



**FRESHPET® FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANT TO  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE**

**Secaucus, N.J., Aug 2, 2010** – The Freshpet® Foundation, [www.freshpetfoundation.org](http://www.freshpetfoundation.org), a New Jersey based non-profit organization, has awarded a grant to Dr. Kenneth M. Rassnick, DVM DipACVIM (Oncology) of Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. The Freshpet® Foundation seeks to support canine nutritional research in the areas of prevention, care and treatment of diseases in dogs, including cancer. The grant is the first awarded by the Freshpet® Foundation and will investigate the effects of vitamin D levels and the development of osteosarcoma in dogs.

Osteosarcoma is the most common bone tumor in dogs, accounting for up to 85% of tumors originating from the bone. Canine and human osteosarcomas closely resemble each other in appearance, biological behavior, and pathogenesis, therefore canine osteosarcoma becomes an excellent model for studying this disease. Each year, approximately 12,000 new cases of canine osteosarcoma are diagnosed in North America, with large and giant-breed dogs being particularly at risk for developing osteosarcoma. The goal of Rassnick's study is to investigate 25(OH)D levels in dogs – which are recognized as the hallmark of the body's stores of vitamin D – with naturally occurring osteosarcoma.

Previous studies have identified numerous risk factors associated with the development of osteosarcoma in dogs, including breed, height, weight, age and neuter status. Genetic factors are most likely a significant cause of canine osteosarcoma, but it is possible the underlying mechanism includes genetic factors acting in response to external factors, according to Rassnick.

“Recently, appreciation of the impact of diet on either the initiation or progression of cancer has come significantly to the fore,” said Rassnick. “In addition to classic effects on bone and mineral metabolism, evidence suggests vitamin D deficiency is a major contributor to the development of cancer in people. Vitamin D is an essential nutrient in dogs and, unlike people, dogs are not able to synthesize vitamin D in the skin when exposed to sunlight.

The Freshpet® Foundation was established in 2008 by a group of pet industry experts in the areas of nutrition, clinical research, and oncology and disease treatment. “Since its inception, the Freshpet® Foundation has committed itself to helping pets live long and healthy lives,” said Scott Morris, advisory board officer. “We believe just as many others do, that dogs are more than just pets. They are family members and best friends. With our collective knowledge and love for pets, we knew there was much we could do to help. Once we understood the pervasiveness of canine cancer, our mission became clear: to help find a cure.” And, there was another reason they became compelled to help. Many of the research findings are often reciprocal from human to canine and vice versa. “This made us feel even better about the work we were doing.”

In addition to funding grants for nutritional research, the Freshpet® Foundation has raised monies through their Bark for the Cure™ five-kilometer fun-runs for people and dogs and at promotional events nationwide.

Applicants for Freshpet® Foundation grants are encouraged to focus on the role that nutrition plays in the prevention, treatment and curing of cancer and other diseases in dogs. Each grant application is evaluated by a minimum of four reviewers.

#### **About The Freshpet® Foundation**

The Freshpet® Foundation, a 501(C) (3) non-profit charitable organization, is dedicated to helping our closest companions lead long, healthy and disease-free lives. Our mission is to support canine nutritional research in the areas of prevention, care and treatment of diseases in dogs. We are committed to improving the knowledge base around cancer and other diseases in dogs by engaging in the following:

- Raise awareness of canine diseases, specifically cancer, among pet parents through education. Information about pet cancer and the Foundation will be distributed via our website, on our packaging, during promotional events, and included in our press materials.
- Raise funds for comparison studies and clinical trials.
- Further canine cancer prevention and treatment through actionable research. Results will be published in veterinary journals as well as on our website.

#### **About Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine**

The College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University is a global leader in veterinary medical education, animal medicine, biomedical research and public health. Its strength as one of the world's leading colleges of veterinary medicine rests in the aggregate strength of the College's faculty, student, and alumni achievement; departments; programs; and its commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

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