

# best friends

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2014

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## FUND!

In order to find cures, we need your help to fund cures. Give generously to OVC Pet Trust. Help the pets we love live longer, healthier lives. OVC Pet Trust is grateful for your support.

## Back to work: Therapy dog on the road to recovery

Daisy is back doing the job she loves — helping special needs children in schools and hospital patients — after recovering from back surgery at the Ontario Veterinary College Health Sciences Centre.

The nine-year old Schnauzer-Poodle cross had surgery in the fall to remove a herniated disc caused by intervertebral disc disease (IVDD). A few months later, she is well on the road to recovery, say owners Liz Raybould and Liz Oreskovic.

“She is regaining her strength and balance and working on her stamina so that she can begin working her regular schedule again,” says Raybould. “She still occasionally sees a physiotherapist, but most of her exercises are done at home.”

Daisy has been a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog in Mississauga for seven years. But last fall, she began showing signs of serious back pain and was having difficulty walking, and the little dog that helps others heal was due for some healing of her own.

Her veterinarian diagnosed a herniated disc and prescribed medication and a strict reduction of exercise to try to ease the problem. When her condition didn't improve, her case was referred to the HSC.

“Herniated discs can progress quickly



Daisy and owner Liz Raybould.

and that was the case with Daisy,” says Dr. Brigitte Brisson, a surgery professor at the Ontario Veterinary College.

Daisy had a herniated disc caused by intervertebral disc disease (IVDD), a condition that causes the shock-absorbing discs between the vertebrae to bulge or burst into

*Continued on pg 2.*



OVC

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## From the Board: Renewing our commitment

OVC Pet Trust has had another amazing year thanks to the generosity of people like you. Spring, the season of renewal, will soon be blooming into summer — an ideal time to renew our commitment to improving the health and welfare of our animal friends.

It seems like only yesterday that we dared to dream of creating Canada's most comprehensive centre for animal cancer treatment and research. The Mona Campbell Centre for Animal Cancer at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) is open, and we're edging closer to our fundraising goal. But there is still work to be done. On behalf of the board of trustees, thank you to all our donors and volunteers for your continued support.

Our dream would still be only that — a dream — if not for your passion and commitment.

But we can't rest on our laurels. This year we begin to shift our focus toward other priorities in companion animal health care.

Though the total amount varies, your donations enable Pet Trust to provide over \$400,000 annually to various health studies at OVC. You'll read about some of those projects in this newsletter. On top of that, we choose an area of special focus where we can

have a major impact. One of those areas will be expanding minimally invasive procedures available at OVC. Equipped with new technologies, veterinarians can now diagnose and treat a number of conditions using techniques that allow pets to return to their healthy lives sooner, with less pain and fewer complications than conventional surgery. With your support, Pet Trust can help ensure that OVC — and the veterinarians who study and train there — remain leaders in this promising area of pet health care.

Learn more about it on our website at [www.pettrust.ca/mip](http://www.pettrust.ca/mip).

**Dr. John Reeve-Newson**, a member of our board of trustees, has received a Caring Canadian Award from the Governor General of Canada. Created in 1995, the award recognizes individuals who volunteer their time to help others and to build a smarter and more caring nation.

John received the award for his dedication to animal welfare, notably through the founding of the Companion Animal Wellness Foundation and his work with Pet Trust. Congratulations John!

— *Dr. Chip Coombs is chair of the Pet Trust board of trustees*

### Choosing the best option

*Continued from pg 1.*

the spinal cord space. The disc pushes on the nerves in the spinal cord, causing pain and nerve damage that can lead to paralysis. IVDD is a common cause of neurologic problems in dogs and is most common in middle-aged Dachshunds, poodles and Shih Tzu's. But it can occur in any breed.

Treatment options can range from rest and medication to acupuncture to surgery. In Daisy's case, surgery to decompress the herniated disc and remove damaged tissue was the best option, says Brisson, who has authored several articles on IVDD and is one of two editors working on a neurosurgery techniques book.

In recent years, donations to OVC Pet Trust have supported several studies by Brisson and others at OVC working to improve understanding and treatment of the disease.

"Many of my research publications and achievements related to IVDD were made possible because of support from Pet Trust," says Brisson.

