

# FUND!

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



The Ontario Veterinary College will be collaborating in clinical trials with leading veterinary cancer centres across North America.

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## University joins cancer research consortium

### Our reputation is growing.

The University of Guelph is the first Canadian institution to join the U.S. National Cancer Institute's Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium (COTC).

The move positions the U of G Institute for Comparative Cancer Investigation (ICCI) and the OVC Animal Cancer Centre with 19 other academic oncology centres at the leading edge of cancer research in North America. It also means that your gifts to the OVC Pet Trust Fund's campaign in support of the cancer centre are more important than ever.

"This is an exciting step for us," said

Dr. Paul Woods, a cancer specialist in the OVC Animal Cancer Centre and co-director of the ICCI. "We look forward to working with the consortium to answer important questions that will help develop new cancer-fighting drugs for use in veterinary and human medicine."

Members of the COTC will engage in clinical trials involving canine cancer patients at veterinary hospitals in the U.S. and Canada. The trials will be coordinated by the National Cancer Institute's Comparative Oncology Program, part of the National Institutes of Health in Washington, D.C.

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## Committed to helping pets live longer, healthier lives

### From the Board of Trustees: Heather Lowe

Over the past 24 years, the OVC Pet Trust Fund has achieved many remarkable milestones in the name of improving health care for companion animals. None would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the volunteers who have served on the board of trustees over the years.

“It’s a pleasure to work with other people who are so passionate about their pets,” said Heather Lowe, a board member for five years and chair of the development committee.

“I got involved with Pet Trust after experiencing first-hand the outstanding medical care that clinicians, staff and students at the Ontario Veterinary College provided for my dogs and horses, and through working closely with veterinary professionals in my business career,” said Lowe, veterinary division director with Medi-Cal / Royal Canin Veterinary Diet.

The mission of the OVC Pet Trust Fund complements Lowe’s personal and professional desire to promote pet health and advance knowledge in companion animal health care. The goal: to help pets live



“It’s a pleasure to work with other people who are so passionate about their pets,” says board of trustees member Heather Lowe, seen with her youngest dog Maci.

longer and enjoy a better quality of life.

“It’s exciting to have a role in helping the University of Guelph and OVC ‘change lives and improve life’ through Pet Trust’s support for clinical research that improves health care for our pets and benefits their people, too.”

The development committee helps raise funds through a variety of activities, from awareness campaigns such as advertising in the *Globe and Mail*, to participation in community events such as the Smiling Blue Skies walk-a-thons and the Ontario Regional Agility Championships. The committee also plays a key role in supporting campaigns for special projects, such as the OVC Animal Cancer Centre, as well as planning outreach activities and networking with the veterinary community and the general public.

A major focus is on showcasing for donors how their support is advancing pet health care at annual events such as the Practitioner’s Forum and the Pet Trust Forum.

“I’m proud to volunteer for such a well respected institution that is making a difference in pets’ lives”

Cover Story Continued

### Comparative approach yields hope

The rationale is simple: pet dogs naturally develop tumours that are similar to those in humans. Therefore they may provide researchers with important information that they couldn’t get by studying cancer in a laboratory setting.

“It’s a big leap from laboratory mice to humans, so perhaps it’s not surprising that it has been difficult to translate success in the lab into effective treatments for cancer,” said ICCI co-director Dr. Brenda Coomber, a cancer biologist in U of G’s

Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Coomber said the traditional approach — studying cancer in the lab, testing a new drug on cells in a petri dish, then maybe on mice and perhaps one day on people — simplifies a very complex disease. In real life, cancer takes years to develop and involves the interaction of many genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors.

“The comparative approach puts the dog in the middle of the investigation pathway, between the lab and humans. The hope is that this will expand our understanding of cancer and lead to breakthroughs in treatment and diagnosis that

will benefit pets and people.”

Comparative oncology has been valuable in the study and treatment of bone cancer, lymphoma, melanoma and other types of cancer. But progress has been hampered by the lack of infrastructure to enable basic scientists, clinicians, and drug companies working in human and veterinary medicine to share information.

