



Jan. 10, 2014

Media only: Jennifer Schommer, SITES, (202) 633-3121; schommerj@si.edu
Keena Lykins, Zoetis, (973) 443-3106; keena.lykins@zoetis.com

Smithsonian Mobile Exhibit Explores the Human–Animal Bond

“Animal Connections” Kicks-off 2014 National Tour in Atlanta

From the cows that provide the milk for a bowl of cereal to the deer nibbling on a shrub in the park, and from sea lions working with their trainers at the zoo to puppies chasing balls in the yard, the connections humans have with animals are vast. This special relationship is explored in a new mobile exhibition from the Smithsonian.

“Animal Connections: Our Journey Together,” a custom-built exhibition housed on an 18-wheel truck that expands into 1,000 square feet of space, will begin its 2014 national tour Jan. 23-25 at Centennial Plaza in Atlanta, Ga., near the Fountain of Rings in Centennial Olympic Park. For the safety of animals and people, visitors are asked not to bring pets. Following its stay in Atlanta, the exhibition will travel to cities across the country; visit animalconnections.com for tour details.

“The affection that people everywhere have for animals sparked our enthusiasm for an exhibit about veterinary medicine that would inspire lively conversations about the human–animal bond,” said Myriam Springuel, interim director of SITES.

“Animal Connections” was created by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) to mark the 150th anniversary of the American Veterinary Medical Association in 2013. The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of founding sponsor Zoetis, Inc., and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation.

“Of the more than 74 million American households that include pets, nearly two-thirds consider their pets family members,” said Dr. Clark Fobian, president of the AVMA. “The deep connection Americans have with animals and the pivotal role veterinarians play in that relationship are wonderful and worthy of celebration.”

Divided into five sections, the exhibition focuses on animals in the home, on the farm, at the zoo, in the wild and at the veterinary clinic. Visitors are offered a variety of ways to learn through informative displays, dynamic videos and interactive experiences. In the home section, visitors will learn how to select the right pet and the possible dangers to pets, such as household items like plants and holiday decorations and feeding pets food prepared for family members. A display in the farm section highlights the mobile clinics that large-animal veterinarians stock with a variety of tools—from dental speculums to cow magnets—to ensure they are prepared for any procedure. A virtual clinic at the center of the exhibition provides visitors the opportunity to be the veterinarian. Through touch screens, they can examine and diagnose what ails their virtual patients—a dog, a piglet and a cheetah.

“At Zoetis, we work every day to better understand and address the real-world challenges faced by those who raise and care for animals,” said Christine Jenkins, Chief Veterinary Medical Officer-U.S. Zoetis, a company that discovers, develops and manufactures veterinary vaccines and medicines. “As part of our commitment to veterinarians, we are proud to join with the Smithsonian and the AVMA in supporting ‘Animal Connections’ as a means to inspire young people to pursue careers in veterinary medicine and its allied professions.”

The free exhibition explores the shared responsibility for animals’ health and well-being. It also highlights the varied roles veterinarians play in the health of animals. Videos showcase that even suburban areas have a great diversity of wildlife—from the squirrels trying to break into a birdfeeder to a bear lounging in a hammock.

“At the AVMF, we are committed to advancing the well-being and medical care of animals,” said Michael Cathey, AVMF executive director. “This exhibition will not only help inspire the next generation of veterinarians, but improve current animal care through a better understanding of the role animals and veterinarians play in our lives.”

Visitors to “Animal Connections” can continue the learning experience online at animalconnections.com. The site includes resources on animal care and careers in veterinary medicine.

About Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for 60 years. SITES connects Americans

to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play.

About American Veterinary Medical Association

The [AVMA](#), established in 1863, is a not-for-profit association representing more than 85,000 veterinarians working in private and corporate practice, government, industry, academia and uniformed services. The mission of the association is to improve animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession.

About American Veterinary Medical Foundation

The [AVMF](#) is the charitable arm of the AVMA. For 50 years, AVMF has been dedicated to embracing and advancing the well-being and medical care of animals. Charitable contributions and support to the Foundation help veterinarians help animals. The AVMF, a three-time, four-star rated nonprofit by Charity Navigator, has awarded more than \$50 million in grants since it began in 1963.

About Zoetis

[Zoetis](#) (zō-EH-tis) is a leading animal health company dedicated to supporting customers and businesses focused on raising and caring for livestock and companion animals. Building on a 60-year history as the animal health business of Pfizer, Zoetis discovers, develops, manufactures and markets veterinary vaccines and medicines, complemented by diagnostic products and genetic tests.

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