



THE WINN FELINE FOUNDATION

For the Health and Well-Being of All Cats

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Winn Foundation Announces Award of Six Grants for Important Feline Health Studies

The Winn Feline Foundation is pleased to announce the award of six grants funded in partnership with the George Sydney and Phyllis Redman Miller Trust in 2006. The Trust designated the Winn Foundation as one of its advisor organizations in its desire to “support medical research to investigate the causes, prevention and development of cures for diseases of . . . domestic cats.” Winn President Susan Little, DVM, commented, “I am pleased that the expertise of the Winn Foundation and its veterinary consultants has been called upon to assist in the distribution of these funds. We are excited about the proposals that have been funded as a result. This year we awarded \$87,515 in grants for studies of heart disease, pain management, genetic testing for feline blood types, and two infectious disease studies (feline infectious peritonitis and *Cytauxzoon felis*). Winn is also pleased to be participating in support of a multi-institutional study to understand better the factors that influence shelter cat populations.

Expansion of the Shelter Population Index for Cats: Phase 2 of a Multi-institutional Study.

John C. New, Jr., DVM, MPH, DACVPM, University of Tennessee. \$21,300

Millions of cats end up at animal shelters and the resulting numbers that have to be euthanized each year are disturbing to all who care about animals. Two groups have partnered to develop a Shelter Population Index (SPI): shelters recruited by five universities and a coalition of other shelters. The SPI is designed to measure the performance of the overall sheltering system. The SPI will increase information that can be used to improve medical management of shelter cats while increasing public awareness of the magnitude of the problem of homeless, abandoned, marginalized, and feral cats in the community.

Gabapentin for analgesia and anesthesia in cats. *Bruno H. Pypendop, DrMedVet, DrVetSci, DACVA, University of California at Davis. \$8,400*

As a species, cats often have inadequate pain control due to the side effects associated with traditional analgesic drugs. Gabapentin may be a good candidate to provide pain relief and decrease anesthetic requirements in cats. It is widely available, its toxicity in other species is minimal, and it is excreted unchanged in the urine. In this study, the researchers propose to determine whether gabapentin decreases anesthetic requirements in cats, and to characterize the analgesic effects of gabapentin using a model of acute pain.

Genetic Testing for Feline Blood Groups. *Leslie A. Lyons, PhD, University of California at Davis. \$15,000*

In cats, only one major blood type system has been identified. Blood type incompatibilities are known to be responsible for transfusion reactions and neonatal isoerythrolysis in this species. Blood type B cats have naturally occurring antibodies against the type A red cell antigen, hence problems may occur with the first transfusion or pregnancy.

Most cats are blood type A. However, several cat breeds, including the Birman, Devon Rex, and British Shorthairs, have significant numbers of blood type B cats. Thus, breeders must be aware of blood type incompatibility problems. Blood type A cats may carry an allele for blood type B, but the current serological typing methods cannot distinguish these blood type B carriers. This study will look at cats from unrelated populations, remote populations, and different breeds to distinguish which mutations cause the blood types. If successful, the resulting DNA-based assay will be performed earlier, and will detect blood type A cats carrying an allele for blood type B.

Tissue factor: Initiator of thrombosis and potential therapeutic target in cats with cardiac disease? *Tracy Stokol, BVSc, PhD, DACVP, Cornell University. \$19,751*

Cats with severe heart disease are at risk for the formation of blood clots that may block circulation and deprive tissues of oxygen. This tissue insult causes sudden and severe pain, paralysis and/or organ failure, and often proves fatal. A new strategy to prevent this devastating complication of heart disease is urgently needed. Based on efforts in human medicine, the researchers aim to use a novel approach based on specific blockade of a key coagulation protein called tissue factor (TF). In this study, researchers propose to develop an assay to detect TF activity on feline white blood cells and to produce a recombinant feline-specific TF inhibitor that may prevent clot formation in feline cardiac patients.

Comparison of Two Drug Protocols for Clearance of *Cytauxzoon felis* Infections

Leah A. Cohn, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, University of Missouri. \$8,284

Cytauxzoon felis is an emerging infectious disease of domestic cats. Historically, infection of domestic cats with this tick-transmitted protozoal agent has been considered uniformly fatal. For this reason, domestic cats were not believed to be a source of infection for other cats. Recently, anecdotal reports of cats that survive the acute infection have been published. These recovered cats seem to harbor the infectious red cell parasite for years and may serve as a reservoir of infection for other cats. This could help explain the seeming recent expansion in the geographic regions reporting this disease, which now covers the South Central, Southeastern, and Mid-Atlantic USA. As more cats survive infection, they could pose a risk of spreading the infection if the organism cannot be eliminated. The researchers propose to compare the ability of two anti-protozoal drug regimens to eliminate the chronic stage of infection in these cats.

Screening for Antibodies to the 7b Protein of Feline Coronavirus in Cats for Detection of Persistent Infection. *Melissa Kennedy, DVM, PhD, University of Tennessee. \$14,750*

Feline coronavirus is a common virus of both domestic and non-domestic felids. In a small percentage of infected felines, a fatal systemic disease, feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), develops. Diagnosis of FIP, as well as management of coronavirus infection in multi-cat environments, is hampered by the fact that no assay specific for the virulent form of the virus exists. Identification and removal of chronically infected cats may be desirable in multi-cat environments. The researchers will investigate the correlation of 7b protein expression (indicated by the presence of the specific antibody) with chronic virus shedding. If a correlation exists, testing for 7b-specific antibody would offer a quick and reliable method for identification of persistently infected animals, aiding management of multi-cat situations to reduce the risk of FIP.