The COTC changes that.

“The consortium will allow us to work collaboratively on novel cancer therapies and techniques with the leading veterinary oncology centres in North America,” said Woods.



Radiation therapist Kim Stewart, foreground, and technician Andrea Kacer prepare a patient for treatment. Stewart joined the OVC team 12 years ago after a 15-year career providing cancer care for human patients.

## Upgrades to radiation unit will improve patient outcomes

**Cancer patients receiving radiation treatment** at the Ontario Veterinary College will benefit from upgrades to equipment supported by the OVC Pet Trust Fund.

New computer software, and a partnership with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatoon, allows specialists at the OVC to offer “three-dimensional” radiation treatment planning. The result: more precise treatment of tumours with fewer side effects for patients, and more peace of mind for pet owners.

“The increased precision will allow us to target tumours with higher doses of radiation, without harming normal tissues. It will also allow us to offer more curative-intent procedures, whereas currently our focus in many cases is palliative,” said Dr. Paul Woods.

“Working with our colleagues at WCVN provides us with the leading-edge radiation treatment planning we need to continue offering comprehensive cancer care to our clients until the redevelopment

of the OVC Animal Cancer Centre is completed and we have an operational linear accelerator.”

The OVC has been operating the only veterinary hospital in Ontario equipped with a radiation unit since 1989. The current machine came from a human hospital in 2001 with support from the OVC Pet Trust Fund. Dogs and cats travel to Guelph from across Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes, New York, and even Korea, for radiation therapy to treat common cancers such as mast cell tumours, lymphosarcoma, and osteosarcoma.

Radiation is often prescribed after surgery to ensure that a tumour does not come back to the same site. It is also used for pain management and palliative care — for example, in large-breed dogs with bone cancer where surgery might not be an option. Patients are anesthetized and receive a number of treatments over the course of three to four weeks. Many are housed at the OVC throughout the treatment period.

With three-dimensional planning,

OVC’s radiology team, led by Dr. Stephanie Nykamp, conducts a CT-scan of the patient to accurately measure and assess the tumour. Results are evaluated and sent electronically to WCVN in Saskatoon, where a radiation oncologist develops the treatment plan, which is then implemented by radiation therapists at OVC.

“Treating cancer is a team effort — every discipline has a role to play and we need all the tools available to provide the highest standard of care for our patients,” said OVC surgical oncologist Dr. Sarah Boston. “With these improvements, we’ll be able to provide clients with more advanced treatment options with fewer side effects for their pets.”

## Linear accelerator next big step in cancer centre campaign

The OVC Pet Trust Fund board of trustees recently committed to including raising funds for a linear accelerator as a key component of the OVC Animal Cancer Centre.

A linear accelerator will provide state-of-the-art radiation treatment, and is expected to cost \$3 million to \$5 million including the “bunker” to house the machine, control room, treatment planning and holding rooms.

Construction of the cancer centre will begin this fall, with the redevelopment of existing space adjacent to the OVC Small Animal Clinic.



## Innovative treatment offers hope for bone cancer patients

An **OVC cancer surgeon** is adapting a technique from human medicine to deliver targeted chemotherapy to canine bone cancer patients, providing clients with another option to preserve a pet's limb that might otherwise be amputated.

Dr. Sarah Boston and radiology specialist Dr. Stephanie Nykamp recently treated a dog with bone cancer using transcatheter arterial chemoembolization (TACE). TACE is a minimally-invasive procedure used extensively in human medicine for palliative treatment of liver cancer.

