



MSc thesis position
Exploring choices and habits related to raw pet food recommendations and feeding

A 2-year MSc thesis position is available in the Department of Clinical Studies investigating choices and habits related to raw pet food recommendations and feeding among pet owners, veterinary health care teams, pet store employees and breeders. The position is offered through the [OVC Pet Nutrition website](#) under supervision of [Dr. Adronie Verbrugghe](#) commencing January 4, 2021.

The practice of feeding raw-meat based diets has grown in popularity over the last decade. Despite the lack of scientific evidence to substantiate marketing claims, many pet owners believe this method of feeding is healthier for their pet, and in the wake of pet food recalls, some pet owners distrust pet food companies and seek alternative options to conventional pet foods. Pet owners' knowledge about nutritional requirements and pet food manufacturing vary widely and often are determined by unvetted information that has been acquired on the Internet. Due to potential concerns regarding nutritional adequacy and an increased risk of contamination with raw-meat based diets, most veterinarians do not recommend this feeding practice. However, more than a few veterinarians and technicians are proponents of feeding raw-meat based diets, and many retail pet stores sell raw-meat foods and treats. Also breeders often feed raw-meat based diets to their breeding colony and advise pet owners to continue feeding raw products to the offspring. In order to begin effectively communicating with pet owners, breeders, pet store employees and veterinary health care teams interested in raw diets, it is important that we understand their different perspectives and concerns. Once we determine where the "gaps" are between what pet owners want and what veterinary health care teams are recommending, or what breeders and pet store employees are saying, we can then identify appropriate messages for pet owners making purchasing decisions about food, and for others who are selling, or recommending raw-meat based diets.

The ideal candidate will participate fully in all aspects of the research project while collaborating with a dynamic research team in the Department of Clinical Studies at OVC. Moreover, the graduate student will directly interact with the industry partner, thereby gaining relevant work experience with a pet food company. Selection of the successful candidate is based on a combination of academic criteria, relevant interest and experience, referees' evaluations, and an assessment of the candidate's career goals and motivation. An undergraduate background with courses and/or research experience in animal physiology, nutrition, and statistics is preferred. Motivated and ambitious students with a keen interest in pet nutrition would be ideal. Well-developed interpersonal skills are essential. Candidates must be able to work independently and as part of a collaborative team.

Review of applications will begin immediately, and continue until the position is filled. Funding for the research project is currently available, yet the candidate is expected to obtain stipend funding through scholarship applications in partnership with the industry partner.

Applicants are encouraged to send CV, transcripts, names and contact information of three references, and a cover letter stating interest in the abovementioned title to Dr. Adronie Verbrugghe, Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Studies, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, at averbrug@uoguelph.ca.

Research-related inquiries should be directed to Dr. Adronie Verbrugghe at averbrug@uoguelph.ca
Further inquiries related to general application procedures can be directed to Ms. Jessie Beer, Graduate Program Assistant, OVC Shared Administrative Services, University of Guelph; e-mail: csggrad@uoguelph.ca

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