A Dog’s Best Friend

“Happiness is a warm puppy,” Lorienna Yancura quoted, Charlie Brown creator Charles M. Schulz on one of the many benefits of interacting with pets as the syllabus of her class "Going to the Dogs: Companion Animals in Social Science, Medicine, and Humanism." This innovative course aims to show students with multiple disciplinary interests to explore one of the universal bonds between humans and animals.

This class studied various types of canine companionship, from traditional service dogs for the visually impaired to bomb- and drug-detecting dogs to the more recent enrollments of pets to help reduce anxiety in elementary schools or to calm and soothe people with anxiety disorders or PTSD. The class incorporated cultural and medical studies as well, examining how companion animals have been represented in media and the ethics of animal research. Dr. Yancura, a professor in the department of Family and Consumer Sciences who also studies family caregiving for older adults, was keen to bring her own companion dog, Philip, to visit people living with Alzheimer's disease. She has seen how interacting with an animal seems to brighten patients’ mood and enables some of them to remember cherished animals in their past. She has also brought Philip and her new dog Bruce to her courses on the UH Mānoa campus. Students have reported that having a well-behaved and friendly dog in class helps them learn by fostering a pleasant class atmosphere—“Dogs create a kind of homey feeling”—and reducing stress—"It was a sigh of relief to have a little friend come along and brighten up the mood." They have also reported that a dog’s presence in class helps them relate to the professor and even boosts their desire to attend class.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura's larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people's mental and physical health in Hawai'i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal and subjective evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings." Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

In this class students studied various types of canine companionship, from traditional service dogs for the visually impaired to bomb- and drug-detecting dogs to the more recent enrollments of pets to help reduce anxiety in elementary schools or to calm and soothe people with anxiety disorders or PTSD. The class incorporated cultural and medical studies as well, examining how companion animals have been represented in media and the ethics of animal research. Dr. Yancura, a professor in the department of Family and Consumer Sciences who also studies family caregiving for older adults, was keen to bring her own companion dog, Philip, to visit people living with Alzheimer's disease. She has seen how interacting with an animal seems to brighten patients’ mood and enables some of them to remember cherished animals in their past. She has also brought Philip and her new dog Bruce to her courses on the UH Mānoa campus. Students have reported that having a well-behaved and friendly dog in class helps them learn by fostering a pleasant class atmosphere—“Dogs create a kind of homey feeling”—and reducing stress—"It was a sigh of relief to have a little friend come along and brighten up the mood.” They have also reported that a dog’s presence in class helps them relate to the professor and even boosts their desire to attend class.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai’i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal and subjective evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai’i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal and subjective evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

Aloha,
Nicholas B. Comerford, Ph.D.
Dean and Director for Research and Cooperative Extension

[Image of a dog and a person]

“T H I R D  Q U A R T E R
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
People, Place, Promise

Animals

I joined the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources in September as the Dean and Director for Research and Cooperative Extension, having previously been associated with an animal science program involving both animal nutrition and reproduction while also raising sheep on my own small farm. Since coming to the college, I have enjoyed the opportunity to get familiar with my adopted state in terms of terrain, weather, and culture. One thing is the same: animals are animals wherever you go.

The connections between humans and animals are deep, complex, and various. They may be our food, our friends, our working partners, and our research subjects. This quarter’s Impact Report pays tribute to animals and to the many ways those in our college work with them, both for their well-being and the well-being of the people of our Islands. At the Meleaki Research Station on the Big Island, breeding cattle is a science that migrates from the lab to the field, and the benefits of that research are helping producers across the state. Alumnae David Franta helps at-risk youth to gain job skills by raising pigs for local consumption, boosting sustainability in his area of North Kohala.

Two other stories hit close to home. Extension veterinarian Jenee Odani and state vet Raquel Wong care for animals in ways that affect all of Hawai‘i, and professor in human development Loriena Yancura researches the stress-relieving effects of individual interactions between dogs and people. As the owner of an Australian Shepherd, Jack, who has just gone through the quarantine process, I can appreciate the care that goes into keeping Hawai‘i safe from animal-borne pests. It is a privilege to be associated with a program that takes such an interest in aspects of our relationship with the animal world.”

