



Joint Press Release

EU Influencers gather to discuss #PetPower and raise profile of pets on EU agenda

Brussels, 1 October 2020; The European animal health and pet food industry associations, AnimalhealthEurope and FEDIAF came together ahead of World Animal Day with a virtual event - #PetPower to highlight the important role that pets have played during COVID-19 lockdowns and to call for greater attention at EU level for pet-focused policies.

During the event, attended by around 300 people from across Europe, a panel of experts and influencers discussed the many ways in which pets benefit society and pinpointed a number of challenges existing in Europe with pet ownership, somewhat exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- MEP Petras Auštrevičius, vice-president of the Parliamentary Intergroup on Animal Welfare highlighted the need for the Commission to look at the costs involved with pet care, and how to make the means to care for pets more accessible, as well as how to encourage EU action against illegal pet trade.
- Suzie Carley, chair of the EU Dog and Cat Alliance said there was a need for harmonisation at EU-Level on welfare standards for breeders, as well as greater awareness and signalling of unscrupulous traders of animals online. With a lack of regulation in these areas, animals are falling victim to serious welfare and health issues.
- Marie-José Ender-Slegers, president of IAHAIO (human-animal interaction organisation) underlined the many learnings from research into the human-animal bond and called for public agencies and authorities to step up investment into research. Greater studies into animal emotions and psychology can help guide better standards for pet partnerships.
- Claire Guest, CEO of Medical Detection Dogs shared the current status of the dogs in training to detect COVID-19 and how they are likely to be able to help countries manage the pandemic. A veteran researcher into the power of a dog's sense of smell, this competence adds to a long list of ways that dogs are actively helping people with various health issues, including diabetes and severe allergies.

Commenting after the event, AnimalhealthEurope Secretary General Roxane feller said:

"The Covid-19 crisis has reinforced what pet owners already know: pets have been empowering our lives for many years, providing multiple benefits. This extends far beyond the companionship, and the opportunities for exercise and enjoyment, to supporting us with health or mobility concerns and relief from stress or anxiety. Our event emphasizes that for families to get the maximum benefit of bringing animals into their homes, they must also be both equipped for and informed on ensuring pets receive the care they need to be healthy and happy."



FEDIAF Secretary General Raquel Izquierdo de Santiago added:

“There is a wealth of research proving the benefits of pets to people. However, we would like to see an increased focus on this science to build EU policies on social wellbeing, which takes in to account the value of #PetPower. In parallel, we need to raise awareness of responsible pet ownership with standards harmonised across Europe to ensure the wellbeing of companion animals.”

ENDS

Notes for editors:

- See our pre-event video interviews with pet care experts and influencers:
 - [MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen](#) sharing her #PetPower story and what the EU can do to support the special role of the pets in society
 - [Daniella Dos Santos, President of British Veterinary Association](#) sharing responsible pet ownership tips, especially for people getting pets during lockdown
 - [Vicky De Baere, Coordinator of Villa Samson](#) explaining the power of animal assisted therapy in medical settings
- [AnimalHealthEurope](#) represents 12 of Europe’s leading manufacturers of animal medicines and 19 national associations. Covering 90% of the European Market, the animal health industry enables more than 293,000 direct and indirect jobs (incl. veterinarians), ensures that over a billion animals in Europe - both livestock and companion animals - stay healthy, while providing solutions for 4 million livestock farmers and 85 million pet-owning households across Europe.
- [FEDIAF](#) represents the European pet food industry with around 200 production sites. It is an umbrella organization of national pet food industry associations plus direct company members. FEDIAF’s mission is to be the credible and responsible voice of the European pet food industry collaborating with authorities, regulators and academics for achieving favourable conditions for the supply of safe, nutritious and palatable products to pets and their owners. Based in Brussels, FEDIAF is fully committed to promoting responsible pet ownership, to the wellbeing of pet animals, to their important social role and to the respect of sustainable development.