Prior to surgery, Daisy was usually on the job four days a week – three days in schools and one day at Trillium Health Centre in



*Dr. Brigitte Brisson's extensive work on IVDD has been supported by Pet Trust.*

Mississauga where they spend time in the palliative oncology ward, paediatrics and the psychiatric in-patient program. For now, she's doing fewer, shorter visits until she regains her strength.

"She was so excited the first day we put her Therapy Dog scarf on her and she saw me in my uniform. She knew she was going to work and bounced around until we headed out the door," says Raybould.

Raybould and Oreskovic are thankful for the support of friends and family during Daisy's illness, and they praise the work of

the team at Malton Veterinary Services, as well as the veterinarians and technicians at the OVC. Daisy was brought to OVC on a Thursday and had surgery the next day.

"We saw four levels of doctors when we came in," says Oreskovic. "Every single one came into the exam room with a smile and a handshake saying 'I'm here to look after Daisy.' They made us feel relaxed, as if we were the only patients in the hospital.

"We love that it's a teaching hospital. We love that we get to help students with hands-on training."



## Fundraising efforts help keep cancer on a leash

Many heroes play part in gala and video success story

OVC Pet Trust has had much to celebrate in recent months with the second 'A Walk in the Park' gala and the première of a pet cancer awareness video that has attracted viewers worldwide.

The gala, held Oct. 17 at Daniels Spectrum in Toronto, brought together over 300 pet lovers who raised nearly \$400,000 for the Mona Campbell Centre for Animal Cancer.

"What an amazing success story. We are so fortunate to have such a passionate network of supporters dedicated to our cause – their generosity is truly inspiring," said Dr. Elizabeth Stone, OVC dean. "Congratulations to everyone involved in this fantastic event. We particularly want to thank Emmanuelle Gattuso and Myles Mindham, the co-chairs of the Gala Committee – their creativity and dedication are inspiring to all of us."

The gala was emceed by broadcaster Valerie Pringle and included a cocktail reception as well as a gourmet meal provided by celebrity chef Mark McEwan. Award-winning Canadian jazz artist Holly Cole gave a special performance, and there were also fantastic prizes including designer jewelry and a live auction for spectacular items. *National Post* society columnist Amoryn Engel tweeted that the gala was the "most creative fête" in years.



Gala co-chairs Emmanuelle Gattuso and Myles Mindham (top); emcee Valerie Pringle; OVC's Melissa Parsons-Doherty, Danielle Richardson, Stephanie Nykamp and Brenda Coomber; some of the performers in the "We Could Be Heroes" video. Gala photos courtesy George Pimentel

The evening also featured the première of a video that launched Pet Trust's "Keep Cancer on Leash" campaign. Sponsored by Purina, the video is produced by Red Urban. It features dogs, including several cancer survivors, 'singing' an original song called "We Could Be Heroes" written for Pet Trust. The video has attracted over 282,000 views on YouTube so far. If

you haven't seen it already, check it out at [pettrust.ca](http://pettrust.ca). Viewers are encouraged to buy the song or support the campaign directly by making a donation to Pet Trust. Purina is matching donations up to \$125,000.

The video received extensive media coverage including Global Morning News, Canada AM, newspapers and websites around the world.

# When the body attacks itself

Identifying unique proteins involved in blood disorder

Support from OVC Pet Trust is helping shed light on a disease that can quickly turn a dog from an energetic pet, eager to play, to an extremely sick animal, barely able to walk.

Primary immune-mediated hemolytic anemia (IMHA) triggers a dog's immune system to destroy its own red blood cells, producing severe anemia. Dogs with IMHA experience a drastic deterioration in health that, within days, can leave the animal lethargic and struggling for breath. Although the disease is treatable, it has a mortality rate as high as 70 per cent.

There is no known cure and little research has been done to investigate exactly how the disease causes the dog's body to turn on itself.

That is, until now.

Dr. Darren Wood is one of the first to examine the proteins on the red blood cells involved in causing the immune system to attack the cells of dogs with IMHA.

"If we can start to understand the mechanisms of this devastating disease, then we can develop a more targeted approach to treating it," says Wood, a veterinarian and scientist in the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) Department of Pathobiology who has been studying IMHA in dogs for more than a decade.

