



Veterinary Science Newsletter

News and updates

New teaching year begins with vibrant 'Vets for Life' and 'Vet Techs for Life' student events

In February the School held two important events for our first year BVSc and second year BVet Tech student cohorts. The Vet Techs for Life event was held on Wednesday 25 February, and the Vets for Life on Thursday 26 February. Both day long events are held annually during the first week of teaching, bringing each of the student cohorts together and providing an opportunity to mingle, make new friends, engage in group activities and hear useful presentations. Thanks to Hills for their annual sponsorship of these events.



From Hong Kong to Guangzhou: veterinary students embark on transformative Indo-Pacific study tour

The New Colombo Plan Mobility Program is a prestigious Australian Government funding scheme which provides opportunities for Australian undergraduate students to undertake semester-based training in the Indo-Pacific region. With support provided by the Faculty of Science International Student Engagement team, Professor Joerg Henning was successful in obtaining funding to take 15 BVSc(Hons) students to Hong Kong and China in November and December 2025.



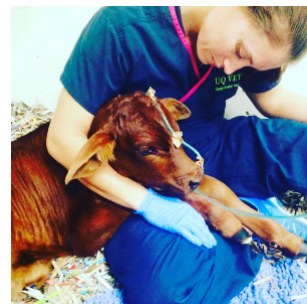
Associate Professor Joshua Aleri and professional staff members from the Faculty of Science also accompanied the students.

This study tour involved visits to the Hong Kong City University, the Sha Tin racecourse Equine Hospital and quarantine facility in Hong Kong as well as the Beas River Equestrian Centre Retired Racehorse Retraining Programme in Hong Kong. The students then travelled to Zhengzhou to visit the Henan Dairy Herd Improvement Centre and were involved in various dairy production activities. The final stop of the tour was South China Agricultural University in Guangzhou where students engaged in hands-on veterinary and animal health activities and completed cultural and language learning components.

The study tour provided students with practical exposure to Chinese/Hong Kong companion veterinary care and production animal industries. It enhanced their technical skills, cultural competence, and professional confidence and offered students networking opportunities to benefit their future research and careers.

Congratulations to Courtney Stewart on achieving prestigious international award

Courtney Stewart has achieved international recognition after being awarded the prestigious Veterinary Technician Specialist (VTS) in Production Animal Medicine credential through the Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice (AVTCP).



Following a rigorous credentialing and examination process, Courtney is one of only six professionals worldwide to hold this qualification and the only non-North American technician to have achieved this distinction.

The VTS designation is formally recognised by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) and represents the highest level of advanced clinical expertise and professional commitment within the veterinary technology profession. Candidates must demonstrate extensive case experience, advanced knowledge, continuing professional development, and peer-reviewed credential approval prior to sitting a comprehensive specialty examination.

Production Animal Medicine focuses on herd and population-level health management, biosecurity, disease prevention, and sustainable livestock systems - a critical area supporting food security, animal welfare, and agricultural productivity globally.

Courtney's achievement reflects not only personal dedication and clinical excellence, but also the growing international impact of veterinary technicians and nurses in advanced practice roles.

Veterinary Pathology Group hosts three international students

The Veterinary Pathology Group of the School is hosting three international students: Evaristo di Napoli, PhD student and resident in Veterinary Pathology at the University of Naples (Italy); Ana Giulia Gabriel da Rocha Cesario, 5th-year veterinary student from UNESP (Brazil); and Kenta Owaku, PhD student at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (Japan). Between Italy, Brazil, Japan, and our own



halls, the group now runs on at least four languages, many coffee styles, and one shared love of pathology. Please join us in giving Evaristo, Ana Giulia, and Kenta a very warm welcome. If you see them around, say hello and help us make them feel at home in our school and community. Welcome to Australia!