Nicholas B. Comerford, Ph.D.
Dean and Director for Research and Cooperative Extension

[Image of a dog and a person]
A Dog’s Best Friend

It is a privilege to be associated with a program that takes such an interest in aspects of our relationship with the animal world.

Aloha,

Nicholas B. Comerford, Ph.D.
Dean and Director for Research
and Cooperative Extension

College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources

People, Place, Promise

Animals

I joined the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources in September as the Dean and Director for Research and Cooperative Extension, having previously been associated with an animal science program involving both animal nutrition and reproduction while also raising sheep on my own small farm. Since coming to the college, I have enjoyed the opportunity to get familiar with my adopted state in terms of terrain, weather, and culture. One thing is the same: animals are animals wherever you go.

The connections between humans and animals are deep, complex, and various. They may be our food, our friends, our working partners, and our research subjects. This quarter’s Impact Report pays tribute to animals and to the many ways those in our college work with them, both for their well-being and the well-being of the people of our Islands. At the Mealani Research Station on the Big Island, breeding cattle is a science that migrates from the lab to the field, and the benefits of that research are helping producers across the state. Alumna Viresha D’Souza uses her background in dairy science to help at-risk youth to gain job skills by raising pigs for local consumption, boosting sustainability in his area of North Kohala.

Two other stories hit close to home. Extension veterinarian Jones Odani and state vet Raquel Wong care for animals in ways that affect all of Hawai‘i, and professor in human development Loriena Yancura researches the stress-relieving effects of individual interactions between dogs and people. As the owner of an Australian Shepherd, Jack, who has just gone through the quarantine process, I can appreciate the care that goes into keeping Hawaii’s safe from animal-borne pests. It is a privilege to be associated with a program that takes such an interest in aspects of our relationship with the animal world.

It is a privilege

With the animal world.

Hawai‘i.

David Fuertes helps at-risk youth to gain job skills by raising pigs for local consumption, boosting sustainability in his area of North Kohala.

In this class students studied various types of canine companionship, from traditional service dogs for the visually impaired to bomb- and drug-detecting dogs to the more recent enlistments of pets to help reluctant readers in elementary schools or to calm and soothe people with anxiety disorders or PTSD. This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

The class incorporated cultural and medical studies as well, examining the ways companion animals have been represented in media and the ethics of animal research. Dr. Yancura, a professor in the department of Family and Consumer Sciences who also studies family caregiving for older adults, said she has brought her own companion dog, the author’s dog Phillip, to visit people living with Alzheimer’s disease. She has seen how interacting with an animal seems to brighten patients’ mood and enables some of them to remember cherished animals in their past. She has also brought Phillip and her new dog Bruce to her courses on the UH Mānoa campus. Students have reported that having a well-behaved and friendly dog in class helps them learn by fostering a pleasant class atmosphere—“Dogs create a kind of honey feeling”—and reducing stress—“If was a sigh of relief to have a little friend come along and brighten up the mood.” They have also reported that a dog’s presence in class helps them relate to the professor and even boosts their desire to attend class. This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

Dr. Yancura’s research.

In this class students studied various types of canine companionship, from traditional service dogs for the visually impaired to bomb- and drug-detecting dogs to the more recent enlistments of pets to help reluctant readers in elementary schools or to calm and soothe people with anxiety disorders or PTSD.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

This work all contributes to Dr. Yancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Yancura’s research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.
Caring for Hawai‘i, One Animal at a Time

Working as a veterinarian for the state is a demanding and multifaceted job, but for CTAHR’s Alaska District is up to it. Coincidentally—or maybe not so coincidentally—the college is associated with at least two interrepid and caring state vets.

Formerly a Hawai‘i state veterinary medical officer, Jenee Odani left the post to become CTAHR’s Extension veterinarians. As she explains, this has enabled a change of focus for her: as a veterinary pathologist, she was more familiar with examining animals after death, diagnosing what killed them. She was also focused on regulatory concerns and on the big picture, on patterns and movement of diseases. As Extension vet, she noted in the first presentation to Big Island farmers, her focus is more individual: she brings her scientific expertise to the particular farm, advising, giving specific recommendations for that producer’s situation.

