

Episode 93 - Dr. Elizabeth Strand: Veterinary Social Work: "One Health" in Action

[00:00:08] Welcome to living through a podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. We're glad you could join us today. The series Living Proof examines social work research and practice that makes a difference in people's lives. I'm your host ardua Robinson and I'd like to take a moment to address you our regular listeners. We know you have enjoyed our pod cast as evidenced by the more than 200000 downloads to date thanks to all. We'd like to know what value you may have found in the podcast. We'd like to hear from all of you practitioners researchers students but especially our listeners who are social work educators. How are you using the podcast in your classrooms. Just go to our Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/podcast and click on the contact us tab. Again thanks for listening. And we look forward to hearing from you. One of the rewards of my job as a host for the podcast series is the regular exposure to cutting edge research and emerging trends and practice beyond my area of specialty that challenges my thinking about my own work and that of the profession in new and exciting ways. Today's discussion with Dr. Elizabeth Strand is one such example. Dr. Elizabeth Strand is the founding director of veterinary social work at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. She is a licensed clinical social worker with specialty and Family Therapy grief recovery and mindfulness based stress reduction.

[00:02:06] Her scholarly interests include the link between human and animal violence animals in family systems a scholarly and practice development of veterinarian social work as a subspecialty of social work practice and mediation and stress management techniques in animal welfare environments. In this podcast Dr. Strand discusses veterinarian social work as a field subspecialty and her own work in it. Rebecca Rouland Ph.D. student at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work spoke with Dr. Strand by telephone. Hello this is Rebecca Rouland from the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Today we're going to be talking with Dr. Elizabeth strand Dr. Strand let me first begin by welcoming you and thanking you for conducting this podcast with us today. Well I want to thank you for inviting me. This is a great opportunity. Thanks so much. You're very welcome. Can you begin today by explaining what veterinary social work is. Sure. Veterinary social work is a specialized area of social work practice and it operates in four main areas. The first is the link between human and animal violence. The second is grief and bereavement. The third is animal assisted interactions and the fourth is compassion fatigue management. And in each of these areas there are micro and macro implications and so veterinary social work is about discovering those micro and macro implications and being able to develop interventions and policies and evaluation practices to respond to human needs in those areas in accordance with the NSW code of ethics. So why use the term veterinary social work. Well a lot of people have asked me that question and actually there's been a little bit of a debate about what should we call social work practice that incorporates animals.

[00:04:09] And for me and for where we stand here there are many different areas of social work that has become specialized. So for instance we have medical social work. We have gerontological social work. We have oncological social work we have school social work. We even have forensic social work. And so it just makes sense that when there is a social worker specializing in the human animal connection that that specialty would reside with the profession that is the expert regarding animals which is veterinary social work. The other component of that is there are like if I'm giving a talk and perhaps I'm not speaking to a social work office audience and I might say OK well what do you think of social workers. And most people have a stigma associated with what a social worker is. You know it's somebody who takes children away from their parents or somebody who hands out welfare checks right. I mean there's a way in which social work is very misunderstood in terms of

the breath of what we do. And the same thing applies for veterinarians. I would say that the veterinary degree the DVM is one of the most diverse degrees that you can get and as it's diverse is the social work degree is. So you find veterinarians and clearly in medical practices small animal and large animal medical practices.

[00:05:36] But you also find them in government regulatory bodies you find them in research facilities you find them in education you find them in corporate environments you even find veterinarians that have a dual degree in law who are interested in animal law or veterinarians that are in business have an MBA and they are interested in doing consulting work regarding animal related issues. So it's extremely extremely diverse degree. So veterinary social work means then that wherever and in whatever capacity a social worker and a veterinarian may put their heads together to address a public health issue is where veterinary social work is happening. It's not just happening in a clinic. It's happening at a regulatory agency it's happening in an environmental situation where animals are being affected and humans are being affected by an environmental issue which is a public health issue. There's something called One Health and one health is the idea that where animals are in trouble and sick very likely the environment is in trouble and sick or having difficulties as well as human beings. And so in order to holistically approach public health problems that we have to have a one health model and so veterinary social work is one component of that one health model that makes sense. Now before you have mentioned the four core areas of veterinary social work which again are one the link between human and animal violence to grief and bereavement three animal assisted interactions and for compassion fatigue management. Can you explain a little bit more about those four core areas and give us some examples of these areas. Absolutely.