In a recent study funded by Pet Trust, Wood's research team compared red blood cells of dogs with IMHA to the red blood cells of dogs with anemia caused by other factors, and the red blood cells of healthy dogs, to determine what was different about the cells in dogs with IMHA.

The study found that the dogs with IMHA have antibodies binding to a unique set of proteins on the red blood cell membrane.



Dr. Darren Wood

"These proteins may be part of the mechanism of the disease," says Wood, who worked on the study in collaboration with Dr. Emeline Tan, a former OVC graduate student.

But what's even more interesting is that some of these proteins seem to be related to apoptosis, also known as programmed cell death.

"The proteins may be indicating there is early cell death so the red blood cells

are dying off before they are supposed to."

At this point, it is unclear whether the unique proteins found on the cell membrane trigger the disease or if they are a consequence of the disease, he says.

The study was novel in that it revealed different findings than those first reported in the 1990s. These recent findings could eventually lead to more specific and effective treatment of dogs with IMHA, said Wood.

The OVC treats up to 30 dogs with IMHA each year. The current treatment is to suppress the animal's immune system. This stops the antibodies from attacking the red blood cells but it also leaves the dog vulnerable to infection since its defenses are down. There is also the potential for reoccurrence so treatment may be life long.

"Understanding how the disease works is one of the first steps towards finding a cure."



# Your gifts at work

*Eight new projects received funding in Fall 2013*

## Estimating homeless cat populations

OVC scientists are hoping to answer some fundamental questions about the rising population of homeless cats, an important issue in communities across Canada where an estimated 60,000 cats were euthanized in 2011. This project aims to answer basic questions such as: What is the size of the homeless cat population? How many cats are expected to be surrendered and rescued by shelters? How does this happen over time? Is it a seasonal phenomenon? Is the problem increasing over past years?

## Predicting cancer treatment outcomes

Certain proteins associated with mast cell tumours (MCT) in dogs may help improve diagnosis and predict the patient's response to therapy. The most common type of skin cancer found in dogs, MCT can differ greatly and it can be difficult to choose the best therapy for an individual dog, or to predict how the cancer will behave. This project will study tissue specimens from 600 MCT cases and analyze the structural and molecular changes through different stages of tumour progression, and a particular protein targeted by the cancer drugs Palladia and Masivet.

## Impact of radiation therapy on bone loss

OVC cancer specialists are hoping to improve treatment of osteosarcoma by examining the effects of radiation therapy used in combination with drugs that help prevent the loss of bone mass. Radiation therapy may be used in lower doses to relieve pain or at higher doses to kill tumour

cells. It is often used in combination with bisphosphonates, drugs which prevent the loss of bone tissue due to diseases such as osteoporosis. This study will examine the effects of radiation therapy on osteosarcoma cells treated with bisphosphonates.

## Improving fracture repairs in cats

The latest technology in bone implants used to treat injuries in humans is being adapted to improve the success of bone repairs in cats. This project will test a new device that has been recently adapted for veterinary use in small dogs and cats.

Developing a more effective way to repair leg fractures in cats with fewer complications will improve pets' quality of life and make surgery more affordable.

## Post-operative pain relief in parrots

OVC researchers are investigating a long-lasting way to deliver pain medication in parrots. Butorphanol is the most effective pain medication available for parrots and pigeons; however, studies have shown each dose is only effective for one to three hours. Repeated handling and injections are very stressful to birds and may exacerbate post-operative pain and discomfort. This project will evaluate the effectiveness and safety of butorphanol delivered in a slow-release gel.

## Comparing the intestinal microbes in shelter animals and pets

Groundbreaking advances in DNA sequencing have revolutionized our under-

standing of the microorganisms in the intestinal tract, and their role in health and disease. This project will attempt to determine whether samples from shelter animals are truly reflective of pet animals or whether studies evaluating health and disease in pet animals must involve typical pets in households.

## Evaluating tools used in microwave ablation therapy

An OVC diagnostic imaging specialist is investigating ways to reduce the cost of microwave ablation therapy, a minimally-invasive alternative to surgery used to treat a variety of cancers in humans. The technique is not commonly used in veterinary medicine, mainly due to equipment costs. This project will assess the lifespan of microwave antennas following repeated use and reprocessing, and lay the groundwork for a clinical trials program.

