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NEWS RELEASE

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British Columbia Veterinarian Honoured for Improving Animal Lives Across Canada and Around the World

OTTAWA, Ont. – Dr. Emilia Wong Gordon has been honoured with the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's (CVMA) *Humane Award* for her animal welfare advocacy and improving how animals in Canada, and around the world, are treated.

“Dr. Wong Gordon and I are currently working on several research projects aimed at improving animals’ lives and the lives of their owners,” informs Dr. Alexandra Protopopova, Assistant Professor, BC SPCA Industrial Research Chair in Animal Welfare, and Graduate Program Advisor, Applied Animal Biology at The University of British Columbia. “She co-supervised and lead research that showed noise, especially dog barks, increased stress behaviour of cats housed in animal shelters. This research led to a second research project on noise reduction with engineered novel quiet cat cages for shelter use.”

Dr. Wong Gordon serves as the Senior Manager, Animal Health for the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals providing animal health support, training, and oversight to 36 sheltering branches across the province. She also teaches veterinary students, participates in community partnerships and outreach, and volunteers with several animal welfare, One Health, diversity, equity, and inclusion in veterinary medicine groups, including the CVMA-SBCV Chapter Animal Welfare Committee.

“Dr. Wong Gordon’s passion for teaching means that her learnings are greatly amplified,” says Dr. Kate Hurley, veterinarian, Master of Preventive Veterinary Medicine, Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners. “She authentically and engagingly communicates the unique blend of health, welfare, and management considerations making up shelter medicine science, encouraging students to learn more.”

Her clinical interests include infectious disease, community medicine, internal medicine, and behaviour. Dr. Wong Gordon has co-authored several publications on shelter infectious disease and was the lead veterinarian investigating a multi-facility feline gastroenteritis outbreak in 2018 that led to the discovery of a novel feline virus, feline chaphamaparvovirus. Her other research interests and areas of active collaboration include animal welfare epidemiology, particularly factors leading to animal relinquishment and their relationship with human social vulnerability and shelter feline behaviour and welfare.

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“Dr. Wong Gordon is a leader in emerging research on equity, diversity, and inclusion within the veterinary and animal sheltering fields,” explains Dr. Protopopova. “She is part of many diversity working groups and has given many talks to veterinary students and professionals on access to veterinary care research. She is an advisory committee member of a Master of Science student who found that the Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation, which measures people’s various vulnerabilities, predicts surrender of animals to the BC SPCA. This data, the first of its kind in Canada, shows the connection between animal surrender and human economic and situational vulnerability.”

For the past 20 years, Dr. Wong Gordon has volunteered with organizations supporting people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals. She believes that cross-sector collaboration with a One Health emphasis is essential to the shared goals of the animal welfare, veterinary, and human health professions. These include the provision of accessible, culturally competent, community-based care that meets human-animal families where they are.

“Dr. Gordon is a uniquely sincere and influential scientist and practitioner, who is also highly sensitive to others’ needs,” expresses Dr. Protopopova. “Her intense passion for animal welfare education, and love for her community is evident in everything she does. Her ability to connect disparate research fields to generate solutions for immediate animal welfare issues is unparalleled. She is highly driven, enthusiastic, and compassionate; even when she is busy, she will not only answer a question, but will do so with particular diligence, references to new literature, and an in-depth analysis.”

The CVMA Humane Award, sponsored by Merck Animal Health, recognizes leadership in the care and well-being of animals. This award is presented to a veterinarian whose work is judged to have contributed significantly to the welfare and well-being of animals.

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The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is the national and international voice for Canada’s veterinarians, providing leadership and advocacy for veterinary medicine. Each year, the CVMA proudly recognizes individuals and groups for their outstanding contribution to veterinary medicine. Visit canadianveterinarians.net to learn more about the CVMA.

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