[00:07:19] So these four areas are based on what the literature has given attention to over the past 30 years in fact and I think it was 1975 was the first time social work paid attention to the human animal connection where a little article written by the colleague who wrote about a medical social worker and the medical social worker was discussing the she had a client who wouldn't go into the hospital because she was concerned about her dog Lacey the mutt. And so social workers paid attention to the human animal connection for 30 years. And from an ecological perspective of course it makes sense that we would as social workers. So these four areas have been based in what the literature has said about human animal connections and all the ways they manifest not just the pretty side of lovey relationship between me and my cat or the animal assisted therapy intervention but also the difficult side. So we'll start with a probably the most difficult side which is the link between human and animal violence in the 1980s the FBI began to recognize that there was a history in the lives of serial killers of being violent towards animals. And so it became part of the profile of serial killers to discover kind of is this person a serial killer. Did they abuse animals. And soon after that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders included animal cruelty as one of the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder and the research continues to mount that where there is violence towards animals. There's very likely also violence towards people who look at criminals violent criminals that are in incarcerated and there is a significant difference between violent offenders and non-violent offenders in terms of their childhood history of cruelty to animals so violent offenders are more likely to have perpetrated cruelty to animals than non-violent offenders. We know that victims of domestic violence who have pets.

[00:09:23] 70 percent of them indicate that their animals have also been abused by their perpetrators and many of them will delay leaving the home where the violence is happening to a domestic violence shelter up to three months because they're concerned for the safety of their pets. We also know that children who have been victims of sexual perpetration are also more likely to exhibit violent behaviour towards animals. So there is mounting evidence that there is a robust correlation between violence to animals and violence to people so of course that makes attention to that very important for social workers and being able to identify homes where violence is happening and also

being able to treat violent perpetrators towards animals. So how do we counsel them is an issue and we have some protocols in place that are helpful in learning how to provide counselling and remediation for folks convicted of or who confess that they have been abusive towards animals. Animal Hoarding is another example of the link between human and animal violence you wouldn't think it because animal hoarding is more of neglect issue where both the human being is being neglected because they're living in squalor and then the animals are being neglected because there are an abundance of animals that are not being properly cared for. So that's a very kind of robust example of the link between human and animal violence. There's a lot out there on that. OK so the next one and these are not any really order in terms of importance but the next one is grief and bereavement and there's mounting evidence that people who are strongly attached to their companion animals experience real grief when their animals die. And for people who have a preexisting mental health issue this is pronounced and can be lethal.

[00:11:17] Certainly from an anecdotal perspective in our work here at the veterinary social work program at UT very often we hear people express suicidal ideation and have had some actually complete the act of suicide secondary to the death of an animal. And so I think it's very under recognized form of grief that can be very serious for some clients who particularly have social isolation and a preexisting mental health issue. Moreover there seems to be some evidence that individuals with serious and persistently mental illness when they have a companion animal they seem to be more engaged in the community. And so when that animal dies there is an increase in social isolation that happens that puts them more at risk for an exacerbation of a mental health issue. Other component regarding grief and bereavement is that animals often demarcate life stages in a person's history and so when an animal dies very often the person grieves the animal but also grieves the life phase that that animal was with them through. So for instance somebody who is grieving the loss of a dog that was given to her by her husband and now the husband is and her are divorced. Grieve the loss of the dog but very often the grief over the ending of the marriage becomes inextricably linked from the grief of the pet. So it is a way of treating human loss through a different entry point. So we might have somebody arrive in therapy talk about the loss of her marriage and that's good. And when the dog dies there's also another way to help that person process and talk about the loss of both the dog and the husband.

