

The Most Hands-On Conference in Veterinary Rehab, Mobility, and Fitness

# ★ STAAR ★

Symposium on Therapeutic Advances  
in Animal Rehabilitation



## PROGRAM & RESOURCE GUIDE

2026  
April 28 - May 1  
Parsippany  
New Jersey

*Our Everyday Superheroes*



STAAR Conference is a Vital Vet  
production [vitalvet.org](http://vitalvet.org)

[staarconference.com](http://staarconference.com)



# ★ STAAR ★



## Letter from the CEO

### Welcome to STAAR Conference 2026!

Each year, our community gathers with a shared purpose: to develop and promote the field of animal rehabilitation and sports medicine while honoring the extraordinary bond between people and their pets. At the heart of STAAR Conference and Vital Vet is a simple yet powerful belief: **All Pets Are Superheroes**. They may not wear capes, but their ability to provide comfort, connection, healing, and unconditional love inspires everything we do.

STAAR was created to support veterinary professionals through advanced education, leadership development, and meaningful connection. The rapid growth of rehabilitation facilities in recent years reflects a rising recognition of the value of integrative care. With this expansion comes a strong demand for qualified professionals, and we are frequently asked to share employment opportunities with our Vital Vet professional community. This momentum highlights the importance of accessible, hands-on training and a united vision for the future of animal health.

In response, we are proud to expand the STAAR experience with three new initiatives: **STAAR Equine**, extending our educational model to the equine community; **STAAR UK**, bringing our programs to an international audience; and **STAAR Fit**, empowering dedicated pet parents to support their pets' lifelong health. These additions complement our flagship conference and reinforce our commitment to practical, compassionate care.

We are also honored to announce **Veterinarians International** as the official non-profit partner of Vital Vet. This relationship reflects a shared dedication to fostering veterinary medical care through education, access, and global outreach. My service on its Board of Directors has offered a firsthand perspective on the organization's integrity and impact, making this partnership a natural step forward.

Together, STAAR Conference, Vital Vet, and Veterinarians International represent education and action working in harmony, united by a common mission to protect, support, and celebrate the animals who enrich our lives.

As you engage in this year's conference, I encourage you to embrace every opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired. The knowledge and relationships formed here will extend far beyond these few days, shaping the future of our profession and the lives of the animals we serve.

**Thank you for being part of this remarkable community and for championing the superheroes who depend on us every day.**

With great appreciation,

Ilaria Borghese, Chief Executive Officer  
STAAR Conference  
*A Vital Vet Production*



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## Vinyl & Velvet

Celebrate a Retro Record-Inspired Evening Featuring Classic Rock, Motown & Funk

### **STAAR Cocktail Party**

Thursday, April 30, 7:15pm – 9:15pm | Exhibit Hall

Food and open bar (wine and beer)

