

# IMPACT REPORT 2021



**BSAVA**  
**PetSavers**  
Funding studies to help pets



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## Introduction

Welcome to our first impact report! BSAVA PetSavers entered the Covid-19 pandemic in the middle of a full strategic review, and we are glad to report we have been able to continue to progress despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic. The initial review stage led to a focus on engaging with veterinary professions and, through them, the pet owner. The development of the fundraising assessment plan with fundraising consultancy guidance has followed this philosophy.

The first stage of implementing the approved fundraising plan is to employ a dedicated BSAVA PetSavers Fundraising & Grant Awards Manager and Fundraising Administrator to join our Grants Administrator, who together will lead the trialling of various fundraising methods over 1 to 2 years to define a more long-term fundraising strategy. This will secure and increase PetSavers' fundraising into the future, allowing more small animal clinical research to be funded.

### **Rosie Godfrey**

Chair of the PetSavers' Management Committee, 2022

# Who is BSAVA PetSavers?

**Our purpose:** To drive excellence in veterinary practice to improve the health and welfare of small animals.

**Our mission:** To fund vital clinical research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases of pets, so that vets always have the knowledge they need to counter the distress and pain caused by those diseases.

## Our aspirations

BSAVA PetSavers aspires to be the UK's leading funder of veterinary clinical research specifically aimed at improving the health of pet animals.

## Why we matter

Our funding provides a lifeline for clinicians and researchers, as grant funding for pet animal clinical research is notoriously difficult to access. BSAVA has been supporting small animal clinical research since 1974, initially through the Clinical Studies Trust Fund, which was renamed PetSavers in 1996, and this year BSAVA PetSavers with the launch of our new logo.

Funded solely by charitable donations,  
**we have invested over £2 million** in vital  
clinical research over the past 40 years.

## Making a difference

"BSAVA PetSavers funding is aimed at helping veterinary professionals solve clinical problems for the direct benefit of pets. It was critical in allowing us to be the first to explore continuous glucose monitoring to help diabetic pets more than 15 years ago. This technology is now in widespread use."

### Professor Lucy Davison

European and RCVS Specialist in Small Animal Internal Medicine, Professor of Veterinary Clinical Genetics (RVC), and MRC Clinician Scientist Fellow (University of Oxford).



PetSavers has been an integral part of my research into the pathogenesis and treatment of Chiari-like malformation and syringomyelia.

### Professor Clare Rusbridge

Wear Referrals; Professor of Veterinary Neurology,  
University of Surrey



# Our grants

We offer several annually awarded grants:

- Student Research Projects (SRPs) (£3,200 + ticket for BSAVA Congress) for undergraduate vets and vet nurses,
- Master's Degrees by Research (MDRs) (£40,000) for postgraduate study, and
- Clinical Research Projects (CPRs) (£20,000) for more established veterinary and/or research professionals.

Research projects are selected in the hope that the study results will have a rapid and positive impact on the way diseases are diagnosed, managed and treated in general practice as well as at a specialist level.

## Match-funded grants

We also support specialist areas of veterinary science by partnering with BSAVA affiliates and other organisations that share our principles.

Our current partners are:

- The Small Animal Medicine Society (SAMSoc)
- Veterinary Cardiovascular Society
- The Debs Foundation
- The British Hen Welfare Trust

We are always keen to have new match-funding partners. If you are interested in this, please contact us at [petsaversadmin@bsava.com](mailto:petsaversadmin@bsava.com).

## New early-career veterinary researcher grant

Our Research Fellowship is our newest grant category. Introduced in 2021 as a larger grant of up to £70,000, it aims to allow a more in-depth study to be undertaken over a maximum of two years, which will support veterinary academics in the early stages of their research career.

The funding targets the period just after gaining a postgraduate research qualification and will help individuals establish themselves as independent researchers and/or prepare for a research council fellowship application.

The Research Fellowship was developed by our Grant Awarding Committee.



# Grant case study

**PetSavers**



old age pets research project



## The Old Age Pets Citizen Science Research Project

BSAVA PetSavers has been funding a major, two-year research project at the University of Liverpool – Old Age Pets – aimed at helping veterinary professionals and owners to provide the best care for their senior dogs.

As the life expectancy of dogs increases, so does the time they spend in poor health, but it may be difficult to distinguish between normal age-related changes and serious diseases. The research grant supports the development of a new canine ageing and well-being tool for use in veterinary practice.

The team, led by Carri Westgarth, has used citizen science to enable pet owners, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to be involved throughout the research process. Data are currently being analysed, ahead of the specific well-being tool's development and trial. Full results from the surveys are expected in 2022.



Increasing owner understanding and involvement will enable the early detection of health problems, resulting in significant improvements in the quality of life of senior pets and the dog-owner relationship.

**Dr Carri Westgarth**

Lecturer in Human-Animal Interaction, University of Liverpool



# Our 2021 in numbers

£145,000

annual grant budget

£110,000

OAP project funding

2 legacies

left to us

1 research fellowship

grant launched

44% of applications funded

13 grants awarded

- 2x Master's degrees by research
- 7x clinical research projects
- 4x student research projects

4 peer-reviewed papers published

(26 in the past 10 years)

Our 2021 fundraising focus has been developing and starting to implement the new strategy. Student research projects were very disrupted by the pandemic and so far fewer were funded than normal.

