Students Engage in Animal Welfare Projects

Thanks to a program sponsored by a national coalition of animal welfare foundations, four UC Davis veterinary students developed winning proposals for summer research projects to reduce pet overpopulation, monitor lion health in Africa, understand more about disease transmission between domestic and wild animals and assist a veterinary school to improve animal welfare in Bosnia.

Faculty members David Hird, Linda Munson, Janine Kasper and Lynette Hart served as mentors to the students who prepared winning proposals.

David Dawson, '00, continued an educational exchange in Sarajevo, Bosnia begun earlier this year through the school's Office of International Programs. Mr. Dawson assisted Santa Rosa veterinarian Deborah Crippen in demonstrating surgical techniques to students at Bosnia's only veterinary school, still recuperating from years of warfare. Dr. Crippen and Mr. Dawson conducted a spay and neuter clinic and began building a framework to ensure humane approaches to a severe animal overpopulation problem.

Cynthia Delany, '00, adapted the ideas of the successful Shelter Dog Rescue Project at UC Davis for use by other communities. Project volunteers take shelter animals and place them with 4-H and community volunteers for a period of socialization and obedience training. Dogs are then put up for permanent adoption. Ms. Delany, who is authoring a book about various volunteer approaches to shelter issues, hopes that community-centered programs may reduce the number of dogs that are euthanized and help youngsters to learn the basic responsibilities of pet ownership.

Katie Prager, '01, conducted disease screening and fertility testing in a population of lions at Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park. Lion conservation is important not only to biodiversity in Uganda, but also to the tourist economy.

Robin Schaffner, '00, visited Africa and studied how the canine distemper virus is transmitted among carnivores at a national park in Botswana. Her project is part of a larger conservation effort aimed at understanding how diseases of domestic animals may infect wild lions.


Shelter Dog Rescue Program Graduates Good Pets

Fourteen dogs completed the winter session of the Shelter Dog Rescue Program. Each academic quarter, veterinary students in the Canine Medicine Club choose young adult dogs from local shelters that will make good pets based on personality, health and other factors. The animals are screened for parasites, vaccinated and spayed/neutered if necessary. They are placed with foster, including 4-H members, veterinary students and community members, for six to eight weeks during which the dogs and fosters attend weekly obedience skills classes. After completion of their obedience training, providing the dogs are house trained and are good with children, permanent homes are found for them. Veterinary student Sharon Wedemeyer, who leads the obedience classes this year, says, “These are wonderful dogs who deserve a second chance!”