New immunotherapy trial for dogs with cancer

Prof Rachel Allavena and Dr José Granados will soon begin a new clinical trial at UQVETS testing an innovative immunotherapy treatment for dogs with solid tumours. The study, run in partnership with Avammune Therapeutics, will evaluate a novel oral drug designed to stimulate the body's innate immune system to help shrink or stabilise cancers that are difficult to treat surgically. This UQ trial will enrol dogs with large, inoperable, or challenging solid tumours, including soft tissue sarcoma, mast cell tumour, melanoma and others. The trial will offer eligible dogs with large or inoperable tumours the chance to access this emerging therapy while helping advance comparative oncology research. Recruitment is expected to open in early 2026.



Osteosarcoma Trial – Final Patients Needed

The team is also currently enrolling the last few patients for our ongoing osteosarcoma clinical trial. Owners of dogs diagnosed with osteosarcoma who may wish to participate are encouraged to contact UQVETS at uqvets.sa@uq.edu.au for more information.

Advancing veterinary forensics at UQ: expertise, training and justice for animals

The University of Queensland's School of Veterinary Science is strengthening its role in the growing field of veterinary forensics, combining specialist expertise, training of future leaders, and real-world impact in cases of animal cruelty and neglect.



Professor Rachel Allavena was recently awarded a Founding Fellowship in Veterinary Forensic Pathology, recognising her expertise in this emerging discipline. The Fellowship acknowledges both her technical expertise in post-mortem investigation and her contribution to developing veterinary forensic pathology as a formal, rigorous field that supports animal welfare, legal processes, and community trust.

Working alongside Professor Allavena is pathology resident Dr Althea Wang (see photo), whose training includes advanced forensic necropsy techniques, and a DVClinSci research project in taphonomy and thanatology focusing on how decomposition affects the interpretation of lesions in the heart and skin. Althea and Rachel are collaborating widely with forensic pathologists in Queensland Forensic and Scientific Services, particularly with Dr Rexson Tse, who is on Althea's advisory committee.

Their expertise was recently called upon in the widely reported Brisbane case of Arnie, a German Shepherd who was abandoned in a ute during extreme heat by his owner. Through careful forensic examination and interpretation, the team's work helped clarify the physiological consequences of heat stress and neglect, providing objective, evidence-based findings to inform investigations and legal proceedings. Other criminal investigations the team supports include murder-

suicide, homicide, domestic violence and unlawful killing of animals, as well as animal cruelty cases.

Viviana Gonzalez-Astudillo's research team receives WIRES special grant honour

Viviana's team has been awarded the Pat Connors Avian Grant - one of only three Special Grants presented nationally by WIRES (Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service) as part of their 2025 National Grants Program.



This honour is more than funding - it is a title bestowed on projects that exemplify excellence and the very spirit of Australian wildlife rescue and conservation. The Pat Connors Avian Grant pays tribute to the late Patrick Connors, a devoted WIRES member who built the organisation's first rescue and rehabilitation database *pro-bono*, helping deliver rescue support to over 2 million animals across Australia.

Being recognised alongside Pat's legacy is a remarkable distinction, and a testament to the outstanding avian conservation work happening right here at UQ SVS. Viviana and her team look forward to sharing updates on this project's progress over the coming year.

SVS well represented at Science Faculty Awards ceremony

SVS were proudly represented by several of our colleagues at the Science Faculty Awards, and we would like to further congratulate the winners of their categories

- Associate Professor Rebekah Scotney - Faculty of Science Award for Excellence
- Professor Joerg Henning - Leadership and Mentoring
- Mr Pranav Narayanan – Future Superstars
- Dr Kate Kemp - PhD Graduate Research Culture



The Faculty of Science Awards is an initiative that recognises the outstanding contributions and achievements of staff and students. Awardees have demonstrated excellence and potential in science learning, communication, research, teaching, service, mentoring, leadership or teamwork and community engagement and we congratulate all involved.

Report of the Joint Committee on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Veterinarians in South Australia

The report of the Joint Committee on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Veterinarians in South Australia was released in February, with two recommendations that are of significant importance to veterinary technology students and graduates, along with veterinary nurses. This may be a South Australian initiative but it has implications for the statutory regulation of veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses throughout Australia. As such, it is of great importance to the vet school community.

