository; Medicine and Health Science Commons. The nine relevant documents identified were published between 1990 and 2018, and after appraisal, the subsequent analysis included all nine. AAA providers are relied on to keep animals and residents safe because facilities lack relevant core policies. Further action is required for human and animal welfare, identified as an emerging area needing additional policy development and research. There is a need for RACFs to have effective AAA policies. The review spanned 30 years and found AAA policies (including basic hygiene) in RACF inconsistent in content and application. The international situation suggests that further work is needed in Australian RACF to develop and enforce policies for infection control, risk management, and animal welfare.

♥ Speaker



Wendy Newton PhD candidate Central Queensland University

Managing stress related pain through animal-assisted therapy in a Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patient

② 3:45 PM - 4:15 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy | Mental Health | Physical Health

Present on the process of investigating the impacts of the integration of a therapy animal into psychotherapy sessions that focused on managing stress related pain in a Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patient. The presentation will include the ethical importance of the professional qualifications of the practitioner, the selection process of the subject, as well as the ethical considerations of working within the natural behaviours of the species, breed and individual animal when developing the goals and interventions applied. In this study the animal integrated was a 5year old Border Collie dog who is accredited by Companion Animals of WA.

▼ Speaker



Karen Brown

Ripple Effect Counselling, Back to Nature Ecotherapy, ACA, ATL

4:20 PM

Overview of the Priorities for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector

② 4:20 PM - 4:50 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Education | Animal-Assisted Services

Animal-Assisted Learning / Coach

Following consultation at the 2023 ATL Conference, ATL national interest based committees were established

Animal-Assisted Therapy

Animal-Assisted Education

Animal-Assisted Learning

Assistance Animals

Since then, Committee Chairs have been appointed, Terms of Reference developed and meetings held.

This session will involve a series of 5-10 minute presentations by the Chairs of each committee outlining the progress that has been made and the key priorities identified.

▼ Speakers



Amy Hodgkinson

Educational Consultant Therapy Dogs in Education



Claire Dickson

Occupational Therapist Assistance Dogs Australia



Sarah Munn

CEO, Animal & Equine Assisted OT Barefoot Therapists



Cheri Allanby

Managing Director True Trails EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING



Dr Jess Hill

Lecturer in Occupational Therapy The University of Queensland



Lisa Robinson

Director Assistance Animals International (AAI)

4:55 PM

Day One Conference Close

② 4:55 PM - 5:20 PM, Feb 15

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Se...

📢 Speaker



Alex Gerrick

Director - Post Traumatic Stress Animal Therapies Ltd

6:00 PM

*Dinner and Presentation of Courage, Resilience and Determination Awards

② 6:00 PM - 9:45 PM, Feb 15

♀ JFK 1-3

Awards Presentation Networking

Mental Health

6pm Pre-dinner drinks and networking

6.30pm Welcome

7pm Dinner

8pm Tim McCallum performs followed by awards presentations

8.45pm Desert and Networking Continued

Dinner is an opportunity for further networking through out the evening. The night will include entertainment and a series of presentations, including:

- The Courage, Resilience and Determination Awards
- Community Contribution Awards
- Assistance Animal Customer Service Awards
- · Overview of the ATL Mental Health Outreach program.

*Dinner tickets are pre-paid at the time of registration. Dinner tickets are also available to purchase by contacting the organiser

▼ Speakers



Wendy Coombe

Founder Animal Therapies Ltd



Brian Zanker

Animal Therapies Ltd



Alex Gerrick

Director - Post Traumatic Stress Animal Therapies Ltd



Janette Young

Researcher University of South Australia



Carlie Driscoll

Associate Professor University of Queensland

Fri, Feb 16, 2024

7:00 AM

Video Replay - Protecting Animal Welfare in AAS Our Ethical Obligation

② 7:00 AM - 7:30 AM, Feb 16

Video Replay

Standards and Ethics Animal-Assisted Services

♥ Speaker



Dr Aubrey Fine

Professor Emeritus California State Polytechnic University Animal-Assisted Education Replay

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE) is an emerging field that is gaining in popularity because of the recognised beneficial effect animals can have on children's health, well-being, and motivation. School can be stressful for some students, especially those with disabilities and learning difficulties (Comartin, 2018). Involving animals in the education setting can result in a reduction in stress and anxiety for students (Sandt, 2020). The presence of an animal can adjust the classroom dynamics resulting in student engagement and positive learning outcomes (Jalongo, 2005). This presentation will provide an overview of what needs to be considered when taking animal-assisted services into Australian schools.

