



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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Funding to provide state-of-the-art housing for U of L lab animals

The University of Lethbridge has received nearly \$90,000 from the Canada Foundation for Innovation's (CFI) John R. Evans Leaders Fund to help provide essential rat housing infrastructure in the newly constructed Science and Academic Building.

Dr. Gerlinde Metz, a neuroscience professor with the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience (CCBN), and Dr. Rob Sutherland, director and Chair of the CCBN, say the funds are vitally important for the collaborative research conducted by all members of the neuroscience department.

"When we move to the new SAB, we need upgraded housing systems for our rats," says Metz. "The old system is obsolete and it won't work in the new building. We need top-notch ventilated cages and this is the latest housing equipment that's available."

The new housing system allows researchers to provide the animals with enriched environments where they can climb between two levels, have more space, get access to toys and be housed in larger groups. The housing system is above the requirements mandated by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC). The total project cost is \$223,000 and applications for further funding from provincial programs will be made later this year.

"This new housing system will further improve the quality of our research," she says. "In our experience, rats communicate across the different cages. For example, if you have animals that are stressed, the neighbours will know if someone's not feeling well. This kind of communication will be more difficult if you have each cage being its own experimental unit. With the ventilation system in the new SAB, each cage will always have clean, fresh air."

The new housing system will serve the entire department, with its emphasis on collaborative research that focuses on the umbrella theme of aging.

"In some way or another, we all have research that contributes to supporting healthy aging," says Metz. "We conduct research to find out how the brain changes as we grow older, what can be done to slow or decelerate biological aging, and how to predict the risk of Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease and develop interventions. The research that we proposed in this

application is along those lines, to find interventions and support for our aging population within Alberta and within Canada at large.”

These advances in knowledge would not be possible without using animals in the laboratory. Human conditions can be modelled in laboratory animals and that helps scientists learn about certain aspects or genetic contributions that lead to disease in a rat or mouse model.

“Most of the therapies we use in clinical environments were required, by law, to go through animal research first because you can’t, for ethical reasons, test invasive therapies in a human,” says Metz. “We have the highest ethical standards so we’re not performing unnecessary and overly invasive procedures in animals. That is closely monitored by our institutional veterinarian, the CCAC and our animal care personnel.”

The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Sport, announced more than \$61 million for leading edge research labs and equipment through the Canada Foundation for Innovation’s John R. Evans Leaders Fund earlier this week in Edmonton.

“Ask any researcher in Canada, and they will tell you that you can’t do the best science if you don’t have the best tools,” says Duncan. “I am thrilled to announce funding for the infrastructure needs of Canadian researchers. Their ground-breaking contributions to science and research have an enormous impact on the breakthroughs that help make our visions for a better future of Canada a reality.”

This news release can be found online at [CFI funding](#).

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Contact

Caroline Zentner, public affairs adviser
403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)
caroline.zentner@uleth.ca