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First Winner of WSAVA Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee's Competitive Travel Grant Announced

The first recipient of a Competitive Travel Grant from the WSAVA's Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee (AWWC) to help a veterinarian aiming to pursue a career in animal welfare to gain experience has been announced.

Dutch veterinarian Lisa Dietz, who qualified from the University of Utrecht in 2014, was awarded the \$5,000 grant to enable her to travel to the UK to carry out a project to develop a new cognitive bias test for movement-impaired dogs. The project is being conducted at the Animal Behaviour and Welfare Research Department at the University of Lincoln, UK, between April and September 2015.

The AWWC is a committee of the [World Small Animal Veterinary Association](http://www.wsava.org) (WSAVA). The Competitive Travel Grant is one of a raft of initiatives to boost animal welfare globally it introduced at WSAVA World Congress in 2014. Lisa Dietz was unveiled as the winner of the first Travel Grant at its 2015 World Congress which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, in May.





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Explaining her project Lisa Dietz said: "I believe the assessment of welfare is important because we need to understand how the animals around us are feeling in a world designed for humans. Cognitive bias tests can be used to assess emotions based on the choices an animal makes. For dogs, however, the current cognitive bias test requires movement so is unsuitable for animals with conditions causing chronic pain. Our project aims to develop a new test that will not require dogs being tested to move as much. This will make it more suitable for use in dogs with impaired movement. Longer term, it could be used to help inform veterinarians as to how their patients are coping emotionally.

"When I heard I'd won the Competitive Travel Grant, I was absolutely thrilled because it meant I could focus fully on the project, rather than worrying about financing my participation. I thank the AWWC wholeheartedly for giving me this opportunity to improve my experience in the field of animal welfare research."

Dr Shane Ryan, Chair of the AWWC, added: "Lisa's application stood out because of the quality of the study project she proposed and its potential benefit to dogs suffering from conditions causing mobility issues, such as chronic pain. She was a worthy winner of this year's Grant and we look forward to hearing the results of the study in due course."

Applications for the 2016 Competitive Travel Grant will be announced in the near future.

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) is a not-for-profit body, dedicated to enhancing the quality of veterinary care for companion animals around the world. Its members comprise 92 veterinary organizations from around the world, representing 145,000 individual veterinarians. Its Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee (AWWC) aims to promote advances in animal welfare and wellness around the world through enhanced veterinary care and through ensuring that welfare issues become a routine consideration for all companion animal veterinarians.





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