



## Press release

### **Animal assisted interventions and their health economic impact study supported by Ceva Santé Animale presented to Uppsala International Health Summit**

*October 19<sup>th</sup>, Libourne* – A new study highlighting the potential health economic benefits of animal assisted programmes with school pupils, who face a series of challenges including autism and bullying, has been launched at the prestigious Uppsala Health Summit in Sweden.

Seventy Swedish teachers from schools where animals, mainly dogs, had been used in sessions with pupils, completed questionnaires as part of the research project. They highlighted the fact that not only did the mental health of pupils benefit from taking part in the sessions but the interventions often reduced absences from school and improved a child's academic performance.

In economic terms, this meant a reduction in funds required for extra teaching staff in schools. The impact on academic performance also improved future employment prospects, reducing the pressure on social financing from State authorities and helping to avoid the costs of dealing with the increased likelihood of involvement in crime for young people facing lifelong unemployment.

The study, 'Mapping of social working dog teams in Sweden', by therapy dog trainer and practitioner Matilda Ström and Professor Lena Lidfors of the Department of Animal Environment and Health, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, was supported by the global veterinary health company, Ceva Santé Animale. It was presented at a workshop during the Uppsala Summit which, this year, explored the theme of 'Pathways to Lifelong Mental Wellbeing'.

Animal assisted programmes in Sweden had been increasing but pressure on education and health authority budgets has seen a number of them closed down. A series of recent international research papers have been published, notably in Australia <sup>1</sup> and the Netherlands <sup>2</sup> spotlighting the positive behavioural improvements seen by children and their families as a result of regular involvement in sessions involving animals.

*"We asked everyone who was sent a questionnaire whether they had success with using dogs in school and everyone said 'yes', no-one answered 'no',"* said Professor Lidfors. *"The health economic benefits are that pupils can end school with approved grades so they can get higher education and a job."*

Figures<sup>3</sup> show that training a social therapy dog in Sweden costs around €3000 but costs to schools are low because handlers often work for minimal or sometimes no fee.

Meanwhile the social cost of a one year in entering working life is €50,000 <sup>4</sup> and if an individual is excluded from work during their lifetime, the costs to the State are over €1 million.

Matilda Ström said: *"Sadly enough we might have thought that the most important thing was to show that the people all those health benefits but now the authorities need to know something more and this is where we are now with the health economic question."*

Sara Karlberg, the CEO of the Swedish Therapy Dog School, who took part in the Uppsala Health Summit workshop, said: *“We have the evidence to show that the therapy helps the children to reach their goals in school, which in the long term means they can provide for themselves when they grow up.”*

Laura Hartman, the Chief Sustainability Officer with Uppsala Municipality said she hoped the workshop would give ‘new energy’ to the discussion on animal assisted programmes in Sweden’s schools and that she thought the workshop would encourage a national dialogue in Sweden on the issue.

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<sup>1</sup>Animal Assisted Therapy for Children and Adolescents with Autism

Spectrum Disorder: Parent perspectives: Maeve Doyle London; Lynette Mackenzie; Meryl Lovarini· Claire Dickson· Lynette Mackenzie Alberto Alvarez-Campos

<sup>2</sup>Children and animals in synchrony: Professor Richard Griffioen

<sup>3</sup>‘The effect of dog assisted education for problematic school absence and the welfare of service dogs’: Moa Magnusson (supervised by Professor Lena Lidfors)

<sup>4</sup>Nilsson I. 2012: Social Investments Around Children and Young People. Skandia Ideas for Life’.

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**About Ceva Santé Animale:**

Ceva Santé Animale is a French multinational veterinary pharmaceutical company created in 1999. Chaired by Dr. Marc Prikazsky, Ceva specializes in the research, development, production and marketing of pharmaceutical products and vaccines for livestock (ruminants, swine, poultry) and companion animals. Ceva is present in 110 countries and employs over 6000 people worldwide.

2020 turnover: €1.3 billion.

**Website:** <http://www.ceva.com>     **YouTube**

**Contact:** Martin Mitchell - Group Communication Director - [martin.mitchell@ceva.com](mailto:martin.mitchell@ceva.com)