## Diagnosing a painful neck disorder

Ultrasound is being examined as an alternative to X-rays, CT scans and MRI for the diagnosis of a serious neck disorder. The condition, called atlantoaxial subluxation, affects mainly small breed dogs such as Yorkshire terriers or toy poodles. It occurs when there is instability between the first and second vertebrae in the neck. Ultrasound can be performed in an unsedated or partially sedated patient, and may allow for a safer diagnostic test than radiographs, CT or MRI to obtain a diagnosis.



*Your gifts help us improve health care for all pets. Visit [pettrust.ca](http://pettrust.ca) to learn more.*

# Six Degrees of Separation

## *Smiling Blue Skies from coast to shining coast*

Spring has sprung and that can mean only one thing. Come rain or come shine, come snow or come hail, Calgary hosted its 12th Annual Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer on May 4 at beautiful North Glenmore Park. Despite the snow they surpassed their \$25,000 goal and raised about \$30,000! Calgary always has a special way of kicking off our fundraising adventures each year, and this year's raffle has messaging reaching new heights as people in different provinces vie for the "loot."

After taking a one-year hiatus to tend to her lambs, Bernadette and her team are back, stronger than ever, with a walk planned for May 25 at the Holland Landing Snowmobile Club. New this year is their "Vet Challenge" and what a challenge it is. Bernadette has sent out 58 invitations to veterinary clinics in her area to walk-the-walk, ultimately reaching for the bright brass ring, and the privilege of being the office that raises the most funds for Smiling Blue Skies. Please visit their Facebook community pages!

I am absolutely elated to announce that while Vancouver Island is taking a break this year, Guelph is stepping up to the plate and joining the walk team this year. Their walk will be held on Sept. 6 at York Road Park. At the helm is Amanda Raymond, whose beautiful Flat-Coated Retriever "Charger" was diagnosed with lymphoma when he was only 5-1/2 years old. Charger was treated at the Mona Campbell Centre for Animal Cancer and was in remission for eight months. Surrounded by the people he loved, Charger lost his battle with cancer on Oct. 25, just one month after he and Amanda had participated in Toronto's second annual Smiling Blue Skies Walk to End Canine Cancer. Like so many of us, Amanda's loss has fuelled her passion and created a new mission to help Smiling Blue Skies in their quest to find more and better ways to deal with and understand this terrible disease. To this end, the monies raised at all walks this year will help fund valuable research projects.



Dr. Chip Coombs with his daughter Bronwyn at last year's Smiling Blue Skies walk in Toronto with their golden retrievers Islay and Cider. Photo by Virginia Macdonald Photographer Inc.

## *Smiling Blue Skies walks raised \$82,466 last year*

Producers of Toronto's Walk, Kelly and Lorrie, have lots up their sleeves for their third annual Smiling Blue Skies Walk to End Canine Cancer. Their "Day in the Hood" is just one of the special treats that awaits you. Last year, Pet Trust's very own Dr. Chip Coombs was the top pledge earner.

In 2013, Smiling Blue Skies walks raised \$82,466.00, and we are hoping we can top that in 2014. When you think about it, it is truly amazing. We are a grassroots organization, with no big businesses or sponsors behind any of the events; but rather, a group of like minded people, who, working together, are truly changing the face of cancer, not only for the precious pets in our lives, but people too. Add other events and

creative fundraising ventures, and you have a whopping \$1.4 million and counting.

Don't forget, even if you can't be on site to participate in one of the walks, you can be a virtual participant, and I can tell you from past experience, that the spirit of friendship and caring burns so brightly during these events, that you feel as though you are walking alongside everyone else.

Last year, Mary's Big Sheep jumped on board. Owner Lisa and her Big Sheep boutique are dedicated to making unique custom-made Canadian products for people and pets, from hemp collars and leashes to bandanas, and even, belts for kids. The company donates 10% of the proceeds from the sale of all collars to Smiling Blue Skies. Please visit Lisa's shop on Etsy.com and like her Facebook page.

*The Animal Wellness Natural Cookbook for Dogs* is now available. With over 50 healthy recipes, and five per cent of the proceeds from the sale of every book going to Smiling Blue Skies, this is truly a gift that keeps on giving. The hardcover is chock-full of beautiful pictures, the recipes are easy to follow. Order yours at [www.animalwellnessmagazine.com/cookbook](http://www.animalwellnessmagazine.com/cookbook).

