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Murphy Cancer Foundation program gives veterinarians insight on improving the lives of aging pets

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. -

The Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation will hold the first training program of its kind to help veterinarians understand how aging affects dogs and cats.

Just as humans are living longer and more productive lives today, dogs and cats also are living longer. Recent consumer research indicates that a top desire for pet owners is to maximize the healthy lifespan of their companion animals.

"Veterinarians receive no formal training in the biology of aging and longevity, and this type of training will meet a huge unmet need," said David J. Waters, DVM, Ph.D., a professor of comparative oncology at the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, associate director of the Center on Aging and the Life Course, and executive director of the Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation, a Purdue Research Park-based company. "No course focusing on why pets and people age exists in the DVM curriculum of any U.S. veterinary school. Veterinarians who graduated last spring or 30 years ago are in the same boat."



Bugsy, a companion dog
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This three-day course will provide veterinarians with training on how to treat older animals. Enrollment for the inaugural class, which takes place Friday through Sunday (April 18-20), is by invitation only.

The course, titled "Understanding the Biology of Aging: A Gerontology Training Course for Veterinarians," is designed to train a select group of veterinarians to be the go-to experts on companion animal gerontology in their communities. By studying the aging process in pet dogs, scientists hope to determine the genetic and environmental determinants of exceptional longevity and how these factors influence the complex relationship between aging and cancer.

The Murphy Foundation's Center for Exceptional Longevity Studies is home to the Exceptional Longevity Data Base, the first nationwide database to systematically track the oldest pet dogs in the country.

Scientists believe these studies of exceptional longevity in pet dogs directly complement the work of other investigators on human centenarians.

The training program is sponsored by the Murphy Foundation, P&G Pet Care, and Purdue's Center on Aging and the Life Course, an interdisciplinary program designed to foster research and education about the aging process. Purdue's Center on Aging seeks to optimize the aging experience by drawing upon the expertise of more than 50 faculty members leading scientific inquiries into why we age and how we can maintain or enhance physical and mental functioning throughout life.

Presentations will be made by world-renowned researchers specializing in both human and animal study, including Michael Hayek, Ph.D., associate director of P&G Pet Care's research and development division, as well as the following Purdue University researchers: Michael Flynn, Ph.D., professor of health and kinesiology; Gerald Hyner, Ph.D., professor of health promotion and director of the gerontology program; Kenneth Ferraro, Ph.D., professor of sociology and director of Center on Aging and the Life Course; and Waters. The broad disciplinary strengths of these faculty include gerontology, physiology, cancer, obesity, health risk assessment, behavior modification, nutrition and pathobiology.

About the Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation

The Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation's PATH to Progress® research program enrolls pet dogs into state-of-the-art clinical trials to test new, life-saving cancer treatments and that will ultimately lead to human application. The Murphy Foundation (<http://www.gpmcf.org>) also is putting a spotlight on cancer prevention as a principal participant in the National Cancer Institute-sponsored Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT), which has recruited more than 32,000 men, making it the largest prostate cancer prevention trial ever conducted. Research by the foundation has shown that supplementation with the trace mineral selenium significantly reduces DNA damage in the aging prostate. This has led to SeleniumHealth™, a simple toenail test that men can use to adjust their selenium intake to reduce prostate cancer risk. The Murphy Foundation's Center for Exceptional Longevity Studies works closely with Purdue's Center on Aging and the Life Course to carry out its research and education missions.

About Purdue Research Park

The 725-acre Purdue Research Park (<http://www.purdueresearchpark.com>) has the largest university-affiliated business incubation complex in the country. The park is home to more than 140 companies. About 90 of these firms are technology-related and another 39 are incubator businesses. The park was ranked No. 1 in 2004 for university-affiliated research parks and received the 2005 Outstanding Commercialization Award, both from the Association of University Research Parks. The park's companies also have received numerous recognitions, including a 2006 MIRA Award: Innovation of the Year for Purdue Research Park/Quadraspec Inc. and a 2005 CoreNet Global Innovators Award finalist.

To the Purdue Research Park, <http://www.purdueresearchpark.com>

PHOTO CAPTION:

Bugsy, a 14-year-old Rottweiler in Indianapolis, is one of many companion dogs living beyond the average life expectancy for canines. David J. Waters, director of the Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation in the Purdue Research Park, is holding the first training program of its kind to help veterinarians understand how aging affects dogs and cats. (Photo provided by the Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation)

A publication-quality photo is available at <http://news.uns.purdue.edu/images/+2008/bugsy-murphycancer.jpg>

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