All STAAR exhibitors, instructors, and course registrants welcome

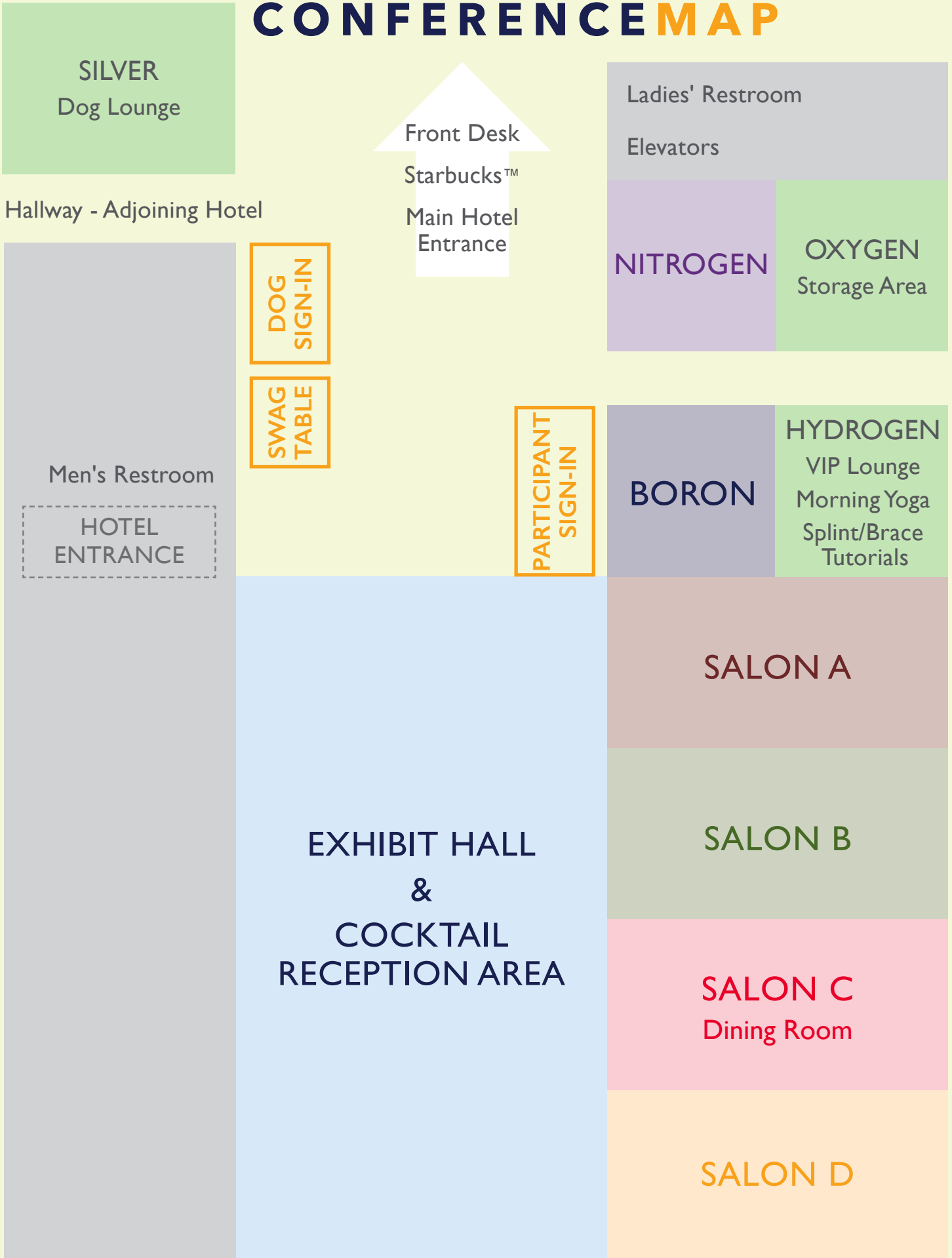
**Bonus Event:** Movie & Music Connection Game | Salon C

Begins at 9:00pm with great prizes!

TUES AM April 28	TUES PM April 28	WED AM April 29	WED PM April 29
<p>Basic Manual Therapy for the Canine Spine Two-day wet lab <a href="#">Laurie Edge-Hughes</a> <b>NITROGEN</b></p>			
<p>Advanced Rehabilitation Strategies for Regaining Optimal Results in the CCL Patient Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Elena Saltis</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>	<p>Mastering the Canine Pelvis: Advanced Assessment and Rehab of the SI Joint and Pelvis Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Elena Saltis</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>	<p>Beyond the Physical: Harnessing PBM, Infrared, and EMF <b>LECTURE</b> 2:00 - 4:00 pm <a href="#">Jaime Pickett</a> <b>SALON B</b> ..... Two Spines, One Goal: Evaluating Horse and Rider, and the Power of Team-Based Care for Performance Outcomes <b>LECTURE</b> 4:30 - 6:30 pm <a href="#">Kirk Peck</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>	
<p>Clinical Joint Mobilization for Extremities in Canine Rehab: Improving Outcomes in Orthopedic Dysfunction Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Ria Acciani</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	<p>From Anatomy to Action: Using Palpation to Maximize Therapeutic Outcomes Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Heather Owen</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	<p>Rehab in Focus: Making Your Specialty Visible, Valued, and Vital Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Deb Torraca</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	
		<p>Comprehensive Care for the Aging Patient: Integrating Rehab, Nutrition, and Management of Common Co-Morbidities Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Lindsey Fry</a> <b>SALON D</b></p>	<p>From X-Ray to Action Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Lindsey Fry</a> <b>SALON D</b></p>
	<p>From Anatomy to Action Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Heather Owen</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>	<p>Neurorehabilitation: Treatment Strategies for Optimal Recovery Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Kara Amstutz</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>	