Dr. Odani has some large-scale goals too: she wants to establish a baseline database of the diseases farmers and ranchers are seeing in their own stock, address big gaps in knowledge about medical interventions in organic livestock production, and create basic protocols for livestock: feeding, vaccinations, and other care guidelines, which can help prevent disease in their community.

The centerpiece of the program is raising pigs. Students build their own inoculated Deep Litter System pigs, which use KNF techniques to negate the usual problems of fats and smells. There’s no wastewater runoff from the pens, since microorganisms and a composting filter on the floor control sanitation naturally. Participants learn market techniques by buying weaned piglets from Mr. Fuertes, raising them, and then selling the grown pigs to outside markets. CTAHR offers training on employment opportunities and starting a business; it also wants to establish a baseline database of the diseases farmers and ranchers are seeing in their own stock, address big gaps in knowledge about medical interventions in organic livestock production, and create basic protocols for livestock: feeding, vaccinations, and other care guidelines, which can help prevent disease in their community.

Drink to the animals. Dr. Odani stresses; they can also be carried by humans or even found in the rubbish. She is looking to notice diseases, those that can be spread from animals to humans. They don’t just arrive via animals, but more importantly, the youth gain confidence and a stronger sense of culture and their place in their community.

Sustainability is key for Mr. Fuertes, who says using locally produced inputs helps keep costs down and creates healthier foods. Animal feed and compost add food from kitchen scraps, sweet potato vines, manure, and locally grown crops. Background trees are shipped for handling the waste. His family is working to establish a meat processing and retail sales outlet in North Kohala, part of their plan to create a full-circle production chain in which crops and animals are raised and processed in Kohala and then sold directly to the local community. In line with Governor Ige’s commitment to double the amount of locally grown food by 2030, this goal far surpasses it in scope—they hope to see 50% of all food eaten in the district produced there. And if expertise, energy, and hard work and food. The nonprofit Kahua Pa’a Mua, Inc. (KPM), of which he is executive director, works to strengthen his North Kohala community through these, offering educational and cultural programs for youth and adults based on growing food and caring for the land.

After earning his undergraduate degree in tropical agriculture from CTAHR, Mr. Fuertes got his teaching certificate and went on to become an assistant at Kohala High School. Now retired after 32 years at the DOE, he partners with his sons, a UH Hilo graduate, as a part-time cattle rancher as a mentor for KPM.

“My passion is working with kids,” he confirms. KPM offers mentorship programs in animal husbandry, crop farming, and agriculture construction. Mr. Fuertes incorporates Korean Natural Farming methodologies into his teaching and ag programs, using locally available and homemade inputs cultured with naturally occurring microorganisms to improve the health and well-being of plants and animals.

Sustainability is key for Mr. Fuertes, who says using locally produced inputs helps keep costs down and creates healthier foods. Animal feed and compost add food from kitchen scraps, sweet potato vines, manure, and locally grown crops. Background trees are shipped for handling the waste. His family is working to establish a meat processing and retail sales outlet in North Kohala, part of their plan to create a full-circle production chain in which crops and animals are raised and processed in Kohala and then sold directly to the local community. In line with Governor’s commitment to double the amount of locally grown food by 2030, this goal far surpasses it in scope—they hope to see 50% of all food eaten in the district produced there. And if expertise, energy, hard work, and community commitment can do it, they’ll make it.

Breeding Success

Mealani Research Station on the Big Island is the perfect living lab for researching cattle production in the tropics and subtropics. In this field, genetics is key, and how the college is researching how to match cattle qualities with the areas where they’ll be used, including fitness for the amount of rain and sun, the temperature and humidity, and the types of forage growing there. In areas with high humidity, cows with smooth hair do better than those with thick, coarse coats. Cattle with high growth potential should be matched with areas with ample nutrients forage material, while those that will grow to be smaller can graze in places with lower-quality feed.

Each genetic matching is particularly important in Hawai‘i because of the Islands’ diverse and distinct microclimates—even individual ranchers ideally may have a “mauka herd” and a “mauana herd” with different variances. Also, because the potential range here is relatively small, it’s crucial to maximize efficiency to compete in the market.