Joanne Cooper is back with her second annual Woof-fit Mini-Triathlon for Dogs and Their People to be held on June 21 at Balmy Beach in Toronto. Let's hope that the day lives up to the beach's name this year! Join a team and run or walk, cycle, blade, or roll, and swim, wade, or paddle to amazing prizes and swag. All fitness levels are welcome!

Agility teams from coast to coast continue to support Smiling Blue Skies, in leaps and bounds, and photographers like Linda Matteson-Reynolds, Ellen Kovar, Virginia Macdonald, and Hilary Stephens, are shining a light in their own special way.

*"Long live Blue Skies, where hope is a kite and dreams really do come true, thanks to special people like you."*

— Suzi Beber

## In the community: Dog Jog shares message of hope

OVC Pet Trust supporters come from all walks of life, including future veterinarians.

This spring, members of the Omega Tau Sigma (OTS) Professional Veterinary Fraternity held their annual OTS Dog Jog. Participants in this fun, non-competitive event run or walk with their furry friends along a 5 km or 2 km route through the University of Guelph Arboretum.

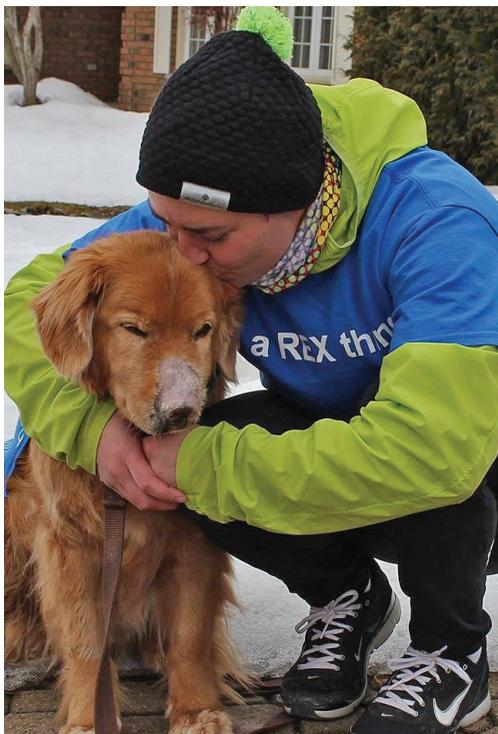
This year about 70 people and their pets braved cold, blustery conditions and raised over \$9,000 in support of Pet Trust and the Mona Campbell Centre for Animal Cancer at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC). Over \$25,000 has been raised since the inaugural OTS Dog Jog four years ago.

One of the top fundraisers this year was Emily McIntyre of London, Ont. She was inspired to run by Rex, her Nova Scotia duck tolling retriever who recently completed his final round of radiation treatment following surgery for oral cancer.

“He’s doing remarkably well,” says McIntyre, who documented Rex’s journey on her “Love for Rex” Facebook page. “He gets a little stronger every day, and just this week we enjoyed our first big outing at the beach since his surgery.”

Rex was diagnosed in the fall with an invasive and aggressive squamous cell carcinoma, and if left untreated he likely had only a few months to live. McIntyre’s vet, Dr. Christina Parker of Masonville Animal Hospital, referred the case to OVC.

In December, a surgical team led by Dr. Michelle Oblak removed Rex’s tumour as well as some bone and teeth on his upper left palate, and lymph tissue in his neck. Radiation therapy began in February in the cancer centre’s state-of-the-art linear accelerator. Treatment was successful and there’s a good chance Rex’s cancer will be in remission for at least a year, possibly two to three, says McIntyre.



*“I am so grateful for the opportunity to have hope for Rex’s future.”*  
— Emily McIntyre

While Rex wasn’t able to do the Dog Jog, he was there to cheer for McIntyre as she completed the course with Rex’s brother Beckett. Having the Dog Jog to look forward to helped McIntyre focus on something positive.

“It really got us through the toughest days,” she says. “I was humbled and overwhelmed by the response of my family and friends. They were so supportive.”

“I am so grateful for the opportunity to have hope for Rex’s future and without the care, compassion and resources of the OVC, their staff and facilities, Rex would not likely have even survived until March to do the run.”