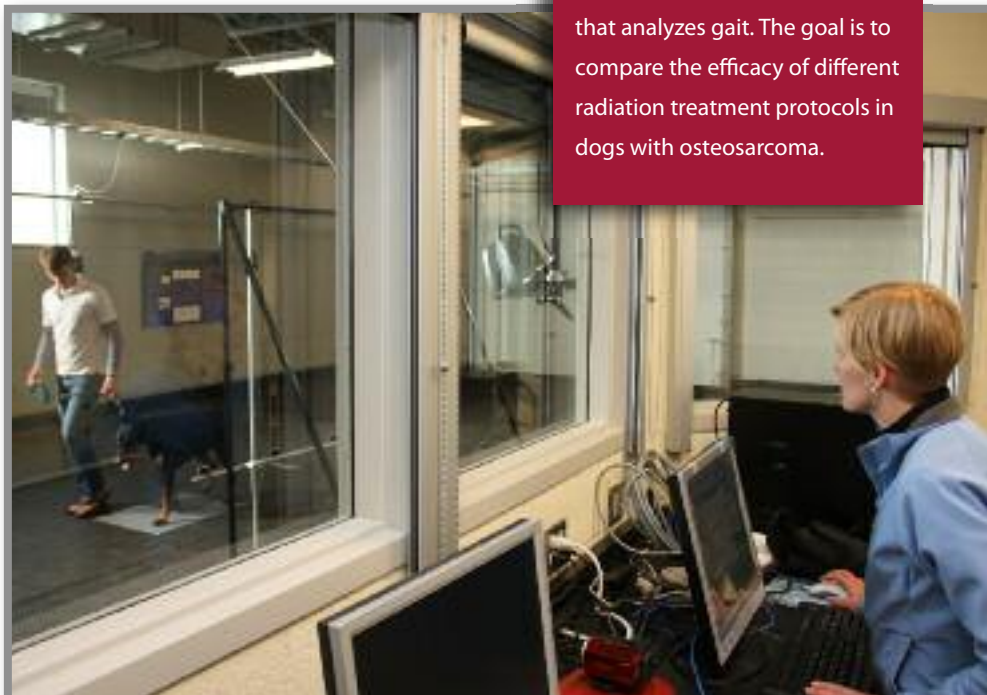
It involves mapping the tumour's blood supply using real-time X-ray fluoroscopy and guiding a catheter through an artery to deliver the chemotherapy agent directly to the tumour site. The blood vessels feeding the tumour are then blocked with tiny embolic beads. It was the first time the procedure has been reported in this type of case, Boston said.

"In conventional chemotherapy, the drug is delivered through the bloodstream to every cell in the body," said Boston. "Using TACE, the patient still gets a systemic dose, but a much higher concentration of the chemotherapy drug is delivered directly to the tumour first."

Boston received support from the OVC Pet Trust Fund to study the procedure. Additional funds from the OVC's Arthur Willis Visiting Professorship in Canine Oncology made it possible for her to travel to New York for hands-on training.

Her first patient was Carney, a 180-pound St. Bernard. The goal is to perfect the procedure and apply it to treating other types of inoperable cancers in cats and dogs such as nasal and prostate tumours.

"My hope is that this will provide another tool to help slow the progression of disease, and in cases like Carney's, allow her to keep her leg and have a good quality of life so that she and her family can enjoy the time she has left."



Dr. Sarah Boston observes from the control room as student research assistant Steve Patten walks a dog across a forceplate that analyzes gait. The goal is to compare the efficacy of different radiation treatment protocols in dogs with osteosarcoma.

## Generosity of donors advances veterinary health care for all companion animals

**It's been another incredible year** for the OVC Pet Trust Fund, and there is much to look forward to in the months ahead.

Thanks to you, we raised more than \$2.8 million in 2009-2010.

In the past year, we've funded 27 research studies that will lead to advances in veterinary health care that will benefit animals all over the world.

Projects include:

- evaluating the effects of commonly used sedatives and pain relievers to help dogs and cats recover more quickly from anesthesia
- validation of a simple blood test to screen for hemangiosarcoma
- investigating the toxicity of topical antibiotics, antiseptic solutions and essential oils used as an alternative to oral antibiotics in the treatment skin infections

- evaluation of a corneal transplant technique that replaces only the diseased inner layer rather than the full thickness of the cornea in dogs

- assessing a new non-invasive test to identify early signs of heart disease and accurately predict its severity

It's a remarkable success story and an ongoing testament to the life-affirming bond between people and their beloved animal companions.

