

Congrats to Michelina, Winner of the 2023 Pet Food Association Scholarship!

Michelina's a PhD candidate in the Department of Animal Biosciences at the University of Guelph, focused on companion animal nutrition.



A hearty **congratulations to Michelina**, a PhD candidate in the [Department of Animal Biosciences](#) at [the University of Guelph](#), the first recipient of the [\\$5,000 Martha 'Marty' Wilder Honorary Scholarship](#) from the [Pet Food Association of Canada](#) (PFAC). The annual award goes to a **grad student pursuing studies in a field related to pet food production**, so Michelina's the perfect candidate!

Pet nutrition specialist

Michelina's finishing up a PhD in [Companion Animal Nutrition at the University of Guelph](#), where she'll defend her thesis in the spring of 2024.

In her career, Michelina hopes to "**continue to contribute meaningful companion animal nutrition research**," and put time into "scientific translation" — that is, making advances in science comprehensible to the broader public. "A lot

of **incredible pet nutrition research** is being done," she says, "but I think there needs to be a greater **focus on making that knowledge accessible.**"

The PFAC Annual Conference

Alongside the **\$5,000 award**, receiving the PFAC pet nutrition scholarship meant getting a chance to **attend PFAC's Annual Conference in Banff, Alberta.**

"It was incredible to **meet and speak with so many professionals** in the pet food industry," says Michelina. She's eager to put her skills and expertise to the test, and "contribute to the great work that's already being done."

Michelina's no stranger to the industry: her interest in animals and nutrition goes back to her youth, and **she's gathered plenty of experience** over the years in "sales, production, formulation," and now research. On top of this passion, she's had "meaningful conversations with a variety of different stakeholders," making her a worthy recipient of the Martha 'Marty' Wilder PFAC scholarship.

Advice for future PFAC scholarship applicants

"**Always be curious,**" Michelina says! "Seek out experiences that compliment but also **challenge your knowledge and skill set** to make yourself as well-rounded as possible." In an industry like pet nutrition, the "industry is so nuanced and requires you to **understand how your area fits into the bigger picture.**"

"You're likely incredibly knowledgeable about your research area ... but what drives this industry is not only **how pets interact with these products**, but also **how the pet owner experiences them** too." Michelina credits her breadth of experiences across the spectrum — from sales to research — for making her such a strong candidate for this scholarship. "I think it also highlights the **incredible program and opportunities** that I've been so fortunate to have at the University of Guelph," she adds.

Props for PFAC

Michelina is enthusiastic and grateful for the work PFAC does, and their support of her studies through this scholarship and its opportunities for professional development. PFAC is "an incredible association and I appreciate how passionate they are about **bridging the gaps between industry and academia,**" she says. PFAC creates "new opportunities for graduate students in the Canadian pet food industry," and Michelina can't wait to be part of the industry!

About PFAC and the Martha 'Marty' Wilder Honorary Scholarship

Per the PFAC website, "PFAC is the national industry association that represents **pet food manufacturers and suppliers to the industry** that does business in Canada. PFAC members are responsible for the majority of pet food sales in Canada, and over \$1 billion in exports to over 90 countries around the world. This scholarship is made possible through **funding by PFAC member companies.**"

"The scholarship's namesake, Martha 'Marty' Wilder, was **Executive Director for PFAC for over 24 years**, and contributed significantly to the growth and success of the pet food industry in Canada, and globally. The scholarship is **named in her honour**, as a recognition of the positive impact that she had on Canadian pet food."

Congratulations once again to Michelina — an outstanding, **deserving candidate for the 2023 Martha 'Marty' Wilder Honorary Scholarship** from PFAC. We'll give the final word to Michelina: "Martha 'Marty' Wilder has made incredible contributions to the Canadian pet food industry and to be named the first recipient of this scholarship in her honour was beyond humbling."

[Learn more about the PFAC Martha 'Marty' Wilder Honorary Scholarship](#)