Mealani uses two modes of breeding, artificial insemination (AI) and “natural service.” For AI, semen is chosen based on desired genetic traits and shipped from the station. Mealani typically holds AI School once a year, when UH students and local ranchers come to gain the physical prowess complementing the cutting-edge research. Immobilizing the cow in the “sacrine chute” takes perfect timing and tremendous physical strength, while inserting the long, narrow syringe requires delicate manipulation. At a recent breeding day, Animal Sciences major Kulani Kawleigh, intern with Extension agent Michael DuPonte, gets hands-on instruction in the process and agreed it’s harder than it looks.

There’s technology involved in the natural service breeding too. Before being moved into the field with the cows, the specially chosen bulls are fitted with cone-shaped metal muzzles dashed with paint. This device makes it impossible to keep tabs on their semen: when mating, they touch their noses to the cow’s back. The paint on the muzzle marks the cows, keeping track of those that have been serviced.

The breeding program is thriving. Recent genetic testing showed Mealani’s bulls rank among the top 5% and even 1% of Angus in the country, and they’re also free of a common genetic disorder, Developmental Dilation. Mealani hopes to soon to make semen from its elite bulls available by contracting with a commercial seed. All of, and more, and more local ranchers are able to use the station’s research for their operations, including buying the prime breed bulls for their own herds.

Eat (Very) Local

Mealani’s breeding program is thriving. In bulls rank among the top 5% and even 1% of Angus in the country. And they’re also free of a common genetic disorder, Developmental Dilation. Mealani hopes to soon to make semen from its elite bulls available by contracting with a commercial seed. All of, and more, and more local ranchers are able to use the station’s research for their operations, including buying the prime breed bulls for their own herds.
Caring for Hawai‘i, One Animal at a Time

Dr. Odani has some large-scale goals too: she wants to establish an Inoculated Deep Litter System program, which use KNF techniques to negate the usual problems of flies and smell. There’s no wastewater runoff from the pens, since microorganisms and a composting litter on the floor control sanitation naturally. Participants learn market techniques by being woven pigeons from Mr. Fuertes, raising them, and then selling the grown pigs to outside markets. KPM offers training on employment opportunities and starting a business, raising them, and then selling the grown pigs to outside markets. KPM offers training on employment opportunities and starting a business, but most importantly, the youth gain confidence and a stronger sense of culture and their place in their community.

Sustainability is key for Mr. Fuertes, who says using locally produced inputs helps keep costs down and creates healthier foods. Animal feed and compost fodder come from kitchen scraps, sweet potatoes, coffee beans, macadamias, and locally grown roots. Cattle manage to grow and produce meat. The “根据自己”的 crops are used in traditional Hawaiian dishes. The “根据自己” is raised on the farm and used in local dishes. The “根据自己” is raised on the farm and used in local dishes.

Breeding Success

Mealani Research Station on the Big Island is the perfect living lab for researching cattle production in the tropics and subtropics. In this field, genetics is key, and now the college is researching how to match cattle qualities with the areas where they’ll be raised, including fitness for the amount of rain and sun, the temperature and humidity, and the types of forage growing there. In areas with high humidity, cows with smooth hair do better than those with thick, course coats. Cattle with high growth potential should be matched with areas with ample nutritious forage material, whereas cows that will grow to be smaller can grow in places with lower quality finishes. Such genetic matching is particularly important in Hawaii because of the islands’ diverse and distinct microclimates—very individual ranchers ideally may have a “masu herd” and a “mauka herd” with different varieties. Also, because the potential range here is relatively small, it’s crucial to maximize efficiency to compete in the market. Mealani uses two modes of breeding, artificial insemination (AI) and “natural service.” For AI, the semen is chosen based on desired genetic traits and shipped frozen to the station. Mealani typically holds an AI School once a year, when all students and local ranchers come to gain the physical prowess complementing the cutting-edge research. Immobilizing the cow in the “squeeze chute” takes perfect timing and tremendous physical strength, while inserting the long, narrow syringe requires delicate manipulation. At a recent breeding day, Animal Sciences major Julio de la Pena, intern with Extension agent Michael DuPont, gets hands-on instruction in the process and agrees it’s harder than it looks. There’s technology involved in the natural service breeding too. Before being loaders into the field with the cows, the specially designed bulls are fitted with cone-shaped metal muzzles dabbed with paint. This device makes the masculinity in the bulls’ “observed behavior” when mating; they touch their noses to the cows’ backs. The paint on the muzzle marks the cows, keeping track of those that have been serviced.