“

I was the lucky recipient of a PetSavers' grant to fund my residency in small animal surgery. I have done my best to pay that back to the profession, predominantly through trying to contribute to the field of cancer surgery in cats and dogs. PetSavers put me on that path, and it changed my career. I hope together we have advanced the field of cancer care, if even a little.

**Professor Nick Bacon**

Clinical Director, Oncologic & Soft Tissue Surgery Fitzpatrick Referrals;  
Professor of Surgical Oncology, University of Surrey



# Our research

## Projects funded in 2021:

- Intestinal fibrosis in cats with chronic inflammatory enteropathy
- Ageing and myxomatous mitral valve disease in canine vascular dysfunction
- Fungal dysbiosis following antibacterial monotherapy in canine otitis externa
- Pathways to waterways for imidacloprid in Seresto collars
- The effect of deformed skull base morphology on nasopharyngeal narrowing and BOAS severity
- Embryonic stem cell markers to identify mast cell tumour nodal metastases in dogs: a pilot study
- The susceptibility of *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius* to fluoroquinolones and their suitability for treating infections with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius* (MRSP): a pilot study

## Publications of 2021:

- The effect of myxomatous mitral valve disease severity on packed cell volume in dogs
- Survival and complications in cats treated with subcutaneous ureteral bypass
- Transverse sectioning in the evaluation of skin biopsy specimens from alopecic dogs
- *Staphylococcus caledonicus* sp. nov. and *Staphylococcus canis* sp. nov. isolated from healthy domestic dogs

## BSAVA PetSavers Veterinary Achievement Award Winner 2021

This award is presented to the first author of the most valuable peer-reviewed research paper following a PetSavers' grant, with respect to veterinary practice.

Victoria Ironside was given the 2021 award for her paper Risk indicators in cats with preclinical hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: a prospective cohort study. This paper was chosen because it was thought to be a great study about a very common disease in cats that finds interesting and likely clinically relevant data. Of particular relevance to first opinion practice is the fact that fairly non-invasive assessments for patients were chosen alongside parameters that first opinion clinicians can use to monitor preclinical hypertrophic cardiomyopathy cases.



# Our volunteer and supporter community

BSAVA PetSavers is a small charity with big ambitions. Its volunteer and supporter communities are at the heart of everything we do. You can join us and be part of a community helping advance small animal health.

You can:

- fundraise for us
- donate to us
- become one of our grant recipients
- be one of our student representatives
- be our regional representative in your BSAVA region
- be on one of our committees – PetSavers Management Committee or Grant Awarding Committee
- join our alumni group
- make a lasting difference by leaving us a legacy in your will



“

PetSavers is an important source of funding for small projects that can make a big difference. It opens the doors of scientific research to all levels of practitioner.

**Kieran Borgeat**

American, European and RCVS Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Cardiology, Senior Clinician in Cardiology, University of Bristol



# Thank you to BSAVA PetSavers

from Daniëlle Gunn-Moore

Professor of Feline Medicine, University of Edinburgh

Over many years, BSAVA PetSavers has been generously funding my clinical research; without the generosity of BSAVA PetSavers and British vets I could not do my work – thank you!



Over 15 years ago, a BSAVA PetSavers grant helped me to show that elderly cats develop changes in their brains similar to Alzheimer's disease in people. This work is still ongoing – the data generated from the BSAVA PetSavers grant allowed me to gain funding for my PhD student, Dr Lorena Sordo. Starting from BSAVA PetSavers funding, we have been able to identify cats with cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS; feline dementia), and to show it is a common disorder in elderly cats, causing distress to the cats and their owners. So far we have published nine papers about CDS/feline dementia in cats, looking at clinical signs and potential interventions through to histopathological changes.

BSAVA PetSavers has also funded a number of my studies looking into understanding mycobacterial infections in cats, of which ~50% of cases in GB are tuberculosis (TB). Dr Conor O'Halloran, Dr Jordan Mitchell and Dr Michaela Wegg have been my PhD students working on these common and often demanding infections. So far, this work has resulted in around 20 publications, as well as book chapters and even a child's story book!

Last year, BSAVA PetSavers funded a group of us to start looking into an unusual neurological disease that has so far been seen in >50 cats from North East Scotland. We call them robotic cats because they develop very distinctive behavioural and motor changes. The disease affects pet cats and potentially the highly endangered iconic Scottish Wild Cats.

BSAVA PetSavers typically awards small grants which are perfect for that initial 'look see', or a pilot study, that allows us to see if something is worth investigating further; the information generated can then allow us to apply for larger grants. If I identify something unusual it is wonderful to know that BSAVA PetSavers is there to help fund my curiosity. It is there to help fund yours too.

# The future

2022 is an exciting year for BSAVA PetSavers.

We are embarking on our new fundraising development strategy. We are launching our alumni group. We are funding more research by increasing our annual grant budget to £220,000. We are also increasing the value of each annually awarded grant to make them more useful to the research community. We await the findings from the OAP project and we hope to welcome more of you to our volunteer and supporter community.



## Contact us



[petsaversadmin@bsava.com](mailto:petsaversadmin@bsava.com)



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Funding studies to help pets