▼ Speaker



Amy Hodgkinson Educational Consultant Therapy Dogs in Education

7:30 AM

Video Replay - A Chicken Whisperer, A Psychologist and a Chicken Flock

② 7:30 AM - 7:45 AM, Feb 16

Video Replay

Neurodiversity

Animal-Assisted Learning / Coach Replay

Dr Tony Attwood, one of the foremost experts on Autism and ATL Ambassador Summer Farrelly discuss how the Chickens To Love Program was developed.

♥ Speakers



Dr Tony Attwood Clinical Psychologist Attwood and Garnett Events



Summer Farrelly Autistic Perspectives

7:45 AM

Video Replay - Assistance Animals and the Law

② 7:45 AM - 8:00 AM, Feb 16

Video Replay

Assistance Animals Replay

An overview of the legislative framework covering the role of assistance animals and therapy animals within the Australian community at both Commonwealth and State levels. Discuss some of the changes and opportunities that present in our current sector

▼ Speaker



Lisa Robinson

Director

Assistance Animals International (AAI)

Video - Integrating Animal Assisted Therapy Assessment into Specialist NDIS Behaviour Support Functional Assessments and Reviews: Tips for Success in NDIS **Funding Applications**

② 7:45 AM - 8:00 AM, Feb 16

Prerecorded Video

Animal-Assisted Counselling Disability Practitioner Prerecorded Video

Sharing senior specialist experience from case-based work in the NDIS sector, Dr Bowers discusses the collaborative nature of specialist behaviour support functional assessment and behaviour support planning in light of international and national trends in animal assisted therapy provision. Understanding that the bid for funding requires extensive documentation to the NDIA, Dr Bowers explores the key factors that need to be addressed in successful funding applications for people with disabilities and mental health issues who could benefit by a range of canine, equine, or other animal assisted specialist trained dogs and/or via direct forms of therapy.

▼ Speaker



Dr Joseph Bowers

Registered Clinician Behaviour Specialist NDIS Commission Honorary of Australian Counselling Association

8:00 AM

Day Two Conference Registration, Networking and Exhibitors

② 8:00 AM - 8:30 AM, Feb 16

♀ Lax Gate 1-3

Networki...

8:40 AM

Welcome

② 8:40 AM - 9:00 AM, Feb 16

P Lax Gate 1-3

Welcome

▼ Speaker



Brian Zanker

Chair

Animal Therapies Ltd

9:05 AM

Keynote - Advocating for the Well-Being of Animals in Quality AAS: Improving Awareness and Skills

② 9:05 AM - 9:50 AM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Standards and E...

There has been a worldwide explosion of interest in Animal Assisted Services (AAS). Considerable attention has been paid to the benefits to humans, while relatively little has addressed the potential impact on the animals involved. Specific practices vary widely, and websites and promotions too often display photos or videos of stressed animals whose needs must be considered. This keynote highlights the too-frequent lack of awareness about the impact of this work on the animals themselves and how we all can do better. Dr. VanFleet will propose key ways to improve our awareness of our animals, what they are communicating, and the skills we need to develop reciprocal relationships and best practices from the animal point of view. Three factors--Empathy, Empowerment, and Enjoyment--will be considered from the animals' perspectives. recipient of 20 national and international awards, including the PPA's Distinguished Contributions to the Science and Profession of Psychology Award, several awards for her education and training programs such as APT's Play Therapy Professional Education and Training Award, 5 awards (Maxwell Awards and Special Awards from the DWAA) for her writing, and 2 awards for her wildlife photography.

▼ Speaker



Dr Rise VanFleet

Founder

International Institute for Animal-Assisted Play Therapy®

② 9:55 AM - 10:25 AM, Feb 16 **♀** JFK 1-3

Practitioner | Animal-Assisted Learning / Coach

Understanding Equine-Assisted Learning as a unique opportunity to deliver essential life skills.