[00:13:21] One last piece about grief and bereavement is that there is a way in which the relationships with companion animals at least is simple. There's not as much complexity between for instance me and my relationship with my dog and me and my relationship with my mother or any of our family members where we have conflicted feelings maybe about the relationship with the pet. It's usually pretty simple and so we hear people say often I'm crying more over the loss of Buffy than I am over the loss of my mom. And then there's incredible guilt about that. So normalizing it for people is really really important. From a macro perspective the grief and bereavement issue is also very important. If we look at for instance agriculture and in the UK there was a experience of foot and mouth disease where many herds of cattle had to be codd because of the disease and the loss that the farmers felt was so intense that there was definitely an increased incidence of suicide among farmers people families who are in agriculture really get attached to their herds the herds sometimes have been in the families for generations and generations. So when a whole herd has to be called you can imagine the meaning the loss of meaning that happens is quite pronounced and the incidence of suicide is something to take very seriously. So that's an example of how grief and bereavement is oftentimes under looked or overlooked in social work practice. So moving on the third is animal assisted interactions. Now animal assisted interactions were very particular about how we talk about this piece but in veterinary social work.

[00:15:14] We define it very broadly so animal assisted interactions includes the therapy dog that goes to the cancer ward at the Children's Hospital and does visits help kids when they're receiving their chemotherapy. We know that the distraction that dogs and other therapy animals can provide

for kids is real. We know that we also know that interventions in nursing homes can also improve nutritional intake for Alzheimer's patients. We know that watching fish swim in a aquarium can lower blood pressure. So we know that the application of a an animal for therapeutic purposes has human benefits. We also in veterinary social work consider animal assisted interactions to be the relationship between the farmer and his herd. So we are not just about companion animals we're about all human animal interactions and the way in which the cattle assist the farmer is real that farmer's life is able to be productive. He's able to take care of his children because of that relationship he has with his herd and so that is a part of how we define animal assisted interactions also the interactions that have happened between in a slaughterhouse where the workers are assisted in their living they get a paycheck because they have a job in the slaughterhouse providing food for our country and you can imagine even as we're talking about this there might be some people listening to the podcast that are beginning to have some feelings about it because the whole issue of animals and people's feelings about the rightness and wrongness of how animals should be treated.

[00:17:03] It's a big issue so we're going to come back to that I'm going to talk about that in the compassion fatigue piece so just but just notice that that's happening for you or for anybody listening to the podcast just know that I'm getting to that that feeling that you're having and then the animal assisted interaction is also the relationship between me and my pet dog Crockett. You and your do you have a companion animal. Rebecca I do I have four cats. Oh my goodness. Yeah. So what's your relationship with your cats and my relationship with my dogs and people's relationships with their with their birds and people's relationships. And if you can believe this with their rat rats have great personalities and turtles have great personalities too. So people's relationship with their individuals individual animals also people's relationship with nature. So people's relationship with the bird feeder outside and all the birds that come and they feed the bird are watching the squirrels that sort of thing is also a part of animal interactions. So you can see that it's a very broad area. One last piece I would say about it is there's also this is the place although there's implications in all four areas. This is a place where the cultural differences of animal assisted interactions is really paramount for the veterinary social worker to attend to. In some cultures dogs are eaten for meat and starting where the client is means that I start with the fact that culturally that is accepted for you. And that's different than me. But I accept and acknowledge in a culturally competent way the different ways that we interact and meet understand and live with animals so that animals within interactions. I guess I'd say one more thing about animals is that interaction is when somebody assists you. You say thank you to them.

[00:18:44] So I think that term animal assisted interactions has within it an inherent thank you to the ways in which animals help us be ourselves. Help us be human. Help us live enhance our lives in some ways in many ways. So it's just kind of an inherent thank you that we have with that term. The last area is compassion fatigue management and this also is some fairly broad compassion fatigue of course as a lot of different terms for burnout secondary traumatic stress vicarious trauma all of the social workers that are listening to this I hope are receiving education either in their current schooling or in their continuing education on how to engage in self care because we as a profession are at risk of compassion fatigue because we meet other people suffering. And the same is true for animal care workers animal related workers. We know that veterinarians have four times as much. This is a study done in the UK. We don't have a study in the United States so it's important to say that but we know that study in the UK found that area had four times as much incidence of suicide than the general population and twice as much as other health populations like medical doctors and dentists. We also know that veterinarians have in the same population of the UK have a suicidal ideation at a five times higher rate than the general population. So we also know that in this country we've got lots and lots of evidence that veterinarians experience depression anxiety substance abuse. So we also know that those same problems reside in veterinary students in veterinary technicians or veterinary nurses in animal care workers like animal control officers in laboratory animal workers even in zookeepers.