It's been especially gratifying to witness the ongoing support for the OVC Animal Cancer Centre. In just three years, people like you have donated more than \$8 million.

Thank you for your support!

**Dr. Mary DeCaire**  
Chair, OVC Pet Trust Fund Board of Trustees

## 'Detective work' results in screening test for deadly virus

A screening test is now available in Canada for the virus linked to proventricular dilatation disease (PDD), a devastating wasting disease that affects members of the parrot family including macaws, African greys and cockatoos.

The test is available exclusively in Canada at the University of Guelph's Animal Health Laboratory. The research that led to development of the test was funded in part by the OVC Pet Trust Fund.

"The biggest challenge was that for years there was no agent we could point to as the cause of the disease," said Dr. Michael Taylor, head of the avian and exotics service at the OVC Health Sciences Centre. "It took some good detective work involving a lot of people and some innovative techniques to break the code."

The culprit is now known to be an avian bornavirus, part of the same family that causes encephalitis in various mammals. PDD causes weight loss, digestive problems and neurological signs in affected parrots. Although it is almost always eventually



fatal, until now PDD was difficult to diagnose because it presents itself in many different ways. Some birds can be carriers that don't show clinical signs, but spread the sickness to other birds.

"These 'typhoid Pollys' seem perfectly healthy but are shedding the virus. For years that was very frustrating for owners and breeders," said Dr. Dale Smith, a veterinary pathologist at OVC.

Drs. Dale Smith and Michael Taylor are hoping that a new screening test for PDD will provide peace of mind for owners and breeders of birds like Sebastian, a red macaw that lives at OVC.

"Now we have a practical, low-cost and effective test that will help us control the disease by identifying those birds that are infected."

The new screening test was developed in conjunction with researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, who identified the virus that causes PDD.

Since 2002, the OVC Pet Trust Fund has supported a PDD research team in Guelph that has also included Drs. Eva Nagy and David Pearl from the OVC; Davor Ojkic and Josepha DeLay of the Animal Health Laboratory; and a number of graduate student collaborators including Raj Raghav, Ady Gancz, and Yohannes Berhane.

The team's latest findings will be published in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation*.

### By the numbers

#### Financial summary for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2010:

<b>Total funds raised:</b>	<b>\$2,845,308</b>
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#### Expenses

Marketing and operating expenses	\$302,252
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#### Program Commitments & Expenses

Research projects and equipment	\$428,658
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Oncology and Imaging Student Funding	\$58,000
Summer Student Funding	\$16,000

The balance of \$2,040,398 is held for future capital projects and programming.

The OVC Pet Trust Fund supports investigations that advance the health and quality of life of companion animals. For a complete summary of recent Pet Trust-funded research projects, go to [www.pettrust.ca](http://www.pettrust.ca)

## Breeders join team effort for hemangiosarcoma study

Sumbitted by Suzi Beber, founder of the Smiling Blue Skies® Cancer Fund

In the last issue of *Best Friends*, readers were introduced to the hemangiosarcoma validation study led by Dr. Gordon Kirby, the associate dean of research and innovation at the Ontario Veterinary College. Just a few weeks later, the study went from paper to practice, thanks to many people including Mississauga-Oakville Veterinary Emergency Hospital's Dr. Jinelle Webb, who had lost her own dog to hemangiosarcoma, and Tanya Van Jou, the clinic's internal medicine co-ordinator.

Hemangiosarcoma is a highly aggressive form of cancer, commonly found in dogs, in which blood vessels grow directly into the tumour which is typically filled with blood. These types of tumours are often found in the spleen, heart and liver but also on the skin and other locations.

Fifty-three golden retrievers were recruited for the study, many from breeders living in the Toronto area. Participating dogs were all over six years of age, and in generally good health.