True Trails combine horsemanship activities with learning to provide capacity building programs which equip children, youth and adults with the skills of the Australian Core Skills Framework. These programs intentionally cater for those with learning difficulties, neurodiversity and specific learning disability (SpLD).

♥ Speaker



Cheri Allanby Managing Director True Trails EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING

2024 Dogs In Schools' - Key Learning's From an Australian Perspective

② 9:55 AM - 10:25 AM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Learning / Coach | Mental Health | Paediatric | Practitioner

♥ Speaker



Roz Rimes

Founder/Canine Assisted Educator & Coach

10:30 AM

Morning Tea

② 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM, Feb 16

11:05 AM

Implementing therapeutic human-animal services across the continuum of actions identified by the Ottawa Charter for individual and public health benefit.

② 11:05 AM - 11:35 AM, Feb 16

♀ JFK 1-3

Setting up practice Standards and Ethics

The Ottawa Charter is the foundational framework for modern health promotion and is used internationally to improve health outcomes for people. The presentation will look at how practitioners interested in considering implementing therapeutic human-animal interventions can make use of the Ottawa Charter to conceive, plan, implement and evaluate these within the context of ethical human-animal engagements.

▼ Speaker



Janette Young Researcher University of South Australia

Trauma informed care and practice in Equine-Assisted Therapy

① 11:05 AM - 11:35 AM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Counselling | Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy | Mental Health | Paediatric | Practitioner

Trauma

This presentation aims to identify and explain how equine-assisted therapy (EAT) can be an important part of the healing journey for children and young people. We describe what happens when a young person who has experienced complex trauma is given the opportunity to get up close with, and build a relationship with a nonjudgemental, non-verbal, affiliative animal, up to ten times their size. Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT) is an interaction between horses and people, provided by registered mental-health professionals with specific training in the field. A central goal of EAT is to strengthen capacities normally established in childhood which may have been significantly disrupted by the experience of abuse and neglect. This is possible because working with horses provides unique biopsychosocial experiences that tap into our social engagement and other neurobiology with positive effects. Synergistic co-regulation between horse, therapist and client encourages the remodeling of arousal pathways and the development of psychosocial skills at all brain levels to build capacity for healthy relationships. The intersubjectivity developed during this experiential, somatically influenced learning can be difficult to replicate in a clinical setting. However, if the inclusion of horses in the therapeutic context provides more than just a buy-in for disconnected young people, then there is an imperative to identify what factors are responsible for generating the significant human-horse relational moments responsible for the therapeutic impact. This is particularly important when designing meaningful research as well as ensuring this form of therapy becomes more accessible, affordable, and accountable.

Speakers



Camilla Mowbray

Counsellor, Trainer and Assessor Equine-Assisted Therapy Australia



Jane Faulkner

Director and psychotherapist EATA

11:40 AM

Equine Assisted Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

② 11:40 AM - 12:10 PM, Feb 16

Q JFK 1-3

Animal-Assisted Mental Health Social Wor

Mental Health

Nature Based Psychology

Practitioner

Trauma

Practice-based insights on the benefits and application of Equine Assisted-EMDR.

This presentation will provide an opportunity to explore the current research supporting the efficacy of interweaving Equine Assisted Therapy through the 8 phases of EMDR as well as sharing practice-based insights when utilising EA-EMDR for the treatment of mental health issues.

EMDR therapy was included as a Focused Psychological Strategy under the Medicare Better Access to Health Care Scheme in May, 2020. Since this time, we have treated increasing numbers of clients using EMDR therapy in the context of Equine Assisted Therapy. In our experience of integrating these two therapeutic frameworks we have observed greater accessibility particularly for neurodivergent clients and those with complex trauma presentations as well as more efficient trauma processing and generally more expedient therapeutic gains.

In this presentation we will provide a definition of EA-EMDR, consider relevant research findings highlighting the potential benefits in this model of therapy and share elements of EA-EMDR in practice through several case studies.

