Call for Applications

WALTHAM® Human-Animal Interaction Research Programme

WALTHAM® has £340,000 (approximately $524,000 USD) available in 2015 to fund high quality research into the impact of companion animals on human cognition or academic outcomes.

Background

Although animals are often included in educational settings for a variety of purposes, there is little empirical research documenting the efficacy of such practices. In the absence of an assessment system for these activities there are significant gaps in our understanding of the potential impact of animals on measures of academic success. Fundamental research is required to provide an evidence base to inform practice and guide educators and administrators on when, and under what circumstances, animal presence or animal ownership may be pedagogically valuable.

Specific areas of research eligible for funding under this call include but are not limited to the following categories:

- Reading/literacy
- Academic learning outcomes
- Aspects of cognition (executive function, memory, learning, categorization, language etc.)
- Stress/anxiety reduction
- Classroom behaviours impacting academic success
- Physical activity and cognition/learning
- Typical and/or special populations (e.g. ADHD, autism spectrum, etc.)

Criteria for research design

**Required:**

- The study design must be empirical in nature. Descriptive variables may supplement an empirical investigation, but exclusively qualitative, descriptive or purely correlational studies will not be eligible
- Random assignment of participants to conditions
- The studies must be statistically powered and include appropriate sample sizes

**Preferred:**

- Randomized controlled trials
- Longitudinal trials
- Blind scoring of dependent variables
- Multiple study sites or different population demographics (age, typical/special developmental status, socio-economic background, e.g.) within a single site
Funding mechanisms available

Award 1: 2015
- **Amount:** The award amount is up to £240,000 (check exchange rates for amount in other currencies) to be paid in equal instalments over a three year period
- Preference will be given to applications that include a longitudinal, multi-site, or multi-population investigation
- Data collection is expected to be completed over a three year period. That timeframe would then be followed by data analysis and write up

Award 2: 2015
- **Amount:** The award amount is up to £100,000 (check exchange rate for amount in other currencies)
- This project is expected to be completed in a two year period. This includes all data collection, analysis, and submission of manuscript(s)

Award requirements

Written institutional acceptance of the following requirements must be included with the application
- Funding to cover institutional overheads is limited to 10% of the total award value, within the overall award limit
- The selected research projects will be conducted in collaboration with Dr. Nancy R. Gee, Research Manager - Human-Animal Interaction, WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition
  - Dr. Gee will lend her expertise to study design considerations, provide input and advice and receive updates throughout the project and be directly involved in writing manuscripts
  - Dr. Gee will not participate in data collection or analysis, therefore the application and corresponding budget should provide the personnel and expertise to accomplish both

Deadlines:

*Letter of Intent:* Prior to submitting a formal application, investigators are required to submit a Letter of Intent to Dr. Gee (nancy.gee@effem.com) by **June 1, 2015**.

*Application:* The application deadline is **June 30, 2015**.