

# A Firm Pet Foundation



Too often when thinking about animal based charitable or not for profit organisations, we think of the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League or other great organisations that rescue and protect the abandoned or unfortunate. Within these pages we like to highlight some of those organisations that can benefit from donations, bequests or your involvement in their fundraising efforts.

An often overlooked not for profit organisation is the Veterinary Science Foundation of the University of Sydney. Its aim is to continue its long history of education and research in veterinary science. Established in 1910, the University of Veterinary Science is Australia's oldest veterinary school and the Foundation is the arm through which the Faculty's major projects are funded and facilitated. The Foundation was established in 2000 due to the dramatic decrease in government funding to faculties—for example, in the 1990s the faculty lost 50% of its core funding.

Jennie Churchill is Director of the Foundation and explains, "Central to the Faculty's work—whether caring for animals large or small—is our unconditional commitment to animal welfare. We really do believe that through our efforts, everyone benefits, from the education we provide through to scientific research. The projects we fund vary—from new buildings, funding residents to study the new postgraduate degree to future projects including facilities for radiation treatment."

The sparkling new Valentine Charlton Cat Centre is testament to the Faculty's commitment to provide state-of-the-art veterinary facilities. The Cat Centre is staffed by two of only nine feline specialists in Australasia. The building incorporates large consulting and treatment rooms, a chemotherapy ward and a nuclear medicine suite for treatment of cats suffering from hyperthyroidism—a very common disorder found in cats. The new dog centre, which is to mirror the cat centre, is scheduled for completion in 2006.

The University Veterinary Centre is open to the public for routine and specialist veterinary services. It operates as a teaching hospital providing senior (fourth and fifth year) students the opportunity to learn under the guidance and supervision of specialists and trained clinicians. For students, our future vets, the teaching hospital gives them the opportunity to interact with clients and patients. Communication skills and empathy are vital in dealing with clients and understanding their needs and concerns regarding the treatment of their loved pets.

Other projects include a Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre to be situated at the Camden Campus. The vision is that centre will be an Australian, and hopefully, an international leader in wildlife health and conservation. The Faculty has had a long history in wildlife disease studies—particularly with koalas. A three-year research project is focussed on the most devastating infectious diseases found in koalas—chlamydia and cryptosporidiosis. It is hoped that through this project, practical strategies for the management, prevention and cure of these diseases in both captive and free-living koalas. Other Australian wildlife species that benefit from research projects include reptiles, the Tasmanian Devil, flying foxes, wombats and the brush-tailed wallaby.

There's a variety of ways that the public can contribute to the fundraising of the Foundation. As Jennie explains, "We've had a variety of events like the huge dog wash. We had 12 vet students and six mobile dog wash units out at Olympic Park. It culminated in us washing a whopping 848 dogs and breaking the Guinness Book of World Records for dog washing. We have also organised some lovely events like the one coming up in December. It's a concert called 'Animalia' featuring the Australian Youth Orchestra. It's a musical celebration of animals and is a great event for people to come along, enjoy cocktails and canapés and experience some fabulous music. Bequeaths or donations are also accepted. Another is to 'remember' a loved pet within the Henry and Banjo memorial garden."

University of Sydney Veterinary Science Foundation  
Phone: (02) 9351 8024  
Fax: (02) 9351 8025  
Email: vsf@vetsci.usyd.edu.au  
Web: www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/Foundation

## The Henry and Banjo Garden

Situated next to the University Veterinary Centre at Sydney is an unusual memorial garden dedicated to the memory of much loved pets. It's created out of sandstone blocks that originally were part of many historic Australian buildings such as the Maitland Jail and the Singer Sewing Company. The garden was designed by internationally renowned and award winning, landscape architect, Vladimir Sitta.

The garden is named after two cats called Henry and Banjo who, as kittens, arrived at the University Veterinary Centre in 1989. Henry and Banjo were originally employed as stable cats where they had the important task of rodent control in the Centre's horse stables. In 1996, when the equine activities were transferred to the Faculty's Camden campus, the two feline brothers devoted themselves to becoming passionate social workers. They were always on hand to give a comforting rub and purr to staff, students and visiting clients.

As they grew older, Henry and Banjo became patients of the centre, both being treated for hypothyroidism. They recovered and went on to live in comfortable retirement. Banjo passed away in 2002. His brother, Henry was inconsolable and so a fourth year student, Leanne Clark, adopted Henry and took him to her home by the Georges River. After her graduation, he moved with her to Tasmania where he died peacefully in 2004.

So fondly remembered are Henry and Banjo by staff at the University Clinic, that it was decided that the memorial garden be named in their honour. Individual cast metal bowls bear their name. Remembrance bowls are available to the people wanting to honour the lives of a cherished pet—whether fur, feathered or fin. The bowls are solid, cast metal and are available in three materials, aluminium, brass or bronze. Donations for a bowl can be pledged over three to five years and can have your personalised inscription of up to 20 words.

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