## Coming Events

### May 25

#### Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer

Holland Landing, Bradford, Ont.  
Contact: Bernadette Beirnes at pawstoclaws@gmail.com or 289-231-9205

### June 21

#### Woof-fit Mini Triathlon

Balmy Beach, Toronto, Ont.  
Contact: joanne@woof-fit.com or call 416-726-2836

### July 17

#### Hamilton Academy of Veterinary Medicine Golf Tournament

Copetown, Ont.  
Contact Dr. Angela Whelan at hamiltonacademyvetmed@gmail.com

### Sept. 6

#### Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer

Guelph, Ont.  
Contact Amanda Raymond at 519-827-0642 or endcaninecancerguelph@outlook.com

### Sept. 27

#### Smiling Blue Skies Walk for Canine Cancer

Kew Gardens, Toronto, Ont.  
Contact endcaninecancer@gmail.com

### Oct. 25

#### Pet Trust Forum

Ontario Veterinary College  
Guelph, Ont.  
Details coming soon!

## Clinic hosts Pet Trust Month: Raising awareness and funds

### *Wellington Animal Hospital giving back and saving lives*

A longtime Pet Trust supporter is finding new ways to help pets live longer, healthier lives.

A Pet Trust supporter for over 25 years, the Wellington Animal Hospital in Woodstock is dedicated to serving clients and their pets as well as caring for sick and injured shelter animals in the area.

"When we make a donation to Pet Trust, we're not only helping our clients but other pets and their families by supporting research that will save lives and improve the quality of life for pets everywhere," says Dr. Donna Flanagan, co-owner of the practice along with Dr. Elizabeth Dennis.

"Making a donation in memory of a pet is a simple, meaningful way for us to show our clients that we appreciate them and acknowledge their loss. It's also a nice way to give back to our alma mater by supporting learning and veterinary health-care research at OVC."

To help build awareness among clients and their own staff, Flanagan and Dennis hosted Pet Trust Month at the clinic in April.

"We've been supporters for years but we've found that many of our clients and even our team members don't really know what Pet Trust is all about," says Tanya Butson-Steele, an RVT and Wellington Animal Hospital's practice manager.

The team met with Chris Beckett, Pet Trust's veterinary relationship manager, and developed the idea of hosting a Pet Trust Month at the clinic as a pilot project that could be duplicated at other



Dr. Donna Flanagan and the Wellington Animal Hospital are the first to host Pet Trust Month.

clinics throughout the year. Beckett provided the display and promotional materials. Clients are encouraged to ask clinic staff about Pet Trust and given an opportunity to make a donation.

"Many people only learn about Pet Trust when they're notified of a memorial gift after their pet has died," says Beckett. "Having participating clinics host Pet Trust Month is one way to raise awareness and have an upbeat, positive discussion that isn't associated with the loss of a pet."

To learn how to host a Pet Trust Month in your clinic, contact Beckett at (519) 824-4120, Ext. 52941 or at [cbeckett@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cbeckett@uoguelph.ca).

### OVC Pet Trust

Best Friends of Pet Trust is published by the Ontario Veterinary College for interests of Pet Trust donors and friends. Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the OVC Pet Trust Board of trustees. Reproduction of material from this newsletter is welcomed.

#### OVC Pet Trust

[www.pettrust.ca](http://www.pettrust.ca)  
Email: [ovcpet@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ovcpet@uoguelph.ca)

#### Pet Trust Board of Trustees

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#### Ask about bequests and planned giving

One of the greatest feelings is knowing that your gift will live on and keep on giving to help and benefit the health and well being of our beloved companion animals.

A planned gift is a charitable donation that can be arranged during your lifetime to benefit the health and well being of pets in the future.

If you would like to find out more about planned giving and its many forms, please get in touch with us.

**Kim Robinson, Managing Director,**  
Pet Trust 519-824-4120 Ext:54454

### Sign up to receive Best Friends electronically



We hope you enjoy reading about how your gifts benefit the health and well being of our beloved companion animals.

We're also mindful of the environmental and financial costs of printing and mailing

our newsletter twice each year.

Please let us know if you would prefer to receive your copy of *Best Friends* electronically.

Just send us an email at [ovcpet@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ovcpet@uoguelph.ca) and we'll send you an e-version of the newsletter.

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CHANGING LIVES  
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