

# Best practice in AAI- achieving connectedness

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**GREEN CHIMNEYS, BREWSTER, APRIL 2019**

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International Association of  
**Human-Animal Interaction**  
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[www.iahaio.org](http://www.iahaio.org)

# Our exciting multidisciplinary work field

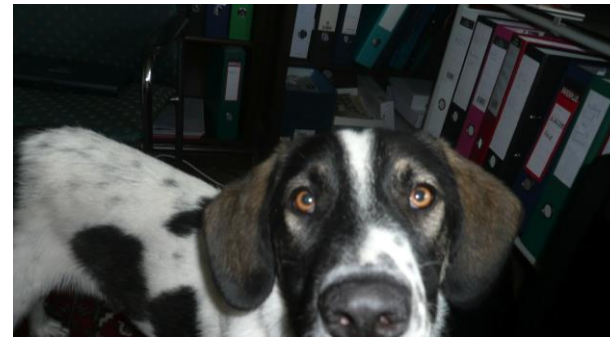
What do we have in common?

**We all strive to deliver the best we can!**

However, how do we know what is the best practice? Do we agree on what is best practice?

# Interdependency

- ▶ Animals depend on humans
- ▶ Humans depend on animals
- ▶ Humans and other animals depend on a healthy environment

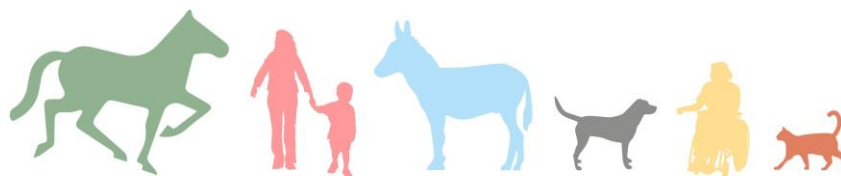


# BEST PRACTICE IN ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS

Is it doing our best to help people and not harming animals?

Is it doing what we have been doing for many years and what worked?

Is it based on evidence? Based on scientific knowledge ? On successful practices?



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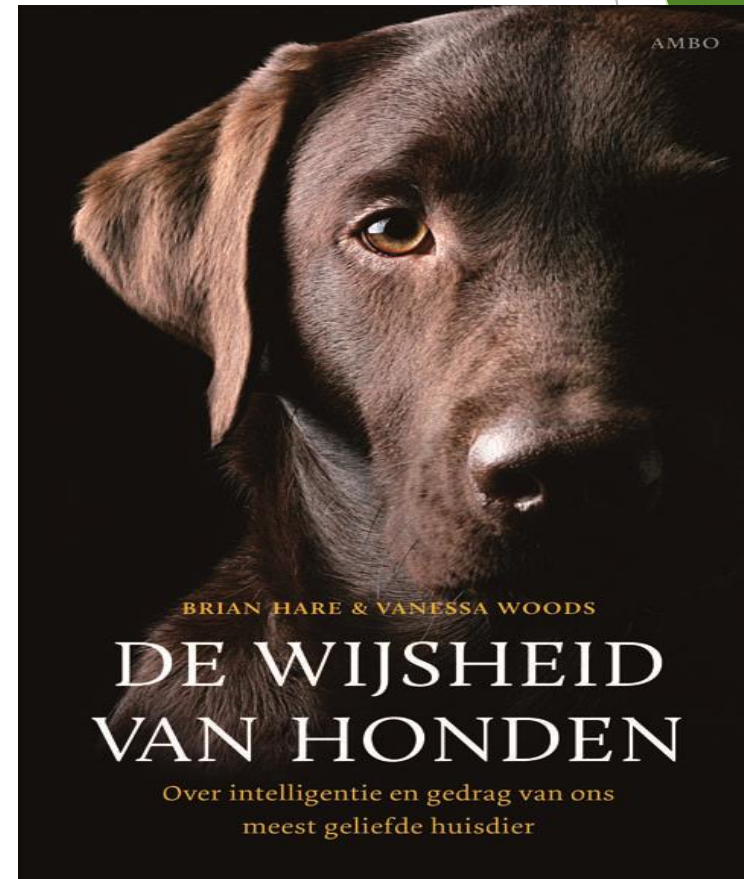
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# Human and animal welfare equally important?

