

## Training project to provide knowledge about Basic cat care, behavior and training for the public and establish a specialized pet mental health clinic to support the needs of the public

### Background

Currently, the trend in Thailand and globally shows an increasing number of people owning pets, especially cats, which are becoming more popular. This is related to the rising number of elderly people, infertility, the growing desire for childless couples, and more people choosing to live alone. As a result, many people want to keep cats as companions to alleviate loneliness and reduce stress. In many countries, workplaces are starting to allow pets because they help reduce stress and increase work efficiency. Additionally, in the southern region of Thailand, there is a larger Muslim population, leading to a higher number of cat owners compared to other regions.

However, as the number of pets increases, other problems arise, such as pet abandonment. One of the main reasons pet owners abandon their animals is due to undesirable behaviors, such as aggression, loud noises, attacking humans, improper elimination, excessive excitement, fearfulness, over-attachment to the owner, and property destruction at home. The issue of pets harming humans is particularly significant in public health and medical fields because it poses the risk of transmitting serious zoonotic diseases, which can lead to death. Moreover, unwanted behavior in cats can negatively impact the relationship between the owner and society. This often results in cat abandonment, leading to the problem of stray cats, which is a major issue in Thai society. Stray cats contribute to road accidents, attacks on people, and the spread of diseases such as rabies and parasites.

Research from the Akkharatchakumari Veterinary College at Walailak University found that over 80% of pets in Thailand exhibit behavioral problems. However, there is currently a very limited number of veterinarians specializing in pet behavior in Thailand, and most of them work in Bangkok. Therefore, to promote pet welfare, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine will establish the first special pet psychiatry clinic in southern Thailand. This clinic aims to enhance education, research, and academic services, as well as to build the university's reputation. The project to educate the public about cat care and behavior will help raise

awareness of the clinic and encourage more people to use the services of the small animal hospital.

The Veterinary School and the Pet mental and behavior Clinic have organized the following free educational events for the public:

1. A training session on “How to Raise a Cat for a Healthy Body and Mind” for the general public in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, held at the Small Animal Teaching Hospital of Walailak University. The event is honored by guest speakers, Associate Professor Dr. Tuempong Wongtawan, and Assistant Professor Dr. Worrakan Boonhoh from the Akkharatchkumary Veterinary College and WU Small animal hospitals. The topics covered include nutrition, care methods, essential supplies, disease prevention, playing with cats, behavior, and mental health of cats. The training will enable participants to effectively apply the knowledge to raising their own cats.





2. Additionally, a supplementary activity was organized in response to a request from a local high school in the province. The Faculty was invited to conduct a knowledge-enhancing training on "How to Raise a Cat for a Healthy Body and Mind" for students at Kanlayanee Si Thammarat School. The session was led by Associate Professor Dr. N.S.V.

Tuempong Wongtawan and Assistant Professor Dr. Worrakan Boonhoh from the Veterinary School and small animal hospital. The training covered topics such as nutrition, care methods, essential supplies, disease prevention—especially rabies—playing with cats, behavior, and the mental health of cats. The students who attended were able to effectively apply the knowledge gained to raising their own cats.