All testing took place at the Mississauga-Oakville Veterinary Emergency Hospital. A report of the blood work and ultrasound findings was shared with the participant's regular veterinarian.

Thanks to Anna and Don Morison (Donamor Goldens) and members of the Golden Retriever Club of Greater Toronto, and the magic of emails, it didn't take long to fill up the spots. Anna and Don helped further, by entering three of their own dogs in the study: 14-year-old Sheba, nine-year-old Billie, and seven-year-old Caelum.

Helen and Doug Lackey of Quinleighblu Golden Retrievers, in Kitchener, Ont., stepped up to the plate with five of their own: 12-year-old Kayleigh, 10-year-old Keegan, nine-year-old Emerson, eight-year-old Denver, and seven-year-old True. The Lackeys were honouring the



Keegan, a 10<sup>1/2</sup>-year-old golden retriever, is still full of life despite having major surgery to remove his spleen after a tumour was discovered during screening for the hemangiosarcoma study.

memory of Zoe, their son-in-law's best friend, who was stolen by cancer in 2009 at only three years of age.

Helen said that she needed to do something to make sense out of this terrible loss, and as a breeder, she feels strongly that she has a responsibility to be a caretaker of her breed.

Helen told me that she felt that by including five of her dogs in the study, there was bound to be at least one dog present with a tumour, and she was right.

Keegan was found to have a tumour on his spleen. Helen was grateful when Dr. Webb called her, to be an advocate for Keegan, and recommended that he have his spleen removed, even at his advancing age. Dr. Webb felt that it was a benign tumour, and guess what, she was right! Helen said, "Someone should tell Keegan that he has had major surgery, because he doesn't have a clue!" which is just as it should be.

Kayleigh was in renal failure and already receiving the very best medicine available, along with lots of walking and playing to enable Kayleigh to continue to prance and dance through life. Emerson had two nodules on her spleen, and Dr. Webb will look after her as long as she is needed.

Now, I have to tell you, that even this story has its own special brand of "Six Degrees of Separation." While Helen and Doug's Quinleighblu Goldens were participating in the study in Ontario, Bella Kismet, a golden retriever bred by the Lackeys and owned by Brenna Litwack, was fulfilling a special dream on the West Coast.

After a lot of hard work, Bella became Quinleighblu's Meant to Be RE CGN, by earning her Canadian Kennel Club Rally Excellence and Canadian Good Neighbour titles!

OVC's clinicians and researchers are heroes, but right along with them, are the pet owners and breeders, who continually go to the front of the line, to help researchers seek answers, to make "the unknown" a little less scary, and provide us all with a new vision of hope and health for the future.

Dreams can come true, thanks to your support of the OVC Pet Trust Fund and The Smiling Blue Skies® Cancer Fund. After all, we are all in this together. We are kindred spirits.

Together, we can reach beyond the bluest skies and brightest stars, to find a cure for cancer.



## Reaching out to pet owners and practitioners

Emergency stickers, reuseable bags now available

**Help keep your pets safe** with a complimentary pet rescue window decal from the OVC Pet Trust Fund.

In the event of an emergency, the decal alerts emergency personnel that pets are inside your home. You'll find one enclosed with this newsletter.

The decals are a gift to the OVC Pet Trust Fund from three donors who wish to remain anonymous. The donors covered the cost of designing and printing 200,000 decals that will also be available at participating veterinary clinics across Ontario.

"The decals are a practical way for us to say 'thank you' to the many people who support the OVC Pet Trust Fund," said Dr. Mary DeCaire, chair of the board of trustees. "We're very grateful to the good friends whose generosity made this possible."

The easy-to-use decals are made of self-adhesive vinyl that will stick to your windows without making a sticky mess. Place yours in a highly visible spot on the inside of a window or door so that in the event of an emergency, rescue personnel will instantly know the types and number of pets inside your home.

The decals may make a split-second difference between life and death.

Your best friends will thank you for keeping them safe.

The decals are part of our ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the OVC Pet Trust Fund and increase support for the work being done at the Ontario Veterinary College.

