



MEDIA RELEASE

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YOUNG ANIMAL WELFARE SCIENTIST WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

**Dr Marisa Erasmus of Purdue University USA
recognised for her contribution to advance animal
welfare**

Dr Marisa Erasmus, Assistant Professor of Animal Sciences at Purdue University, Indiana, USA has been awarded the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) Young Animal Welfare Scientist of the Year Award in recognition of her exceptional contribution to the field of animal welfare.

Dr Erasmus was nominated for the award by a fellow faculty member at Purdue, Dr Brianna Gaskill who said: *“Many of us scientists go about improving animal welfare by studying animals in various situations and publishing our results in highly respected journals. However, few of us take the extra step to make sure the knowledge we’ve gained actually gets put into practice. Marisa has taken that extra step by establishing an extension programme which is unique within the US to educate members of the public about basic animal welfare.”*

During her graduate training and early career as a scientist, Marisa demonstrated independent, scientific excellence, contributed important new knowledge to improve the welfare of a species, and has a keen aptitude for research in her discipline of applied ethology.

As part of her unique extension programme, Dr Erasmus conducts outreach activities every year at the Indiana State fair which attracts over 850,000 visitors annually and so her work has the potential to affect the lives of many animals. In addition, she is developing a training programme for animal control officers and anyone who works with animals so that they can identify when animals are in need of assistance.

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE



UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

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While her outreach efforts are broad and touch on a variety of animal species, her applied research focuses mainly on poultry. She has developed indicators of welfare for laying hens, ducks and turkeys to be used by producers to improve the welfare of their flocks. Her research has spanned a wide range of welfare issues from euthanasia methods for turkeys to feather pecking in ducks and turkeys, and indicators of stress and parasite infestations in turkeys and laying hens. Dr Erasmus has contributed significantly to the scientific literature on the behaviour and welfare of the domestic turkey, making her one of the few experts in this field, and has published the first and only book chapter on turkey welfare. Her research was the first to validate fear tests for turkeys and to examine the link between fearfulness and its impact on the quality of turkey meat. Marisa currently serves on several scientific advisory boards for turkey welfare.

Over the past eight years, she has individually mentored over 50 undergraduates and inspired their interest in, and passion for, animal welfare.

Amongst the letters of recommendation which accompanied her nomination was one from Professor Janice Swanson from the Michigan State University, USA who said: *"It is my pleasure to support the nomination of Marisa. She has made an important scientific contribution to our understanding of turkey behaviour and welfare. Her current work shows great promise for advancing scientific knowledge and her extension programme offers evidence-based knowledge that leads to real transformation."*

Dr Erasmus was presented with her award at UFAW's international symposium in Bruges, Belgium, on the 4th of July. Dr Robert Hubrecht, UFAW's Chief Executive who presented the award said: *"Dr Erasmus is making a real difference to poultry welfare, both through original research and by using this and other work to inform and educate those who work with these animals. She is a worthy winner of the 2019 award."*

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Note to editors:

The UFAW Young Animal Welfare Scientist of the Year Award is to recognise the achievements of young scientists who have made significant contributions to improving the welfare of animals. It is open to postgraduate students, anywhere in the world, currently studying for a doctoral degree or who are within six years of the end of their PhD

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve

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knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

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Chief Executive and Scientific Director: Robert C Hubrecht OBE BSc PhD FSB
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