[00:20:33] So we know that being a professional that's dedicated to caring for animals puts those professionals at risk for compassion fatigue within the compassion fatigue component we include communication skills. We include conflict management and we include grief counseling skills grief management skills and also stress management skills. And these are the components that are needed in order to help mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue. So now I'm going to come back to that feeling that we identify when we were talking about animals is that interactions and the slaughterhouse whenever you're in a conversation about animals. If you're talking with somebody who has a very different viewpoint than you about how animals should be treated then emotions run high. And part of the job of the Veterinary social worker is to learn how to modulate those emotions and work to develop a neutral non-judgemental stance so that the veterinary social worker can help the people deal with the conflict that they're having. So just like as a social worker we learn how to respect the decisions of the clients that we have that they make even if they're in opposition to what our value system is as a human being not as a social worker but as a human being. The same thing applies in that in any social work that we are not here to decide what's right and wrong regarding animals. We leave that to our colleagues the veterinarians. But instead we try to help enhance human to human contact which is one of our core values.

[00:22:11] And according to the NSW code of ethics so that human to humans can communicate well regarding animal issues so conflict drains animal related professionals and the veterinary social workers job is to help to resolve those conflicts with a mediating role. The social worker in terms of compassion fatigue is also there to help animal related professionals process loss and grief. Teach them about stress management and teach them about communicating properly with human beings very often folks that are drawn into animal related professions are done so because they don't really like to talk to people. And our job as social workers we know how to talk to people so we lend our skills in that capacity through psycho education and through being able to talk well with people animal related professionals can oftentimes reduce a lot of the problems that they have that creates compassion fatigue for them. So those are the four areas and those are some examples of the four areas Great. Now can you clarify as veterinary social work focus on animals on humans or both. So I'm purists and I have many students push me back on this or push back when I'm talking with them about it but I I take a purist stance on it. I believe that we are human service professionals because we are social workers and that's what social workers are we are human service professionals. We are not animal related professionals and we have many many many many animal related professionals in this country. It's not like we need necessarily more of them. What we need is a human service professional that knows how to deal with people regarding animal issues have the purity in place means that we avoid two ethical problems. The first is that we avoid the trap of putting an animal before a person.

[00:23:59] So if we made a clinical decision that put the wellbeing of an animal before the wellbeing of a person then I really believe that we're behaving in an unethical way according to social work and we have moved over to become an animal welfare professional instead of a social worker. So I'm very purist about it. The second is that there is something in our code that says we must not operate and perform services that are outside of our area of competence and when we are getting our training as social workers we do not receive extensive training on the health wellbeing and behaviour of animals. We may receive some we may learn some from reading books we may have pets we may have grown up around animals but we don't have the expertise that animal related professionals do. And so when we take a purist stance and acknowledge that I'm here to deal with the people the human factor in this maybe ecological conundrum that we might be presented with. For instance the client that won't go into the hospital because of her dog. That's a conundrum right and it's a cross species conundrum.

