

## ***PetSafe at the Ontario Veterinary College: A Program Update***

Suzie J. Kovacs and Sandra Lefebvre  
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph  
Guelph, Ontario

In the spring of 2002, the Ontario Veterinary College's PetSafe program opened its door to pets belonging to women in crisis. Its aim was to provide a safe haven for pets at risk of being abused if left in the household once a woman leaves seeking secure shelter. A women's shelter survey completed in 2000 by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals found that 43% of respondents held off leaving their abusive households out of concern that their pets would be harmed in their absence. Unfortunately, most shelters for abused women do not provide animal boarding facilities. The PetSafe program, based on the program of the same name initiated at Purdue University in 1994, was developed to specifically help these women and their animals. The student-run program provides security for both pets and their owners in emergency situations where both are vulnerable targets of abuse. The program's long-term goals are violence prevention, and raising the awareness of the link between human and animal violence. The PetSafe program will increase the recognition of the human-animal bond, thus reinforcing its existence in society. This presentation will summarize PetSafe's progress over the past year, the difficulties that have arisen, and the anticipated future direction of the program.