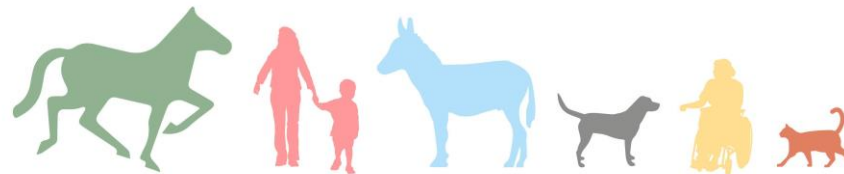
- ▶ One health one welfare
- ▶ Growing scientific knowledge about animals cognitions and emotions (Panksepp, Bekof, Miklosi, Hare)
- ▶ Growing scientific knowledge about mechanisms of AAI and HAI (Griffioen, Verheggen et al.)
- ▶ The importance of the relationship between animal, therapist or handler and client

So, do animals recognize people's emotions?  
Research Hare (2014), Miklosi et al. (2012)



# Organizations are developing their own standards for delivering AAI: some examples

- ISAAT/ESAAT developed standards about species and developed an accreditation system of educational programs
- JAHA developed visiting programs in Japanese hospitals
- PATH International developed quality standards, educational programs etc.
- Pet partners developed educational programs
- Many organizations set up their own standards and own educational programs
- All over the world educational programs arise or are developed



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# BEST PRACTICES IN ANIMAL ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS: WHAT IS NEEDED

## EDUCATION at the human side

Professionals that are trained and qualified in their profession (medical doctors, psychologists, speech therapist, social workers, nurses, physiotherapists etc.)

Volunteers /handlers that are trained in working with special populations ( e.g. elderly, reading programs etc.) in different settings

**EDUCATION AT THE ANIMAL SIDE:** ethology, animal welfare and behaviour, training methods, knowledge and practice in how to do the interventions with the animals, zoonosis, first aid etc.

Secondly: knowledge of legal issues, protocols, how to evaluate etc.

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# Finding consensus about best practices

- ▶ Will improve standards of care for human and animal participants
- ▶ Will help bring professionalism in the field
- ▶ Will help to further legitimise AAI alongside mainstream approaches
- ▶ Will enhance client and public confidence in the field
- ▶ Will improve our understanding of how AAI works by enhancing the evidence base

# How do we achieve that? Iahaio works with its members on development of international guidelines

- ▶ Outline the minimum standards for delivery of AAI
- ▶ Outline ways to protect the welfare of the animals involved in AAI
- ▶ Describe the appropriate selection of animals involved
- ▶ Identify minimum training standards for animals involved in AAI
- ▶ Describe considerations for client selection
- ▶ Outline how human health, wellbeing and safety can be achieved
- ▶ Outline key features of effective AAI programmes development and delivery
- ▶ Describe ways in which AAI programmes can be evaluated and outcomes documented

# Iahaio is working with about 50 taskforce members on best practices

Working groups focussing on

- ▶ Equids : Kathy Alm
- ▶ Visiting Farm Animals: Luca Farina
- ▶ Visiting programs small animals: Christine Olsen
- ▶ Community programs: Belinda Johnston
- ▶ Residential programs: Jennifer Henley

# Furthermore

- ▶ We stimulate practitioners to work together with researchers and the other way around
- ▶ We stimulate practitioners to work together and form inter-vision and supervision groups
- ▶ We stimulate researchers to work together with in special areas
- ▶ Connections need to be build with service-users/participants
- ▶ Connections need to be build with other organizations and professional groups not yet involved in the field
- ▶ We help new organizations with our expertise and knowledge

# IT IS TIME TO CELEBRATE AND TO ACKNOWLEDGE BEST PRACTICE

- ▶ THE WINNER OF OUR 2019 WILLIAM  
McCULLOCH AWARD

▶ **Ingrid Stephan**