THURS AM April 30	THURS PM April 30	FRI AM May 1	FRI PM May 1
<p>Understanding and Treating Idiopathic Geriatric Vestibular Disease Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Laurie Edge-Hughes</a> <b>NITROGEN</b></p>	<p>Strain Counterstrain and Gua Sha Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Laurie Edge-Hughes</a> <b>NITROGEN</b></p>	<p>GOLPP and the Vagus Nerve Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Laurie Edge-Hughes</a> <b>NITROGEN</b></p>	<p>Understanding and Treating Idiopathic Geriatric Vestibular Disease Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Laurie Edge-Hughes</a> <b>NITROGEN</b></p>
<p>Rehabilitating the Canine Shoulder: Synergistic and Advanced Approaches Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Elena Saltis</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>		<p>Muscle &amp; Tendon Mastery: Diagnosis and Advanced Treatment Techniques, Dysfunction and Dynamic Recovery Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Elena Saltis</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>	<p>Mastering the Canine Pelvis: Advanced Assessment and Rehab of the SI Joint and Pelvis Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Elena Saltis</a> <b>SALON B</b></p>
<p>Taking Underwater Treadmill Therapy to the Next Level Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Kirsty Oliver</a> <b>OFF SITE</b> ..... When Progress Stalls: Breaking Through Plateaus Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Deb Torraca</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	<p>The Role of Chronic Disease on Biomechanics and Whole Body Posture Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Kirsty Oliver</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	<p>Clinical Joint Mobilization for Extremities in Canine Rehab: Improving Outcomes in Orthopedic Dysfunction Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Ria Acciani</a> <b>BORON</b></p>	
<p>Pain Management in Rehab Patients: A Comprehensive Deep Dive into Injectables, Ingestibles, and Therapeutic Strategies Full-day wet lab <a href="#">Lindsey Fry</a> <b>SALON D</b></p>		<p>Comprehensive Care for the Aging Patient: Integrating Rehab, Nutrition, and Management of Common Co-Morbidities Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Lindsey Fry</a> <b>SALON D</b></p>	<p>Building the Canine Athlete: Prevention, Training, and Peak Performance Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Jana Gams</a>, <a href="#">Dawn Hickey Rector</a>, <a href="#">Beate Egner</a> <b>SALON D</b></p>
<p>Step by Step: Practical Assessment of Canine Mobility Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Kara Amstutz</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>	<p>Rehab for the Win: Speeding Recovery &amp; Restoring Function Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Jana Gams</a>, <a href="#">Dawn Hickey Rector</a>, <a href="#">Beate Egner</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>	<p>Neurorehabilitation 101: Fine-Tuning Your Neurologic Evaluation Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Kara Amstutz</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>	<p>Step by Step: Practical Assessment of Canine Mobility Half-day wet lab <a href="#">Kara Amstutz</a> <b>SALON A</b></p>

# CONFERENCE MAP



## INFO

### Breakfast & Lunch

SALON C

### Dog Lounge

SILVER ROOM

### VIP Lounge

HYDROGEN ROOM

### Storage

OXYGEN ROOM

### Evening Events

EXHIBIT HALL &

SALON B

### Movie & Music Connection Game

SALON C

### Hilton Parsippany

Check-in 4:00 PM

Check-out 11:00 AM

## REGISTRATION LOCATION & HOURS

Registration is located on the main level, just beyond the front desk. Hours:

Tuesday, April 28: 7:30am - 8:30am | 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Wednesday, April 29: 7:30am - 8:30am | 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Thursday, April 30: 7:30am - 8:30am | 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Friday, May 1: 7:30am - 8:30am | 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Please arrive on time and wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing suitable for lab sessions.

## CONFERENCE EVENTS

### Alliance for Animal Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Cocktails & Conversation

Wednesday, April 29: 7:00pm - 9:00pm | Exhibit Hall and Salon B

All attendees are welcome. Sponsored by Paw Prosper.

### STAAR Cocktail Party

Thursday, April 30: 7:15pm - 9:15pm | Exhibit Hall

Food and open bar (wine and beer)

All STAAR exhibitors, instructors, and course registrants welcome

Theme: *Vinyl & Velvet* - Celebrate a retro record-inspired evening featuring classic rock, Motown, and funk.

### Movie & Music Connection Game

Thursday, April 30: 9:00pm | Salon C

Pick your teams. Test your movie soundtrack knowledge.

Great prizes!



