



Sri Lankan Veterinarian is First Recipient of WSAVA Award for Companion Animal Welfare

Dr Nalinika Obeyesekere, a veterinarian from Sri Lanka, is the first recipient of the [World Small Animal Veterinary Association's](#) new Award for Companion Animal Welfare. The Award, developed by the WSAVA's Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee (AWWC), recognizes individual veterinarians who have made a significant contribution to animal welfare and inspired others to play their part in advancing welfare globally.

Dr Obeyesekere graduated with a BSc in Wildlife Biology and Management from UC Davis, USA, and, in pursuit of her primary interest, animal behavior, returned to Sri Lanka in 1985 to work in the environmental sector. She later obtained a BVSc at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka and also has a MVSc from Murdoch University in Australia. She is now the owner-director of Pet Vet Clinic in Sri Lanka, a clinic which paved the way for small animal practice in Sri Lanka and which is an internship center for the University of Peradeniya and an externship center for the Royal Veterinary College in London.

Her passion for animal welfare is a consistent theme throughout her work:

- A founder member of the Society of Companion Animal Practitioners of Sri Lanka (SCAP), she is now Director of Education. In this role, she has been instrumental in developing high quality continuing education (CE) in Sri Lanka, championing higher standards of veterinary practice and in the adoption of a one health approach. She has also pioneered behavioral therapy, both with members of the veterinary

healthcare team and with owners. She is active on a range of veterinary and welfare focused committees, both in Sri Lanka and internationally.

- As founder and trustee of Blue Paw Trust, an organization which aims to enhance human health and advance animal welfare, she is focused on the eradication of rabies from Sri Lanka and leads projects to improve the relationship between the public and the country's community dogs.

Commenting on receiving the Award, Dr Obeyesekere said: "The most important thing we can do for animal welfare is to improve and equalize the quality and standards of veterinary care globally. We have made great progress but have a long and difficult journey still to travel and my current priority is to improve the quality and availability of education in small animal clinical practice in Sri Lanka."

Co-Chair of the WSAVA AWWC, Dr Melinda Merck, said: "Nalinika's approach to animal welfare is grounded in science and this has enabled her to lobby successfully on a range of welfare issues with government agencies and other stakeholders. As a veterinarian with a global reputation, who advocates for higher standards of companion animal veterinary practice, works to minimize the impact of zoonotic disease and to improve understanding of animal behavior, Nalinika is a beacon of excellence in Sri Lanka and beyond.

"Her service in developing the country's veterinary skills for the benefit of both animals and people make her the perfect first recipient of this Award."

Dr Obeyesekere will be presented with the Award during the [2018 WSAVA World Congress](#) which takes place from 25-28 September in Singapore.

The WSAVA aims to advance the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide through creating an educated, committed and collaborative global community of veterinary peers. It currently represents more than 200,000 veterinarians through 104 member associations. Its annual World Congress brings together globally respected experts to offer cutting edge thinking on all aspects of companion animal veterinary care.

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