[00:25:10] And we as social workers deal with conundrums all the time if we embrace that we are

social workers and that we're there to deal with the people and we take a veterinary social work paradigm to how to address the problem then we know that our obligation is to partner with and have good strong relationships with animal related professionals that can help us with the dog the way that that case was resolved in 1975 was that the dog was taken home with the caseworker and I think that happens a lot and I think that happens with social workers that love animals but that puts the social worker at risk more and more. The relationship between people and their animals is becoming more like a family member. So if a social worker takes the dog home and the dog dies gets sick gets injured then that social worker is at risk for the consequences that that client may feel they have and can be entitled to. With that social worker. So I'm curious I know if that is million times but I am aware human service professionals that specialized in human animal interactions and by taking that stance we avoid two main ethical complexities. We always put the people first and allow the animals. Animal related professionals to put the animals first and we prevent operating outside of our area of competence now in your discussion just now you touched a bit on different ethical issues and challenges that may be faced in veterinary social work. Can you provide us some information about whether or not it's ethical for social workers to make animals for clients. Yes I think it's unethical to make animals your clients. Now that having been said in animal assisted interactions for instance social worker might use an animal in an animal assisted therapy component and without being partnered with an animal related professional may miss the signs that the animal welfare is at risk. So a dog may be showing signs of stress that the social worker may not see or attend to or be able to attend to because they're attending to the person.

[00:27:20] So it's essential that a social worker acknowledge that an animal being is part of their treatment protocol and they have to acknowledge that that being has needs and they have to make sure that those needs are taken care of by ensuring that either an animal related professional is involved directly or has is in a close advisory role with the social worker to ensure that the animal factor is properly taking care of. The third example and this is one of the classical examples is you go to a home you're a case worker you've been working with the family. The case is of a family that is at risk of having the children removed because of violence in the home. You go to the home you've been working. It's an involuntary client. You've been working really really hard to build rapport with the client. You're not the Department of Children Services so you're not ultimately going to be taking the child out. But you're the treatment approach. You're trying to remedy the problem. And the fact is that you're put in a situation where that perhaps there's a dog in the environment that is on a chain that is aggressive that is exhibiting a health problem that is covered in fleas is emaciated not properly fed. So what do you do. Do you confront the family about the dog and what effect will that have on the report that you're building with the family. The dog is definitely in danger. But who is your client. What are you responsible for in that situation. So this is a situation where we feel grateful for laws like cross reporting law which is a very macro veterinary social work kind of policy whereby an animal related professional a team of professionals are required to report to each other when they see someone of the other species in danger.

[00:29:17] So in that situation one of the things I'm going to suggest an approach of how that could be resolved in an ethically sound way and then I am interested to hear how the audience might react to that. And people are welcome to send me an e-mail and because certainly all the answers are not in place regarding veterinary social work it's an ongoing dialogue of how do we grapple with these issues in an ethically sound way. But from my perspective if the state has a cross reporting law and you are there as an emissary for the Department of Children's Services and you have a release to speak with the Department of Children Services and have to give them updates about how treatment is going then you can including your caseload. So there's a dog that is and described the situation with the dog in which case that activates the Department of Children Services to have to engage with the cross reporting approach. You did not have to confront the family about it and you did not have to make the report yourself and break the client's confidentiality. But yet because of the Cross reporting law and because of that partnership between an animal related professional and human

professional the needs of both species were taken care of. So as a vet social worker. Our job is on a macro level to start looking at what policies need to be put in place. From a one health perspective to ensure that we're able to address all beings without compromising the social work's role of advocating for the human being. So I hope to hear back from people about their perspective on that. Absolutely.

[00:30:44] And you want to share your e-mail at this point so people can give you. OK go ahead. Absolutely. People can e-mail me at estrand@utk.edu. Great. Thank you. Now we want to take some time and focus on some of the research you have exclusively done and I know in the past you have conducted various studies examining domestic violence and animal abuse. What have you found as a result of these studies about the impact of pet abuse on battered women. You know I think that the most pronounced thing that I found I already kind of listed what the overall literature is saying regarding domestic violence and animal abuse. But I think the thing that I found that was new and really stuck out to me was that women grieve about their pets when they have to leave their pets behind. They grieve. They honestly feel sad and that the level of grief is more intense for those without children than those with children. So it speaks to the ways in which animals can serve as surrogates for human family members. Very often people say well she's like my child. So this finding kind of definitely supports that that domestic violence victims who have to leave their pets behind if they do not have children grieve more intensely than those that do have children. But both women with children and women without children also grieve when they have to leave their pets behind. And also I was surprised to have the replicated findings that that women really will delay they will use that as an excuse to not leave a violent situation.