**REGISTRATION HOURS**

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
1:15 PM - 2:15 PM	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

**EXHIBIT HALL HOURS**

Exhibit Hall hours are suggested and not mandatory.

Breakfast begins at 8:00 am and Exhibitors are welcome to open their booths at that time.

7:00 AM - 9:00 PM	Wednesday (includes The Alliance Cocktails & Conversation)
7:00 AM - 9:15 PM	Thursday (includes <i>Vinyl &amp; Velvet</i> Cocktail Party)
7:00 AM - 6:30 PM	Friday

**TUESDAY APRIL 28**

7:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast - Salon C
8:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Morning Wet Labs
12:45 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch - Salon C
1:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Splinting & Bracing Tutorial, sponsored by Thera-Paw - Hydrogen
2:15 PM - 6:30 PM	Afternoon Wet Labs

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 29**

7:00 AM - 7:45 AM	Yoga - Hydrogen
7:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast - Salon C
8:45 AM - 9:15 AM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C
8:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Morning Wet Labs
12:45 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch - Salon C
1:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Splinting & Bracing Tutorial, sponsored by Thera-Paw - Hydrogen
2:15 PM - 6:30 PM	Afternoon Wet Labs
2:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	The Alliance Cocktails & Conversation - Salon B

**THURSDAY APRIL 30**

7:00 AM - 7:45 AM	Yoga - Hydrogen
7:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast - Salon C
8:45 AM - 9:15 AM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C
8:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Morning Wet Labs
12:45 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch - Salon C
2:15 PM - 6:30 PM	Afternoon Wet Labs
2:30 PM - 3:00PM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C
7:15 PM - 9:15 PM	<i>Vinyl &amp; Velvet</i> Cocktail Party - Exhibit Hall
9:00 PM	Movie & Music Connection Game - Salon C

**FRIDAY MAY 1**

7:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast - Salon C
8:30 AM - 12:45 PM	Morning Wet Labs
8:45 AM - 9:15 AM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C
12:45 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch - Salon C
2:15 PM - 6:30 PM	Afternoon Wet Labs
2:30 PM - 3:00PM	Pet Parent Volunteer Appreciation Session - Salon C



## Helping Animals. Healing our Planet

VI keeps animals and habitats healthy by empowering veterinarians around the world with critically needed equipment, medicine, education, and training

### What do we do?

- ✔ Protect wildlife
- ✔ Prevent disease spread
- ✔ Build vet capacity
- ✔ Care for animals, habitats, & communities
- ✔ Partner with local communities to create sustainable solutions



### Paying it forward:

### Future veterinarians need your help!

**Imagine that less than a handful of Kenyan vet students ever get to see an elephant in the wild.** Now in its third year, VI's Vet Training Program offers specialized lectures delivered by wildlife experts for 85+ students each year. The top 20 students travel to conservancy for a transformative firsthand experience of shadowing wildlife vets and seeing conservation medicine in action.

**Meet James Wokabi**, a fourth year student at Egerton University in Kenya. Reflecting on his participation in last year's Vet Training Program, James shared the following:



*"To be honest this is the first time I've ever seen most of these wild animals. I never knew that practicing wildlife medicine in Kenya was an option for me, not because I didn't want to take this route, but I didn't know what steps to take in order to enter this field. However, through this experience with VI, I've learned about how to pursue a future in conservation medicine and I've seen the kind of work that people are doing behind the scenes."*

**We still need to raise funds to sponsor 10 more vet students' field training this June. Your support can help another student like James have this life-changing experience, bringing them one step closer to a career spent protecting wildlife.**

**Help empower the next generation of wildlife heroes!**



**GIVE TODAY!**

# ★ STAAR ★ INSTRUCTORS



**Ria Acciani - MPT, CCRP, IADN cert.**

Co-Owner, Advanced Canine Rehabilitation Center, Warren, New Jersey, U.S.

Ria Acciani received her Masters in Physical Therapy degree from University of St. Augustine, Florida. She has over 25 years of experience in both human and Canine Physical Therapy. She received her CCRP from UTN and was the first Physical Therapist, along with her husband, in New Jersey to practice on dogs.

Ria owns and operates the Advanced Canine Rehabilitation Center, a practice that focuses on orthopedic and sports rehabilitation and specializes in performance and sporting dogs. She travels extensively to national and international dog competitions and works with top level competitors. She is the Official Therapist for the AKC US World Team, IFCS US Agility Team, WAO US Agility Team, and has travelled with these teams since 2010.