- Recommendation 9: That the Government of South Australia introduces legislation defining a state regulatory framework for veterinary nurses and veterinary technologists that includes mandatory registration, title protection, appropriate remuneration rates, and a defined set of restricted activities that can be done under veterinarian direction and supervision.
- Recommendation 10: That, after the introduction of a regulatory framework, the VSBSA acts to include a veterinary nurse or technologist to the board.

With a review of the Queensland Veterinary Surgeons Act now in progress, this has major implications for potential outcomes of that review regarding the regulation veterinary technologists and nurses in Queensland.

The focus of the inquiry was forming a comprehensive understanding of the factors negatively impacting the mental health and wellbeing of veterinarians in South Australia, as well as identifying measures to bring relief, provide support, and bring positive change to the veterinary industry.

The Animal Welfare Team visits Gatton campus monthly.

The Animal Welfare Team will be visiting Gatton campus once a month in 2026 to make ourselves more available to both researchers and animal facility staff.

Who we are

Dr Virginia Sheppard BVSc(Hons), GPCertFeIP: Veterinary Officer (Animal Ethics and Welfare). A veterinarian with over 15 years' experience in clinical practice and five years working in the office of Research Ethics and Integrity and as an advisor to the UQ Animal Ethics Committees (AECs) and researchers.

Dr Rebecca Cramp BSc(Hons), PhD: Animal Welfare Advisor. An animal researcher with over 20 years' experience, plus a background in veterinary nursing. Rebecca was a member of one of UQ's Animal Ethics Committees for 3 years and now works in the office of Research Ethics and Integrity as an advisor to the AECs and the research community.

What we offer

Our collective experience in veterinary medicine, research and ethics positions us to advise on matters such as:

- Animal ethics applications and amendments
- Developing monitoring plans, score sheets and SOPs
- Reporting to the AEC – Unexpected Adverse Event and Mandatory Annual reports
- Refinements to experimental and teaching protocols that improve animal welfare and outcomes

When and where we will be at Gatton

We will visit on the morning of the third Wednesday of each month - Room 213, Level 2 NW Briton. The next date for this is Wednesday 18th March, 8am to 12pm.

If you would like to book a specific time to meet up or have an enquiry that you would like to discuss before our next visit, please contact us at: ae.welfare@uq.edu.au. Otherwise just drop in on the day.

Upcoming events and opportunities

Support SVS students at the Vet School Picnic

Please come and join our students from both programs for a casual, drop-in, community building picnic.

As in 2025, as well as family, kids, significant others being invited, the Office of Director, Gatton Campus has generously allowed us to again trial bringing our dogs along too!

Please ensure that your pooch remains on a lead at all times, is registered, healthy and vaccinated for campus biosecurity, and you have poo bags on hand to immediately clean up after your dog.

When: Thursday 12 March 2026

Where: Central Walkway, Gatton campus

Time: 5-7pm



The 6th International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Environment (SAE 2026)

For information about submitting, reviewing or publishing articles please contact Dr Che Minh Tung, abs.sae2026@hcmuaf.edu.vn

When: November 11-13 2026

Where: Nong Lam University - Ho Chi Minh City, Linh Xuan Ward, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

[More information](#)

In case of confirmed emergencies such as gas explosions, life threats, confirmed fire, please contact **000** - remember to call out of UQ first by dialling another 0 first, i.e. **0-000**.

For medical emergencies, UQ still mandates UQ Security be contacted first, all hours, on ext **53333** or **3365 3333**.

In both cases, remember to let them know you are calling from UQ GATTON campus and in the latter case, your building number.

- 8114 (Veterinary Science Building)
- 8106 (Veterinary Teaching Building including Anatomy, Post-mortem, MPL and Histo labs)
- 8156 (Veterinary Medical Centre)
- 8179 (Clinical Studies Centre)

[School of Veterinary Science](#), The University of Queensland, Phone: (07) 5460 1834

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