

ASAS Centennial Paper: The future of teaching and research in companion animal biology in departments of animal sciences

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Abstract :

Departments of animal sciences must be relevant to a society in which a small number of people can raise almost all the food animal products needed. The declining number of people involved in animal agriculture has decreased enrollment of students interested in food animals in many departments of animal science. However, several departments welcomed students from a diverse background and began research on animals other than food animals. In many states, the undergraduate enrollment is made up primarily of students interested only in companion animals. A benefit of this is that we have recruited new students into animal agriculture and they have gone on to excellent careers. We have a new challenge now: how to maintain and expand the efforts in teaching, research, and outreach of companion animal science. Departments wishing to expand in teaching have examples of successful courses and curricula from other departments. Some departments have expanded their teaching efforts across their own university to teach about pets to a wider audience than their own majors; other departments can follow. In research, a small number of faculty have been able to establish extramurally funded projects on pets, including horses. But it will be difficult for more than a handful of departments to have a serious research effort in dogs, cats, birds, fish, or exotic animals. Departments will have to make a concerted effort to invest in such endeavors; joint ventures with other universities and colleges of veterinary medicine (or medicine) will probably be required. Funding sources for "traditional" efforts in nutrition, reproduction, and physiology are small and inconsistent; however, with the progress of the equine, canine, and feline genome projects, there should be opportunities from federal funding sources aimed at using animal models for human health. In addition, efforts in animal behavior and welfare can be expanded, perhaps with some funding from private foundations or animal-supportive organizations.

Key Word :

companion animal, outreach, philosophy, research, review, teaching

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