

# Dr. Sheilah Robertson named winner of 2023 AVMA Animal Welfare Award

(SCHAUMBURG, Illinois) May 10, 2023—In recognition of her commitment to advancing animal welfare through decades of teaching, research, service, advocacy and leadership within the profession, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has honored Dr. Sheilah Robertson as the winner of the 2023 AVMA Animal Welfare Award.

The AVMA Animal Welfare Award is presented to an AVMA member veterinarian in recognition of their achievement in advancing the welfare of animals via leadership, public service, education, research/product development and/or advocacy. It is presented annually by the AVMA and supported through educational funding from Merck Animal Health.

"The African proverb 'it takes a village' describes this award accurately as my work reflects the influence of many people on my career path – nothing is achieved alone," said Dr. Robertson. "My mentors, students, colleagues and patients have taught me so much and I would like to acknowledge their contribution to advancing animal welfare and accept this award on their behalf."

Dr. Robertson graduated from the University of Glasgow with her Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery degree in 1980 and completed her doctoral training in veterinary medicine at the University of Bristol in 1984. She then pursued specialization in anesthesia, pain management, animal welfare and shelter medicine. Dr. Robertson is one of only three individuals holding board certification in both the American College of Animal Welfare (ACAW) and the European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Medicine (with a subspecialty in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law). She also holds dual board certification from both the American College of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia (ACVAA) and the European College of Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia.

Throughout her career, Dr. Robertson has held a variety of leadership positions that have advanced animal welfare. She has served as president of the ACVAA and as a charter member of the ACAW. Dr. Robertson has been the scientific organizer for the World Veterinary Conference of Anesthesia and served on several taskforces and committees for professional organizations, including the AVMA, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, the American Association of Feline Practitioners, the International Society of Feline Medicine, the American Animal Hospital Association and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association.

As an educator, Dr. Robertson has worked in academia for many years, teaching veterinary and nursing students about anesthesia, acute and chronic pain, animal welfare, and end-of-life care. She is a gifted instructor who received the prestigious Carl J. Norden Distinguished Teacher Award (now known as the AAVMC Distinguished Veterinary Teacher Award) early in her career, which recognizes an

outstanding teacher who, through their ability, dedication and leadership, contributes significantly to the advancement of the veterinary profession. She is a popular, effective, and highly sought-after speaker at national and international veterinary conferences.

Dr. Robertson's research has primarily focused on pain assessment in cats, dogs, horses and even iguanas. She has published over 100 peer-reviewed manuscripts and contributed more than 40 book chapters on pain management, and her work on the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's Global Pain Council led to the development of the 2014 and 2022 Guidelines for Recognition, Assessment, and Treatment of Pain, providing analgesic protocols that fit each global situation. This work reflects her engagement in international spay and neuter clinics where there is limited access to drugs. She has also developed anesthetic protocols for pediatric patients.

Dr. Robertson also spent two years serving as an assistant director in the Animal Welfare Division at the AVMA. She was a member of the AVMA's model animal welfare curriculum working group, which laid out the basics of an animal welfare curriculum to be taught in North American veterinary colleges. Dr. Robertson also served as a member of the organizing committee for the AVMA American Board of Veterinary Specialties-recognized specialty in Animal Welfare.

Dr. Robertson has been a strong advocate for the care of working dogs, including police canines, military working dogs, force protection K9s and search and rescue canines. She is an advisor for the Tactical Emergency Casualty Care working group and has helped create standardized pre-hospital trauma care guidelines. Dr. Robertson's small canine first aid course, started in 1992, has grown into the K9 Down program.

For the past six years, Dr. Robertson has served as senior medical director for Lap of Love Veterinary Hospice, where she has played a crucial role in developing palliative care protocols and training veterinarians in euthanasia best practices. This work has further demonstrated her commitment to animal welfare and her dedication to ensuring that pets receive the highest quality of care during the final stages of their lives.

"The AVMA is honored to present Dr. Sheilah Robertson with the 2023 AVMA Animal Welfare Award, acknowledging her significant contributions to the field of animal welfare and her unwavering dedication to improving the lives of animals," said Dr. Lori Teller, president of the AVMA. "Through her research, leadership, education and advocacy, Dr. Robertson has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to advancing the wellbeing of animals and has made a lasting impact on the veterinary profession."