The breeding program is thriving. Recent genetic testing showed Mealani’s bulls ranked among the top 5% and even 1% of Angus in the country, and they’re also free of a common genetic disorder, Developmental Duplication. Mealani hopes to soon to make semen from its elite bulls available by contracting with a commercial stud. All of these, more and more local ranchers are able to use the station’s research for their operations, including buying the prime-breed bulls for their own herds.
Caring for Hawaii, One Animal at a Time

W

orking as a veterinarian for the state is a demanding and multifaceted job; yet CTAHR folks are up to it. Coincidentally—or maybe not so coincidentally—the college is associated with at least two intrepid and caring state vets.

Formerly a Hawaii state veterinary medical officer, Jon Odani left the post to become CTAHR Extension veterinarian. As she explains, this entailed a change of focus for her: as a veterinary pathologist, she was more familiar with examining animals after death, diagnosing what killed them. She was also focused on regulatory concerns and on the big picture, on patterns and movement of disease. As Extension vet, she noted, “she is looking to establish a baseline database of the diseases farms and ranchers are seeing in their own stock; address big gaps in knowledge with medical interventions in organic livestock production; and create best protocols for livestock feeding, vaccinations, and other care guidelines, which can prevent disease because animals that are optimally cared for are usually healthier.

Animal Sciences alumna Raquel Wong, the Hawai‘i State Animal Health Official and the administrator of the Department of Agriculture’s Animal Industry Division, has plans of her own.

Tackled with protecting Hawai‘i’s livestock and poultry industries through the control and prevention of pests and disease, she supervises the animal quarantine program and the State Veterinary Laboratory, as well as providing aquaculture and livestock support services. Dr. Wong is in charge of disease investigation for both livestock and domestic animals, with both keeping out diseases we don’t have in the Islands and dealing with those we do.

As she explains, although the state doesn’t physically touch any other land-masses, it receives a lot of traffic and imports from Asia, where many animal diseases are coming from—including zoo-science alums and now a very busy lady veterinarian.

Dr. Eileen Faust and Dr. Jenee Odani. CTAHR Extension veterinarians.

Eat (Very) Local

D

avid Fuertes understands two things that bring a community together: meaningful work and food. The nonprofit Kohala Pono, Inc. (KPI), of which he is executive director, works to strengthen his North Kohala community through these, offering educational and cultural programs for youth and adults based on growing food and caring for the land.

After earning his undergraduate degree in tropical agriculture from CTAHR, Mr. Fuertes got his veterinary certificate and went on to become an ag instructor at Kohala High School. Now retired after 32 years at the DOE, he partners with his sons, a UIH HS grad, as a part-time cattle rancher and as a mentor for KPI.

“My passion is working with kids,” he confesses. KPI offers mentorship programs in animal husbandry, crop farming, and agriculture construction. Mr. Fuertes incorporates Korean Natural Farming methodologies into his teaching and ag production, using locally available and homemade inputs cultured with naturally occurring microorganisms to improve the health and well-being of plants and animals.

The centerpiece of the program is raising pigs. Students build their own inoculated Deep Litter System pigpens, which use KNF techniques to negate the usual problems of flies and smells. There’s no waste runoff from the pens, since microorganisms and a composting filter on the floor control sanitation naturally. Participants learn market techniques by buying weaned piglets from Mr. Fuertes, raising them, and then selling the grown pigs to outside markets. KPI offers training on employment opportunities and starting a business, raising them, and then selling the grown pigs to outside markets. KPI offers training on employment opportunities and starting a business, learning the process and agreed it’s harder than it looks.

