

Adrienne & Pierre SOMMER
FONDATION

JOURNAL



4

ANIMAL-ASSISTED
INTERVENTION IN
FRENCH PRISONS



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SOUS L'ÉGIDE DE LA FONDATION DE FRANCE

THE ADRIENNE & PIERRE SOMMER FOUNDATION



The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation is currently the only private and independent non-profit organization in France that supports the development of animal-assisted intervention, a practice based on positive interaction between humans and domestic or companion animals.

The Foundation provides assistance for animal-assisted activities at educational, healthcare, social service, and correctional establishments. Over the last 15 years, the Foundation has provided funding over 700 programs throughout France, for a total of over 7 million euros.

Involving animals, improving lives

www.fondation-apsommer.org

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INTRODUCTION

Guy Courtois

President of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation



Animal-assisted intervention (AAI) is based on controlled, improvement-oriented encounters between humans and animals. The practice is particularly significant in the prison environment, where the issue is not to treat an illness or ease a handicap, but rather to reestablish dialogue, restore self-esteem, and ultimately, facilitate social reintegration. In the face-to-face encounter between prisoner and animal, there is also a third party: the professional whose role is to leverage this relationship. Animal-assisted intervention in correctional institutions has become a core component of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation's mission.

The Foundation travelled quite a bit of road before reaching this focus. Created in 1971 and operating under the auspices of the *Fondation de France* since 1984, the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation's original mission was to inform and raise children's awareness about companion animals. The Foundation subsequently got involved in the domain of child protection, then expanded its scope to include the elderly, the handicapped, and the homeless. The reasoning was this: contact with animals could help healthy children, so it should also help people in vulnerable or difficult circumstances. This is what has led us to support the development of animal-assisted intervention in prisons.

Supporting AAI in prison has been a top priority for the last decade. Encouraged by the positive impact of experimental initiatives, we have increasingly invested in this area, helped to develop programs, and strived to raise awareness. Animal-assisted initiatives in prisons currently represent a quarter of the projects receiving funding from the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation. Our aim is to attain sufficient critical mass to inspire the public sector to get definitively involved and financially commit to keeping these activities running.

So far, the results of animal-assisted activities in correctional institutions have been quite positive, and they are developing rapidly. Proposals for new initiatives are on the increase, both on an institutional level as well as in individual prisons. This is good news. Animal-assisted intervention is a precious tool in correctional institutions, when used wisely and by qualified people. Its growth will create new jobs that will require specialized training. Effective professionalization and training schemes will be crucial to the future of this promising field.

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PRISON ADMINISTRATION IN FRANCE:

Organization and missions

Prison administration is one of the five divisions of the French Ministry of Justice. It is composed of:

- **A Central bureau of prison administration**
- **Decentralized services:**
 - 9 interregional agencies
 - 1 prison services office for overseas territories
 - 188 correctional institutions
 - 103 Social integration and probation units (SPIP)
- **A national employment agency:**
Prison Employment Services (SEP)
- **A public administration school:**
National School of Prison Administration (ENAP)
- **Local jails** receive the accused (those waiting for a judgment) as well as people who have been convicted whose sentences do not exceed two years.
- **Detention centers** are for people sentenced to more than two years and considered to be good candidates for social reintegration.
- **Prisons** receive people sentenced to more than two years and considered dangerous. Detention programs focus on security.
- **Semi-custodial facilities** are for people who have been granted a semi-open regime or exterior placement.
- **Reduced sentence centers** receive people sentenced to a maximum of two years, a semi-open regime, or exterior placement.
- **Penitentiary centers** are mixed correctional facilities featuring at least two sections with different detention regimes.
- **Penitentiary centers for minors** are for young people aged 13 to 18 that are operated in cooperation with the Youth Judicial Protection agency (PJJ).

Prison administration has two main missions:



Surveillance

To ensure that those entrusted to a correctional institution by the judicial authorities remain in custody.



Prevention of recidivism

Carried out by the entire prison staff in collaboration with public institutions and non-governmental associations, this mission consists of preparing inmates for social reintegration and accompanying those serving their sentences in open facilities.

French prison administration is comprised of some 40,000 agents, including 27,000 surveillance staff and 5,000 reintegration and probation officers.

French prison administration is responsible for 250,000 people: 80,000 inmates and 170,000 people assigned to semi-open regimes.

OBJECTIVES OF ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION IN PRISON

- **Disengagement from violence**
(dealing with feelings, emotions, frustration)
- **Positive relationship skill development**
(understanding social codes, people's needs, dealing with others)
- **Self-motivation and engagement**
(suicide prevention, autonomy)



Source: Ministry of Justice, <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/>



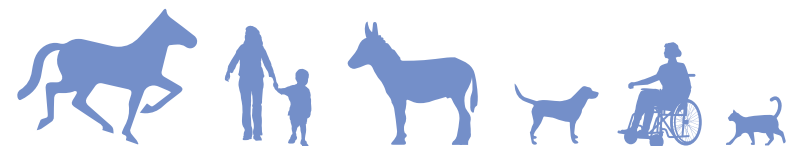
In memory of Sophie Lasne

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THE ADRIENNE & PIERRE SOMMER FOUNDATION: A CATALYST FOR ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION IN FRENCH PRISONS



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The role of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation

Boris Albrecht

Director

The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation has provided funding for animal-assisted intervention (AAI) in correctional facilities since 2010. Equine- and canine-assisted activities are the most common.