Ria conducts instructional seminars on a variety of topics for dog handlers and educates them on how to prevent injury and enhance performance within their sport. Ria worked closely with Dr. Sherman Canapp and VOSM to establish the rehabilitation protocol for various shoulder elbow and pelvic limb conditions. She has published works in Veterinary Surgery, Veterinary Clinics of North America, and articles in Clean Run. She has presented at STAAR (since 2010), IAVRPT, ARSIG/APTA, and SCIVAC. She is a former Board Member for ARSIG/APTA and a member of AARV.



**Kara Amstutz - DVM, DACVSMR, CVA, CVPP, CCRT**

Director of Clinical Education, Canine Rehab Institute

*Dr. Kara Amstutz is presenting on behalf of the Canine Rehab Institute (CRI) and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Dr. Kara Amstutz earned her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Missouri in 2000 and founded Hometown Veterinary Hospital in 2002. She became a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist in 2013, a Veterinary Pain Practitioner in 2014, and a Certified Veterinary Acupuncturist in 2019. These credentials allowed her to focus on rehabilitation and pain management.

In 2022, Dr. Amstutz transitioned from full-time clinical practice to become the owner, CEO, and lead clinical instructor at the Canine Rehabilitation Institute (CRI), offering postgraduate certifications and continuing education. In 2023, she achieved Diplomate status with the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. In 2024, Dr. Amstutz founded Momentum Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation in Springfield, Missouri. Additionally, she lectures nationally and internationally and is active in leadership within sports medicine, rehabilitation, and organized veterinary medicine.



**Laurie Edge-Hughes - BScPT, MAnimSt (Animal Physio), CAFCI, CCRT, CSm Anim Acup / Needling**

Co-Owner, The Canine Fitness Centre, Ltd., Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Laurie Edge-Hughes obtained her Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy from the University of Alberta in 1993 and has since focused her post-graduate training on orthopedics, osteopathy, acupuncture, and animal rehabilitation. Additionally, she completed her Master of Animal Studies in Animal Physiotherapy through the University of Queensland (Australia) in 2006.

Laurie taught the first canine physiotherapy/physical therapy courses in Canada (1999), the USA (1999), and Australia (2001). She has been involved in the Animal Rehab Division since its inception in 1994 and teaches canine physiotherapy and rehabilitation courses for the Animal Rehab Division (ARD) of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA).

Additionally, she holds the position of Advocacy Lead for the ARD and is chair of the Registry of Allied Animal Health Practitioners of Canada. FourLeg.com, an online educational platform for continuing education in canine rehabilitation/physiotherapy.



**Beate Egner, DVM, PhD**

President and CEO, Veterinary Academy of Higher Learning (VAHL GmbH)

*Dr. Beate Egner is presenting on behalf of VAHL and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Education:

- 1986 - 1991; Veterinary Medicine, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich
- 1991 - 1994; PhD, Surgical Animal Hospital, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

Scientific & Industry Roles:

- 1995 - 1999 - European Scientific Marketing Manager - Veterinary Pharma
- Since 1998 - Founding Member, International Blood Pressure Forum
- Since 1999 - Active Memberships: DVG - Cardiology Section; BVCS (British Veterinary Cardiology Society); ESVC (European Society of Veterinary Cardiology)
- Since 2002 - Member, ACVIM Hypertension Consensus Group
- 2009 - 2017 - Scientific Committee Member, European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine
- Since 2019 - Member, International Association of Veterinary Rehabilitation and Physical Therapy
- Since 2020 - Founder, VAHL Award - Best Abstracts in Equine & Canine Rehabilitation (ECVSMR)

Entrepreneurship & Leadership:

- Since 2000 - Founder, Schloss-Seminar - now: VAHL; Freelance Consultant & Lecturer - Cardiology, Hypertension, PWA, Scientific Marketing
- Since 2002 - Founder and Board Member, Veterinary Blood Pressure Society (VBPS)
- Since 2005 - Founder, CEO & President, VBS GmbH; Global education partner of the University of Tennessee outside North America
- Since 2022 - Founder, CEO & President, VAHL GmbH and VBS Holding GmbH
- Since 2022 - Appointed: Exclusive Global Partner for Veterinary Education & Marketing, University of Tennessee (incl. USA/CAN)



## **Lindsey Fry - DVM, DACVSMR, CCRP, CVPP, cVMA**

Dr. Lindsey Fry grew up in Boulder, Colorado and attended Colorado State University for veterinary school. As a veterinary student, she became certified in medical veterinary acupuncture, and her passion for pain management and mobility was sparked. She completed her rehabilitation training and certification (CCRP) through the University of Tennessee in 2011, and became a certified veterinary pain practitioner through the International Veterinary Academy for Pain Management (IVAPM) in 2013. She went on to serve as board member of the IVAPM and subsequently as treasurer.