This summer, you can also ask your vet about our special edition "Love/Live" bags. Durable, reuseable and made of recycled materials, the bags are being distributed to clinics across Ontario to encourage donations. The bags will be available for a limited time only so get yours soon!



There's plenty of room in the "Love/Live" bags — just ask Nadine Chambers and Bernie, above.

## Pet Trust the 'Charity of Choice' at Ontario regional agility trials

**Healthy pets were big winners** in more ways than one at the 2010 Agility Association of Canada (AAC) Ontario Regional Agility Championships.

The event, held in May in Fergus, Ont., attracted 377 participants competing for a spot at the national championships and the chance to represent Canada at the worlds.

The event raised over \$1,600 for the

OVC Pet Trust Fund which was named this year's charity of choice.

Proceeds go toward the OVC Animal Cancer Centre.

"Many people stopped by to tell their story of how they came to hear about Pet Trust," said Marie Sawford, a member of the Pet Trust board of trustees and owner of Companion Dog Training. "Many agility competitors took time out of their busy schedules to make donations from fundraising events that had been held ahead of time or simply because they believed this is a very important cause for all companion animals."

Sawford said Roger Coles (pictured below) vowed to shave off his beard if they could raise \$500, which was done easily on Saturday.

"During the lunch break the brave man was seated in the middle of the competitors area while a local dog groomer first carved OVC into his beard while friends cheered on, before having his beard completely removed."

She said for those who volunteered for the weekend, it was a great way to reconnect with people who were well aware of the good that Pet Trust offers our pets. It also gave those people a chance to say 'thank you' and share some ideas for fundraising.



## COMING EVENTS

### Pet Trust Forum Oct. 2

Friends and supporters are invited to come celebrate the special bond we share with our animal companions at the OVC Pet Trust Forum.

The popular annual event takes place Saturday, Oct. 2 at the Ontario Veterinary College.

The forum provides donors with an opportunity to learn how their gifts lead to advances in health care for pets and contribute to the success of the veterinary profession.

On the agenda this year are discussions about the value of clinical research, obesity in pets, health issues affecting birds, and a Q&A session with our cancer specialists.

There will also be tours of the new Hill's Pet Nutrition Primary Healthcare Centre at OVC, which opened this summer.

**Reserve your seat now,** or for more information, contact Nadine at 519-824-4120, Ext. 56929, or by email at [pettrust@uoguelph.ca](mailto:pettrust@uoguelph.ca).

But hurry — seating is limited.

UNIVERSITY  
OF GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

## Providing comfort in a time of need

Clinic Profile: Kingsway Animal Hospital a proud supporter for 24 years

Some people know a good thing when they see it. Like the veterinarians and staff at Kingsway Animal Hospital in Etobicoke, Ont., proud supporters of the OVC Pet Trust Fund since it was founded in 1986.

“As soon as Pet Trust was first formed, our staff thought it was a wonderful idea,” says Dr. Rosemary Draganic.

Over the past 24 years, Kingsway Animal Hospital has donated over \$48,000 through the memorial program in which clinics make donations to honour their clients' beloved pets.

“Our donations to a local and tangible cause have touched countless clients who, in turn, have offered their own personal donations,” said Dr. Wendy Van Slyke. “Losing a pet is always painful, but it's some comfort to know that something is being done in the name of a beloved family member to help other pets. Further, several of us here have had pets with special problems that received extraordinary care from the wonderful and compassionate team at the OVC. Therefore, we know that the funds are being well utilized.”



*A donation to Pet Trust supports grieving clients when they need it the most, say Drs. Wendy Van Slyke, above left, and Rosemary Draganic. The team at Kingsway Animal Hospital are longtime supporters of the OVC Pet Trust Fund.*

## OVC Pet Trust Fund | Best Friends Newsletter

Best Friends of Pet Trust is published by the Ontario Veterinary College for the interest 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. Credit should be given to Best Friends of Pet Trust.

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