[00:32:25] So we have here at UT and there's programs across the country. Ours is called Animal Haven where we take care of the pets of domestic violence victims so that if a person wants to come into shelter but they're worried about their pet we have a system in place whereby our animal related professionals take care of the pet for the women and we are the portal to help the women get that application in and get that placement underway. Great homes like a fantastic project they have in place. Yeah and there's also increasing call to have domestic violence placements where animals are actually allowed to be present. So having more and more domestic violence shelters where animals can stay with people I think has a lot of good implications for mental health benefits and helping women get through that hard time of their life. Absolutely. Now what types of research topics in your opinion remain to be explored within the field of veterinary social work. Well there's just so many there's never really been done a really nice analysis of the link literature so I would love to see somebody just do a nice met analysis of all of the studies out there looking at the correlation between violence to humans and violence to animals. It's a great one. I'd like to see somebody look at grief and loss issues and suicidal perpetration and also ideation for pet owners because I was so surprised anecdotally when I got on the clinic floor how often I heard people talk about suicide that they would take their life if their dog died. I had no idea that I was going to be dealing with so much suicide prevention in this setting.

[00:34:02] It was kind of flabbergasting to me. So I think a nice study about that. What I think would be really beneficial in terms of animal assisted interactions. You know I think that what really needs to be done in terms of animal assisted interactions is the design of the studies needs to be improved. And we know that dogs and cats and other animals but particularly dogs can lower blood pressure. There's oxytocin the love hormone that people experience when they're petting a dog. People feel their dogs are non-judgemental presence and they perform better when their dogs are with them as opposed to when their husbands are with them on like a math test or something. So we know that but more specifically things like what does the dog actually help with. There's one study that I like that's recent looking at substance abusers and group therapy and the group that had the dog had better rapport in it than the group that did not have the dog. And so we know then that the intervention of the dog was for rapport. So more specificity if you will in terms

of the reason why an animal assisted intervention works. I also think that issues of animal welfare and animal assisted therapy is really big and really really important. And so I'd like to see a lot more research looking at animal welfare issues in animal assisted therapy where you have crossed disciplinary teams that are conducting research in this area. So a study that has an animal behaviorist and also a social worker on the same research team I think is called for.

[00:35:34] Given that the intervention is a cross species intervention I think that we have to have representation on the research team that is also has expertise in across species way in terms of compassion fatigue. The research I think that really I would like to see grow is research regarding conflict regarding animal related issues and whether or not animal related mediators have any kind of effectiveness in helping to resolve these conflicts. Now be a really hard study to do. I mean there would be a lot of thought how to operationalize those variables would be very challenging but I think that that's the cutting edge area for the issue. The fourth area that in a social compact fatigue. And of course in all these areas of the research hope but being a generalist social worker and being a true social worker I mean I'm a researcher at my Ph.D. I love to do research I think it's really necessary and needed and important but I also believe in policy and advocacy and I think there's a lot of policy and both at micro and macro levels. And all for these areas that there's plenty of room to grow. Absolutely. I would agree with you certainly on that. What is your highest hopes for what veterinary social work will be like in the future. Well I think I'm going to make a plug now. We have in April of 2013 the veterinary social work summit and we have keynote speakers. Dr Temple Grandin who has done a lot of work on improving the treatment of animals that are going to be used for food in this country.

[00:37:15] And she's also autistic and she's written a lot of books and she is really important in terms of improving animal welfare and in this country. We also have another gentleman named Dr. Halhertzog who has done a lot of research on people's attitudes towards animals and why we eat some and why we snuggle with them and why we hate some and why we love them. You know all the different ways that people experience animals. He'll also be with us and the tagline of the summit is is there a role for social work and animal welfare and that's really a question because if we are human service professional then what is our role and is there a role and is it appropriate. And so the summit is the third one we've had. We had one in 2008. We had one in 2010 and then we're having one in 2013 and this upcoming summit is the first one that will be a call for papers. So we want people to submit content in one of the four areas but in their social work and also submit content on the ethical dilemma that may arise. But in any social work and for us to have a national and international dialogue about this in the profession of social work and when I say dialogue I really mean dialogue. I don't mean one sided. I mean I want everybody to come to the table to discuss this and have differing views. And for us to engage in meaningful conversation about the role of social work in human animal interactions in a very pragmatic practical way. So the highest hope would be that that we do engage in a dialogue about this for our profession because we've paid attention to animals since 1975 and we embrace the ecological perspective.