Dr. Fry practices in Fort Collins, CO where she focuses on an integrative approach to pain and mobility management in a wide variety of patients, offering regenerative medicine, rehabilitation, palliative care, sports medicine, and pain management. In 2023 she achieved board certification through the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation (DACVSMR).

Dr. Fry has published on acupuncture, pain management, iliopsoas injury in agility dogs, palliative care, and continues to have a special interest in pain management in complex cases and a multimodal approach to keeping pets active and mobile. She enjoys teaching and lecturing with a variety of organizations and continues to pursue research in pain management, sports medicine and rehabilitation.



## **Jana Gams - DVM, CCRP**

*Dr. Jana Gams is presenting on behalf of the Veterinary Academy of Higher Learning and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Jana Gams, DVM, CCRP is a veterinarian and the founder of Dogs4motion Canine Rehabilitation & Sports Medicine in Slovenia, Europe, where she leads a multidisciplinary team focused on rehabilitation, performance conditioning, and recovery strategies for dogs of all life stages and activity levels – from post-injury recoveries to elite canine athletes preparing for top-level competitions such as the World Agility, FCI Obedience, and IGP Championships.

She earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the Veterinary Faculty, University of Ljubljana in 2017 and completed the Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP) program through the University of Tennessee in 2019. Jana frequently lectures at events across Europe and internationally, and serves as an instructor in both the CCRP and CCFT programs, sharing her expertise in functional recovery, performance optimization, and injury prevention.

An active competitor herself in agility and FCI obedience at the international level, Jana brings a unique dual perspective to her work – blending real-world experience in dog sports with advanced clinical knowledge. Through the Dogs4motion Academy, she creates educational resources for dog owners, trainers, and professionals around the world, empowering them with evidence-based, practical knowledge to support their dogs' movement and well-being.



**Dawn Hickey Rector - LVMT, VTS (Phys Rehab), CCRP, CVPP, CCFT**

*Dawn Rector is presenting on behalf of the Veterinary Academy of Higher Learning and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Dawn H. Rector graduated from Columbia State Community College with an AAS in Veterinary Technology. After a one-year internship at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, earning the Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP) title, she was employed at Animalia Health and Wellness in Franklin, TN and was instrumental in the development of their rehabilitation practice. In 2014, Dawn moved to Knoxville to become lead technician in the Small Animal Rehabilitation Department at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. She completed the University of Tennessee’s Companion Animal Pain Management Certificate Program in 2016. In 2017, she became a Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner (CVPP) and a Certified Canine Fitness Trainer (CCFT). Dawn earned her Veterinary Technician Specialty (VTS) title in Physical Rehabilitation in 2018. She completed the University of Tennessee’s Osteoarthritis Case Manager Certificate Program in 2020 and received special training in Canine Myofascial Trigger Points through Myopain Seminars.

Dawn is an instructor in both CCRP and CCFT programs, and a member of the American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians (AARV), Academy of Physical Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians (APRVT), International Association of Veterinary Rehabilitation and Physical Therapy (IAVRPT), International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM), National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), and the Tennessee Veterinary Technician Association (TVTA). Her particular areas of interest in physical rehabilitation include working dogs, fitness/conditioning, myofascial issues, geriatrics, neurology and pain management.



**Kirsty Oliver - VN, RVT, VTS (Phys Rehab), CCRP, CCAT, CCMT, CVPP**

*Kirsty Oliver is presenting on behalf of NC State/NES and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Kirsty Oliver is an English trained Veterinary Nurse who holds an Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (surgical). Having dedicated the first half of her career to nursing surgical and orthopaedic patients, Kirsty qualified in veterinary rehabilitation (CCRP) in 2005.