Sustainability is key for Mr. Fuertes, who says using locally produced inputs helps keep costs down and creates healthier foods. Animal feed and compost fodder come from kitchen scraps, sweet potatoes, citrus, lemongrass, and locally grown perennials. Backyard trees are chipped for bedding down and creates healthier foods. Animal feed and compost fodder come from kitchen scraps, sweet potatoes, citrus, lemongrass, and locally grown perennials. Backyard trees are chipped for bedding. Mr. Fuertes incorporates Korean Natural Farming methodologies into his teaching and ag production, using locally available and homemade inputs cultured with naturally occurring microorganisms to improve the health and well-being of plants and animals.

The centerpiece of Kohala Pono’s raisin pig is student-built Deep Litter System pigpens.

Breeding Success

Malamani Research Station on the Big Island is the perfect living lab for researching cattle production in the tropics and subtropics. In its fields, genetics is key, and how the college is researching how to match cattle qualities with the areas where they’ll be raised, including fitness for the amount of sun and rain, the temperature and humidity, and the types of forage growing there. In areas with high humidity, cows with smooth hair do better than those with thick, coarse coats. Cattle with high growth potential should be matched with areas with ample nutritious forage material, while those that will grow to be smaller can graze in places with lower quality fillishments.

Such genetic matching is particularly important in Hawaii because of the Islands’ diverse and distinct microclimates—even individual ranchers ideally may have a “makai herd” and a “mauka herd” with different varieties. Also, because the potential range here is relatively small, it’s crucial to maximize efficiency to compete in the market.

 mealani’s breeding program is thriving. In India rank among the top 3% and even 1% of Angus in the country. Dr. Fuertes is executive director for nonprofit Kohala Pono, Inc. The breeding program is thriving. Recent genetic testing showed Malamani’s bulls rank among the top 5% and even 1% of Angus in the country, and they’re also free of a common genetic disorder, Developmental Duplication. Mealani hopes to make semen from its elite bulls available by contracting with a commercial stud. All of this, more and more local ranchers are able to use the station’s research for their operations, including buying the prime-breed bulls for their own herds.
A Dog's Best Friend

Aloha,

Nicholas B. Comerford, Ph.D.
Dean and Director for Research
and Cooperative Extension
www.ctahr.hawaii.edu

“Happiness is a warm puppy,” Loriena Tancura quoted Charlie Brown creator Charles M. Schulz on one of the many benefits of interacting with pets as the syllabus of her class “Going to the Dogs: Companion Animals in Social Science, Medicine, and Humanities.” This innovative course on the University of Hawai‘i (UH) Manoa campus has seen how interacting with an animal seems to brighten patients’ moods and enables some of them to remember cherished animals in their past. The class incorporated cultural and medical studies as well, examining the ways companion animals have been represented in media and the ethics of animal research. Dr. Tancura, a professor in the department of Family and Consumer Sciences who also studies family caregiving for older adults, used to bring her own companion dog Phillip to visit people living with Alzheimer’s disease. She has seen how interacting with an animal seems to brighten patients’ moods and enables some of them to remember cherished animals in their past.

Two other stories hit close to home. Extension veterinarian Jenee Odani and state vet Raquel Wong care for animals in ways that affect all of Hawai‘i, and professor in human development Loriena Tancura researches the stress-reducing effects of individual interactions between dogs and people. The owner of an Australian Shepherd, Jack, who has just gone through the quarantine process, I can appreciate the care that goes into keeping Hawai‘i safe from animal-borne pests. It is a privilege to be associated with a program that takes such an interest in aspects of our relationship with the animal world.

Dr. Tancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal and subjective evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical-proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Tancura research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.

This work all contributes to Dr. Tancura’s larger research goals, for which she has received a five-year grant from USDA NIFA, of studying ways of improving people’s mental and physical health in Hawai‘i through human-animal interactions. As she explains, “A great deal of anecdotal and subjective evidence points to the influence that animals, particularly dogs, have on reducing the biological and psychological effects of stress in humans. However, there is surprisingly little empirical-proof of this influence in social settings.” Dr. Tancura research aims to fill this important gap by performing research studies to explore the impact of companion dogs in the workplace, schools, and institutional settings. And that impact, from indicators thus far, is very positive.