By sharing several case presentations, we will illustrate some of the creative and innovative ways of making trauma and mental health treatment more accessible and relevant where traditional or standardised treatment protocols may be less applicable. We will demonstrate how equine experiences and activities can be integrated in a variety of ways to enhance treatment whilst maintaining fidelity of the 8 phase and 3-pronged approach of EMDR.

♥ Speakers



Sue Jakes

Psychologist Nature Based Therapies Australia



Nadine Delany

Accredited Mental Health Social Worker Nature Based Therapies Australia

Dogs For First Responders Ltd (D41R) The journey of its conception and the pilot program

② 11:40 AM - 12:10 PM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Activities | Mental Health | Setting up practice

Karen shares her journey with PTS and the new initiative to prevent mental health deterioration, self harm, PTS and suicide of First Responders by using an additional and alternative form of specialised support with Therapy Dogs and experienced First Responders. Dogs For First Responders allows a frank exchange of communication based on an acute understanding of the role, with dogs assisting to break down barriers.

Speaker



Karen Hollings

First Responder Dogs For First Responders

12:15 PM

From Puppy to Public Access(TM) and the Lived Experiences Inbetween

② 12:15 PM - 12:45 PM, Feb 16

Q JFK 1-3

Assistance Animals Disability

Physical Health Mental Health

Both Ends of the Leash, Puppy to Public Access(TM) is a program that is equally focussed on the training for the prospective assistance dog and the wellbeing of their human handler. Facilitating our program has provided us with significant exposure to the change an assistance dog brings in measurable ways.

Healing Refugee trauma with a therapy dog: insights from The Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT)

① 12:15 PM - 12:45 PM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Mental Health Social Work | Practitioner

Trauma

Mental Health

Despite the lack of evidence in the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI) with people from refugee or CALD backgrounds, QPASTT started introducing canine assisted therapy with a trained staff handler in early 2022, after over a year of preparatory work and consultation. QPASTT's experience has shown that is important to have an understanding of cultural and religious views, and specific health needs to inform risk management planning. However it also highlights the importance of keeping a person-centred approach as clients and staff' choice to engage with a therapy dog is a personal process that may not align with the predominant views in their cultural or religious backgrounds. The presentation will discuss how safety, choice and individual needs have been attended to, to adapt canine assisted therapy to QPASTT context, including the challenges faced. The presentation will detail the experience above and benefits achieved for clients and staff, which extend the preexisting practice of drawing on past or current relationships with pets in therapeutic interventions with clients and in staff self-care. The benefits observed include supporting the trauma recovery goals: restoring safety, reducing fear and anxiety, establishing connections and attachment and offering emotional support.

♥ Speaker



Noémie Rigaud Counsellor/Advocate **QPASTT**

12:45 PM

Lunch and Networking

② 12:45 PM - 1:30 PM, Feb 16

Networki...

② 1:35 PM - 2:05 PM, Feb 16

♀ JFK 1-3

Research Physical Health

As reported previously, in acute settings, illnesses such as stroke can have devastating emotional impacts on people, their close companions and others involved in their care. Animal Assisted Intervention has been reported as improving stroke patients' mood, enhancing quality of life. DOgSS (Dogs Offering Support after Stroke) is an action research study at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in South Australia. It aimed to investigate if dog-visiting impacted on stroke patients' expressed mood (Smiley Faces and Likert mood scales) and that of others involved in their care; DOgSS also assessed the dog's wellbeing (biomarker and ethographic data). We report on the results of this dog-visiting action research, which was impacted by COVID19-related and other delays. We also summarise the non-research processes required to bring this project to conclusion and from the lessons learned, discuss future directions for such research.

♥ Speaker



Affiliate Associate Professor Anne Hamilton Bruce

Principal Medical Scientist and Researcher The Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Multi-species animal-assisted therapy in a farm setting

① 1:35 PM - 2:05 PM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Animal-Assisted Occupational Therapy | Setting up practice | Standards and Ethics | Practitioner

Working in a farm setting with a wide variety of animals gives clients a wide range of opportunities to work through their issues and express themselves. I will talk about the setting/animals that I work with, the frameworks and ethics involved, and present some examples of the work.

Speaker



Madeleine Flynn

Occupational Therapy All About Animals - Animal-Assisted Therapy

2:10 PM

Raising a therapy dog from conception to practice.