In 2010, she added CVPP (Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner) through the IVAPM. Kirsty joined VSC/ VSCR in 2016 after spending 14 years at a large veterinary hospital in New Jersey. In 2018, she obtained her VTS in Physical Rehabilitation with the APRVT (Academy of Physical Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians).

In 2022, Kirsty was invited to become an instructor for the new CCAT Rehabilitation Program through NE Seminars and NC State. Kirsty has a passion for manual therapy and myofascial treatment to help patients move better after injury.



## Heather Owen - DVM, MAV, CCRP

Dr. Heather Owen received her veterinary training from Oklahoma State College of Veterinary Medicine where she graduated in 2001. She completed a one-year internship in small animal medicine and surgery in Loveland, CO. Heather practiced as an emergency and critical care Veterinarian until January 2005 where she entered general practice. She received her Veterinary Acupuncture certification through Colorado State University in 2006 and moved back to Oklahoma in 2007. Together with her husband, Dustin, Animal Acupuncture was opened in 2008. In 2018, Animal Acupuncture and Canine Sports Medicine Facility was born and became Oklahoma's first free standing veterinary rehabilitation and pain management clinic.

Heather completed her Canine Rehabilitation and physical therapy training from the University of Tennessee in the spring of 2010 and she completed her veterinary food therapy certification for the Chi Institute in June of 2010. Also, Heather is a certified canine fitness trainer as well as a master trainer. She became Penn Hip Certified in 2022. She is currently pursuing her working dog certification through University of Pennsylvania.

Heather enjoys teaching Veterinarians about shock-wave, regenerative medicine, and pain management. She has been published in *Frontiers Journal* and has helped to author a shockwave manual. Heather speaks internationally for Companion Animal Health, Nutramax, Elvation, and Veterinary Hope Foundation.



## Kirk Peck - PT, PhD, CSCS, CCRT, CERP

*Dr. Kirk Peck is presenting on behalf of the Veterinary Academy of Higher Learning and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Dr. Peck received a BS degree in Exercise Science from Kansas State University, a Master of Science Degree in Physical Therapy from the University of Kansas Medical Center and PhD from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His clinical expertise involves treating sports and orthopedic related conditions in humans, horses, and dogs, in addition to providing physical therapy for the Native American population in an ambulatory clinic governed by the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. Dr. Peck is past President (2013-19) of the Animal Physical Therapy Special Interest Group of the APTA Orthopedic Academy of Physical Therapy, and current SIG liaison to the World Physiotherapy Animal PT Network.

He is a core instructor for a certification program in equine rehabilitation at the University of Tennessee, and instructor for Sierra Peaks Animal Rehabilitation, Denver, Colorado, focused on canine physical therapy. Dr. Peck serves on the Board of a non-profit organization, Ignite for Equine Athletes, spearheading several national and international presentations on horse and rider biomechanics. He also serves on the editorial board of an Elsevier publication entitled, "Journal of Equine Rehabilitation".

Dr. Peck is an Associate Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at Creighton University, Omaha, NE, where he teaches in the realm of clinical exercise physiology, health and wellness, healthcare systems, and political advocacy for the profession of physical therapy. He is also the current Chair of the Licensure Board of Physical Therapy in Nebraska.



## **Jaime Pickett - DVM, MBA**

*Dr. Jaime Pickett is presenting on behalf of EQUUSIR and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Dr. Jaime Pickett is a well-respected and visionary Executive in the Veterinary Medicine profession with expertise in driving strategic vision, organizational effectiveness, and comprehensive veterinary care within innovative business models. Dr. Pickett has a long, successful track record of spearheading business growth, setting long-term goals, and steering mission-critical planning, utilizing a keen focus on strategic thinking, adaptability, and optimizing operations. She is a team collaborator and motivator as a CEO, CMO, COO, and Board member. Dr. Pickett has owned and managed multiple business franchises, ensuring effective business operations, maximizing profitability, and fostering a culture of excellence to drive growth.

Dr. Pickett holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, a Master of Business Administration from St. George's University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Pickett has completed the Executive Education program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. She continues to mentor/develop young professionals into leaders; contributes to the Hopkins Athletic Leadership Program, serves on the UF CVM Admissions Committee, and holds a lifetime membership in the Dean's Circle of Excellence. As a lifelong learner, Dr. Pickett entered the veterinary rehabilitation field a year ago by beginning her CCRP training. She is currently the CMO for EQUUSIR.



