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HABRI Hosts Virtual Lecture on the Impact of a Shelter Cat Fostering Program on the Mental Health of Older Adults Living Alone

Second Session in IDEXX Sponsored Lecture Series Highlights Research on the Human-Animal Bond for Older Adults and the Importance of Veterinary Medicine

WASHINGTON, DC (January 22, 2021) – The Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) and IDEXX held a virtual lecture on the impact of a shelter cat fostering program on the health and wellbeing of older adults living independently alone. This was the second in a planned series of lectures, sponsored by IDEXX, to highlight impactful scientific research on the health benefits of the human-animal bond and the importance of veterinary medicine in strengthening human-animal bonds.

In this lecture, “*The Impact of a Feline Fostering Program for Older Adults Living Alone*”, Dr. Sherry Sanderson, BS, DVM, PhD, Dipl ACVIM, Dipl ACVN, Associate Professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia, discussed the main aims and shared preliminary results of her ongoing HABRI-funded study, “*Healthy Aging: Human Companionship Through Fostering Felines*”, which have indicated that participation in the foster cat program decreases loneliness in older adults.

“IDEXX is proud to sponsor this human-animal bond lecture and to provide pet owners and veterinarians with tangible, real-world examples of how the human-animal bond can improve lives in both humans and companion animals in need,” said Kerry Bennett, Corporate Vice President, IDEXX.

Funded by HABRI, “*Healthy Aging: Human Companionship Through Fostering Felines*” aims to determine if fostering a shelter cat, with the option for adoption, improves the mental health and emotional health of older adults living alone. In addition, Dr. Sanderson and her research team are assessing the impact of feline fostering on older adults’ interest in and commitment to adopting their foster cat, as well as evaluating the feline fostering program as a sustainable partnership between the University of Georgia and community partners. Preliminary results indicate that participants experience a decrease in loneliness at one- and four-months post placement of the foster cat, and that the level of comfort participants receive from their cats continually increases the longer they are with their cat.

“HABRI is grateful for IDEXX for their continued sponsorship of this lecture series which serves as a wonderful opportunity to reach a broad audience of pet owners and animal health professionals interested in the science of the human-animal bond,” said Steven Feldman, President of HABRI. “IDEXX also supports HABRI’s research program, which is demonstrating that pets play a vital role in not only supporting the health and wellbeing of older adults, but also in improving the lives of all pet owners and the communities where they live.”

Professionals who register and view this session are eligible to receive RACE-approved Continuing Education (CE) credit through the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB).

The lecture will remain available on-demand at <http://www.habri.org/HAB-Lectures>. The first lecture in the Human-Animal Bond Lecture Series, “The Efficacy of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD”, which HABRI hosted on Veterans Day, November 11, 2020, is also available on-demand at <http://www.habri.org/HAB-Lectures>.

About HABRI

HABRI is a not-for-profit organization that maintains the world’s largest online library of human-animal bond research and information; funds innovative research projects to scientifically document the health benefits of companion animals; and informs the public about human-animal bond research and the beneficial role of companion animals in society. For more information, please visit <https://www.habri.org/>.

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