[00:38:58] And so to not acknowledge that animals are part of the ecological lives and environments of our clients. It's not in keeping with our values system as a profession. And so we have this opportunity to come together in 2013 and have this discussion and to figure out how to do this and ethically sound ways. The other hope that I have is that institutions of education and social work will begin to integrate that in their social work content into their coursework. Here see we have a certificate program that students can specialize in but in every social worker receive a certificate. We will have a postmaster's certificate available in fall of 2012. For those that have already graduated and it's all online with some face to face time required here in Tennessee and our Ph.D. students in our DSW students can also specialize in and social work here. But it's not hard just to incorporate a little information regarding the human animal connection even in the basic human beings in the social environment coursework. And when a human being arrives in the office

of a social worker bereaved about the loss of their dog and the social worker does not value that it hurts the client and we know it because they end up with us. So I don't think it is meeting a standard of practice at this point to not have this education mainstreamed on some level in all beginning courses in social work. So those are my high hopes. Sure I could go on but those are my highest hopes. Now at this point I believe we've touched on know the core questions about veterinary social work.

[00:40:45] Is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to mention. I think I'd like to to revisit this one issue that for some social workers it's hard to grasp which is that when we are doing our education in social work you know we get educated about the fact that we will meet clients and will kind of be in situations with clients that the client is dealing with something that is in opposition to our values. And this is a classic example is let's just say that I am opposed to abortion from a religious perspective. It's against my faith and I'm working with a client who is grappling with whether to have an abortion or not. We're supposed to be able to help that client by starting where the client is and supporting the client with what their strengths are and what they want to do and set aside our own personal values or decisions about what's right and wrong. And there is no profession in this country or anywhere in the world that I know of whose sole job it is to maintain that neutral stance regarding animal issues. You think about people that are into animals they are into animals and they say this is the right way to do it it should be this way. Man I'm a hunter and I don't want to deal with any of you PETA people that are quote unquote crazy animal person or you have people that are vegan and that are very very opposed to any kind of harm towards animals at all.

[00:42:14] Who thinks that somebody who might eat a hamburger is also morally decrepit and I use these inflammatory words because the conflict is that inflammatory and that emotional and there is no profession. That has trained themselves to learn how to be neutral in those situations to create the space for people to connect with each other in human ways. And that's what I think that in a social work has the capacity to do. I don't think it's our job as a very social workers. We certainly have skills in knowing how to treat an animal abuser we know how to help people who are bereaved over their pets. We know how to set up an animal assisted therapy program that is good animal welfare practices and also collect data to make sure that there's no iatrogenic effects and that actually being beneficial for the people we know how to give stress management training and communication training and help people deal with compassion fatigue. But underneath it all is this capacity to modulate our own emotions regarding the right and wrong way to treat animals. And that's what I would hope people would take home as the gap that is so desperately needed to fill in this country and in the world I would say that there's social work has the capacity to do so. I thought I would add Great. thank you so much. And let me take this time again just to thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise those delivering podcast series. We really appreciate it. I so appreciate being asked and being able to share this information with you and I want to invite everyone to consider to submit an abstract for the social work summit and come down to Knoxville in April 2013 and enjoy a dialogue regarding this issue with us. Great. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:44:08] You've been listening to Dr Elizabeth Strand discuss veterinary social work. Thanks for listening. And join us again next time for more lectures and conversations on social work practice and research. Hi I'm Nancy Smith professor and dean at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. For more information about who we are our history our programs and what we do we invite you to visit our website at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. Here at UB we are living proof that social work makes a difference in people's lives.