## **Amy Rogato - PT, DPT, CCRT**

*Dr. Amy Rogato is presenting on behalf of the Canine Rehab Institute (CRI) and in cooperation with STAAR Conference.*

Dr. Amy Rogato graduated from Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, NY, with her Doctorate in Physical Therapy in 2013. She enjoyed treating humans with neurologic issues and geriatric and pediatric patients.

Amy completed her CCRT certification with CRI in 2017 and began treating dogs within a group of animal hospitals in the Tampa Bay Area. She realized that there was a need for at-home care for dogs and opened In Pawsuit Rehabilitation & Wellness. She began operating this mobile model full-time to help dogs in their home in 2021.

Amy has been published in the Academy of Orthopedic Physical Therapy Journal - Special Interest Group in Animal Rehabilitation. She has also been a teaching assistant for CRI since 2017, where she has enjoyed sharing her knowledge and expertise to help other physical therapists and veterinarians pursue their skills in animal rehabilitation.

# ★ STAAR ★ INSTRUCTORS



**Elena Saltis - BSc, NZPT, APA, CCRT**  
Owner & Director, Animal Physio NZ,  
Christchurch, New Zealand

Elena Saltis received her undergraduate degree in Physical Therapy at Ohio State University. She started PhysiotherapyNZ Limited, a prominent, successful, multi-clinic human Physio business in the South Island of New Zealand. She went on to obtain her certificate in canine rehabilitation (CCRT) from the Canine Rehabilitation Institute (CRI). After graduating she continued to hone her skills, attending post graduate courses at CRI, further study through the Australian Physiotherapy Association - Special Interest Group, and multiple internships at various facilities. Elena went on to become an instructor for CRI in both the US and Australia, and presented at numerous international conferences.

Elena is passionate about giving back and imparting her therapy skills on animals most in need. She established a rehabilitation clinic in Spain in partnership with the Galgo Rescue sanctuary. She started Street Tails, a charity providing veterinary and physical therapy services to the pets of people who are homeless. Also, she developed Canine NeuroPark Charity Trust, a private rehabilitation and enrichment park in Christchurch, New Zealand.



**Deb Torraca - DPT, MSPT, Diplomate ABPTS, CCRP, CCMT, Fellow IAVRPT**  
Wizard of Paws, Colchester, Connecticut, U.S.

Dr. Torraca began her career in human physical therapy (PT) and specialized in orthopedics, sports medicine, and pain management. With a solid foundation in human PT, she has adapted her skills (including her expertise in the Mulligan Technique) to her work with animals. Dr. Torraca is a pioneer in the field of canine physical rehabilitation and is a core faculty member of the NC State Veterinary School's Certified Companion Animal Therapy (CCAT) program. She also founded and heads the Certified Canine Manual Therapy (CCMT) program at UTN. Following her doctorate in Physical Therapy from UTN-Chattanooga, she transitioned to her work with animals and has been practicing canine rehabilitation for more than 25 years.

Dr. Torraca has authored many chapters in veterinary textbooks and writes for professional journals/magazines dedicated to the dog enthusiast. She has been a speaker/instructor at many veterinary conferences including the International Association of Veterinary Rehabilitation and Physical Therapy, American College of Veterinary Surgeons, North American Veterinary Conference, Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference, and Western States Veterinary Conference. She sits on the advisory board for Companion Animal Health and has been a key speaker at the American International Medical Laser Association.

Dr. Torraca is a longtime member of American Physical Therapy Association Special Interest Group (APTA-SIG) and has held the office of President. She is also a member of the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM). She is an active member of the Portuguese Water Dog Club of America, the American Bullmastiff Association, the Clumber Spaniel Club of America, and various other local dog clubs and organizations, including the Connecticut Police Canine Unit.

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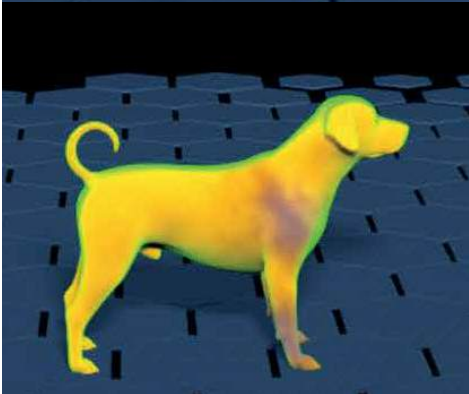
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