

Research Projects 2026

The following new research projects have been granted funding from the Agria SKK Research Fund for 2026:

• Development of a computer vision method to measure lameness in cats and dogs

Orthopedic diseases such as osteoarthritis cause pain and reduced quality of life in cats and dogs but remain underdiagnosed. This project aims to develop a computer vision method to detect lameness in videos of walking and trotting animals. Using 3D scans, AI models, and validation against the gold standard for motion recording, we strive to enable early, objective, long-term monitoring, improve diagnostics, treatment, and animal welfare.

Marie Rhodin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden, 3-year project

• Project: Validation of genetic testing for mitral valve disease in dogs

The most common heart disease in dogs is myxomatous mitral valve disease (MMVD). The aim of the project is to evaluate whether newly identified gene variants can predict cardiac death due to MMVD in a large population of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (CKCS). The project will also study how common these gene variants are in young CKCS used for breeding in 2025. The research project is expected to provide evidence for a robust genetic test that can effectively reduce the incidence of MMVD in the breed.

Lisbeth Høier Olsen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 3-year project

• Accurate estimation of prevalence and causes of behavioral problems in Swedish dogs

The prevalence of behavioral problems and their distribution among breeds is largely unknown. This project will obtain impartial statistics on the frequency of various problems and their causes. A large, representative sample of dog breeds in Sweden and their owners, contacted through available registers, validated questionnaires, and statistical modeling, will reveal the main risk factors. The project will provide a tool for breeders and an invaluable database.

Per Jensen, Linköping University, Sweden, 2-year project

• The changing role of the dog in a sustainable society

There have never been as many dogs as today. The dog is part of both home and society, highlighting the relationship between dog owners and their surroundings. To understand the future role of the dog, insight into the social effects of dog ownership is needed. In this project, we aim, through surveys, to 1) investigate changes in attitudes over time regarding the dog's place in society, and 2) analyze the connection between active dog ownership and a sustainable society, focusing on trust and a meaningful life.

Patrik Öhberg, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2-year project

• The physical demands of agility on the dog

Research shows that the risks of agility-related injuries and concerns about welfare due to increasing physical demands in agility are rising. The Finnish agility study's overall goal is to clarify the physical requirements of canine agility and, through knowledge, improve their safety and welfare. The agility study has conducted surveys on training and injury risk, studies on jump biomechanics, A-frame performance, and speed of agility dogs on different surfaces.

Anna Boström, Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Helsinki, Finland, 1-year project

• Genetic status of the Jämthund and Swedish Lapphund: analysis of 100-year-old skins

Studies on how the development of the Jämthund and Swedish Lapphund breeds has affected their genetic status and health, compared to the original, non-breed population. We do this by analyzing DNA from 100-200-year-old dog skins obtained from clothing from northern Swedish farmers and

Sami people. In the final stage of this project, blood samples from today's Jämthund and Swedish Lapphund populations are analysed, and genetic diversity, inbreeding rate, and frequency of harmful gene variants are compared.

Peter Savolainen, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Solna, Sweden, 1-year project

Extended research projects receiving new funding:

- **Effects of personality on pain and stress in dogs and their owners**

Eva Sandberg, SLU, year 3 of 3

- **Infection and antibiotic resistance in corneal ulcers in companion animals in Sweden**

Lena Ström, SLU, year 3 of 3

- **How can social media support responsible cat and dog ownership practices?**

Maria Fuentes, Lund University, year 3 of 3

- **Rabbit Osteoarthritis Recognition**

Johanna Mäkitalo, University of Helsinki, year 2 of 3

- **Encephalitis in dogs – causes and disease patterns in the Swedish dog population**

Cecilia Ley, SLU, year 2 of 3

- **The genetic imprint of hip dysplasia and obesity in dogs**

Maja Arendt, University of Copenhagen

- **Suitability of dogs for different types of function in modern society**

Therese Rehn, SLU, year 3 of 3

- **Pain management in female cats during caesarean section and lactation**

Anneli Rydén, SLU, year 2 of 3

- **Human/dog intimacies towards end of life**

Nete Schwennesen, Roskilde University Center, year 2 of 2