② 2:10 PM - 2:40 PM, Feb 16

♀ JFK 1-3

Standards and Ethics Animal Behaviour and Training

Increasingly therapy animals are being incorporated into the practice of many education and health professionals. Although several species have been incorporated into animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted education, dogs are the most common due to their adaptability and, sensitivity and responsiveness to human cues. To support the wellbeing of both the humans and dogs involved it is important that therapy dogs are confident across a variety of different environments and are motivated to engage with a range of different people. Not all dogs are suited to work as a therapy dog and although there are no guarantees, guided by the current literature, there are several considerations health and education professionals can make to set themselves up for success. This presentation will follow the journey of therapy dog in training Winnie, from conception to practice, outlining the many considerations that were made by first her breeder and then her handler.

♥ Speakers

Lisa Foster

Facility Manager Lovelocks Australian Cobberdogs



Dr Jess Hill

Lecturer in Occupational Therapy The University of Queensland

Developing Therapeutic Presence, can horses help?

② 2:10 PM - 2:40 PM, Feb 16

♀ Lax Gate 1-3

Equine-Assisted Counselling | Mental Health | Trauma

Developing therapeutic presence, can horses help? This was the central question we hoped to answer in this research study. A mixed method study of questionnaires, workshops, and a focus group, was carried out with six volunteer practicing counsellors to explore this question. The participants found that the pre and postquestionnaires provided thought-provoking awareness of the different facets of therapeutic presence, the main positive differences between pre and post-questionnaires were regarding 'internal flow of experiencing', awareness of felt senses during sessions, and feeling present and attuned to their clients. The workshops included interactive and experiential activities with the horses, which were then integrated utilizing expressive arts activities. The follow-up focus group (two weeks after the workshops) provided a mutually beneficial opportunity to re-establish the group connection after the workshops, which provided a unique bonding experience (Luke and Kiweewa 2010). Counsellors had returned to their regular client sessions and were asked to reflect on any new awareness that had arisen. They identified new felt sense awareness's, greater self- awareness, an experience of 'beginners positioning', and a felt sense of calm, grounded presence. The participants found that the workshops provided a safe place for self-care and compassion, which created a 'clear space' in which new realisations were able to manifest within the relational connections with the horses. It is acknowledged that therapeutic presence is vital for creating a feeling of safety for our clients, which is a precursor to facilitating a therapeutic alliance and effective therapy (Geller 2017). The skills and awareness's of therapeutic presence are difficult to 'teach' as they include individual awareness's only found in relational experiences. The research concludes that specifically designed interactions with horses provide a unique relational experience of working non-verbally with intuitive sentient archetypes who will not judge and have no agenda. This creates an opportunity for counsellor participants to feel and experience the 'beginner mind', a sense of presence, grounded awareness, attunement formed in relationship, an opportunity to become aware of previously unconscious or disconnected parts, and perhaps an experience of working outside of our cultural 'normal' world view reality. These experiences can then offer participants new awareness's and knowing's that can inform their self-awareness and ability to develop therapeutic presence and alliance.

▼ Speaker



Alison Clift Director Horselife Center

2:45 PM

Volunteer-Provided Animal Assisted Services for Young People – a pilot program

② 2:45 PM - 3:15 PM, Feb 16

♀ JFK 1-3

Animal-Assisted Activities Paediatric

In 2022-23, Lort Smith completed a pilot project delivering targeted, volunteer-provided Animal Assisted Services with a range of youth service organisations spanning justice, secure care, education, housing, mental health and rehabilitation settings. This presentation explores the transformative effects of carefully designed and integrated animal-assisted services for young people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Findings include:

- 1. AAI enabled young people to achieve emotional regulation, and to feel present, connected and capable.
- 2. The ability of AAIs to support emotional regulation, connection and engagement was most profound for young people who were particularly shut-down or difficult to engage.
- 3. AAIs can be a powerful tool in amplifying the impact of targeted therapeutic and educational activities for young people - and were found to increase attendance, participation, and positive interpersonal and group
- 4. AAIs can strengthen a range of Protective Factors linked to reducing offending behaviour.
- 5. Consistency of AAI visits, effective relationships, careful selection and matching of AAI teams, and dedicated volunteer support and communication were key enablers to creating these outcomes
- 6. The Lort Smith team will deliver findings from its evaluation to inform future learnings for the delivery of effective AAIs to support young people who experience barriers and are at-risk of adverse outcomes.

▼ Speaker



Megan Nutbean

Community Programs Manager Lort Smith Animal Hospital

Co-Designing session: Horses for Gender Diverse Mental Health

② 2:45 PM - 3:15 PM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Equine-Assisted Psychology Gender Diversity

A collaborative session that invites participants to explore a crucial area of mental health care - gender diversity. Through an in-depth examination of equine-assisted therapy's potential in gender-affirming care, I aim to foster open discussions and critical insights. Participants will actively work to co-design a proposal for a therapeutic framework of intervention that addresses the value of working with horses to support the unique mental health challenges faced by gender diverse individuals.

The presenter will briefly introduce participants to: (i) the most common mental health challenges experienced by gender diverse people in Australia, (ii) the latest standard of care for the mental health of gender diverse people, and (iii) some of the approaches used to work with horses in mental health care. Then, participants will brainstorm and co-design a proposal for an intervention framework that focuses on leveraging the value of working with horses to support the unique mental health needs of gender diverse individuals.

▼ Speaker



Gustavo (Gus) Garcia-Arismendi

Provisional Psychologist | MCP Candidate King Street Psychology Clinic

3:20 PM

Afternoon Tea and Networking

② 3:20 PM - 3:50 PM, Feb 16

Conference Meeting Area

Networki...

3:55 PM

Assistance Dog Ownership for Older Adults in Aged Care: Identifying Difficulties and Planning for a Better Future

② 3:55 PM - 4:25 PM, Feb 16

♀ JFK 1-3

Assistance Animals Research

Background: Assistance dogs are trained to complete key tasks, supporting their owner's everyday living, but their impact extends beyond utility, across physical, mental, and social health, particularly for older adults. Sadly, many aged care facilities do not allow dog ownership, highlighting a key barrier to ownership in later life that must be addressed to allow older adults to benefit from ownership and prevent grief and loss associated with separation for owner and dog. Methods: Using a deliberative democracy methodology, a range of stakeholders (assistance dog owners, and professionals related to aged care, ageing, or animals) were consulted.

Participants explored whether older adults should be able to retain their assistance dog on relocation to a facility, best practice to allow retention, and who should be involved in this process. Results: Results indicated that with initial and ongoing objective measurement fair decisions can help ensure the welfare and wellbeing for owner and dog. Key policy and procedure changes are instrumental in ensuring ongoing support, such as training, care plans, and emergency directives. Conclusions: Ensuring sufficient policies and procedures are in place could lead to an ideal outcome where facilities could be at the forefront of a better future for aged care.

♥ Speaker



Amanda Salmon

PhD Graduate and Provisional Psychologist University of Queensland

Safety, Systems & Structure in Equine Assisted Learning and Equine Assisted **Therapy**

② 3:55 PM - 4:25 PM, Feb 16

Q Lax Gate 1-3

Standards and Ethics Animal-Assisted Services Setting up practice Practitioner

Building a successful and professional Equine Assisted Learning or Equine Assisted Therapy business requires a high level of safety, systems and structure. This includes professional horsemanship, risk assessments, evaluations and outcome reporting. Topics covered will include horsemanship experience and training horses to a safety standard, environment and surroundings of program delivery for safety, safety education around horses for inexperienced clients, session planning, outcome reporting and working with different personalities both horses and humans.

▼ Speaker



Lisa Warren

Licensee

Horses Helping Humans - Master Facilitator and Sunshine Coast Licensee

4:30 PM

Looking to the Future by Learning From the Past, Keynote

② 4:30 PM - 5:00 PM, Feb 16

♀ Lax Gate 1-3

Leadersh...

Keynote

5:00 PM

Conference Close

② 5:00 PM - 5:15 PM, Feb 16

♀ Lax Gate 1-3

Conference C...

▼ Speaker



Alex Gerrick

Director - Post Traumatic Stress Animal Therapies Ltd