A crucial component of the A&P Sommer Foundation's mission is to fund, facilitate, promote, and raise awareness about innovative animal-assisted intervention (AAI) practices. AAI is a relatively recent phenomenon in French correctional institutions, and the Foundation is currently the primary source of funding for the majority of animal-assisted interventions in French prisons. 60 activities are presently being run at over 25% of French correctional institutions. This figure is increasing rapidly, as AAI produces largely positive results.

French prisons do not always have a budget for this type of program (practitioner wages, animal care, etc.), so AAI initiatives often run up against financial barriers. This is why the Foundation lends financial support to carefully selected projects. The amount allocated varies according to the nature and the scope of the activity. We give grants of up to 20,000 euros (over two years) for operating costs, and up to 15,000 euros for one-time investments.

Generally, the Foundation partially subsidizes AAI initiatives at institutions for one, two, or three years, enough time for programs to establish themselves and be comfortably integrated into routine. In the case of correctional institutions, we sometimes extend this duration to give facilities time to find adequate financing and to allow programs to develop and mature.

Every year, we receive many requests from prisons for financial assistance. We make our choices based on an evaluation of the following elements: the intensity and the duration of the proposed intervention, the well-being of the animals involved, the available human and animal skills, the cost, the practitioner's training and references, and above all, the establishment's commitment to the project.

We take particular care to make sure that project proposals are written by penal staff, as they have the most intimate knowledge of the specific needs of the people who will be involved. Finally, the Foundation generally encourages co-

financed projects, because it is essential that all parties get involved to the best of their ability.

We are very pleased that French prison administration now takes AAI quite seriously and is directly supporting high quality development by creating frameworks and supervision schemes. Things are headed in the right direction.

ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION Definition

While the first theoretical writings related to associating animals and people in difficulty go back to the 1970s, the concept of "animal-assisted intervention" emerged in the 2000s. In 2008, a group of experts working under the under the aegis of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation came up with the following definition:

Animal-assisted intervention consists of leveraging the relationship between people and domestic or companion animals in the framework of a social welfare, therapy, or education program, in a spirit of mutual respect, for primarily human benefit.

ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION In Practice

Animal-assisted intervention should reinforce and complement the efforts of caregivers, psychologists, and social service professionals who work with people confronting social, physical, mental, sensory, or psychiatric disabilities. The quality of the results obtained depends largely on the relevance of objectives and the means attributed to organize, carry out, and assess the intervention. AAI is usually led by healthcare or social service professionals in institutional settings, in collaboration with animal specialists such as dog trainers, veterinarians, or ethologists.

Map of AAI activities in French correctional facilities








Since 2010, the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation has provided funding for 90% of animal-assisted initiatives in French correctional facilities. The Foundation is currently helping finance AAI initiatives at 60 out of 188 facilities.

The map of France on the next page shows past and current AAI activities at French prisons to date (non-exhaustive list).

AUVERGNE – RHÔNE ALPES

- Centre de détention de Roanne 
- Centre pénitentiaire de Valence 
- Maison d'arrêt de Grenoble Varces 
- Maison d'arrêt de Chambéry 

BRETAGNE

- Centre de détention de Rennes femmes 
- Centre de détention de Rennes femmes 
- Maison d'arrêt de Rennes Vezin 
- Maison d'arrêt de Saint-Malo 
- Centre pénitentiaire de Lorient 
- Maison d'arrêt de Brest 
- Maison d'arrêt de Vannes 


CENTRE VAL DE LOIRE

- Centre de détention de Château-dun 
- Centre pénitentiaire d'Orléans 
- Maison centrale de Saint-Maur 


CORSE

- Maison d'arrêt de Borgo 









DOM TOM

- La Réunion**
- Association culturelle sportive et d'aide aux détenus (A.C.S.A.D.) 





Guadeloupe




- Centre pénitentiaire de Baie-Malo 

GRAND EST





- Maison d'arrêt de Strasbourg 
- Maison d'arrêt de Châlons-en-Champagne 
- Maison d'arrêt de Reims 
- Maison d'arrêt de Besançon 
- Maison d'arrêt de Dijon - quartiers mineurs 
- Centre de détention de Villenauxe-la-Grande 
- Maison d'arrêt de Mulhouse 
- Maison centrale de Clairvaux 

HAUTS DE FRANCE








- Maison d'arrêt d'Amiens 
- Maison centrale de Château-Thierry 
- Centre pénitentiaire de Vendin-le-Vieil 
- Centre de détention de Bapaume 

- Centre pénitentiaire de Liancourt 
- Centre pénitentiaire d'Annoeulin 
- Établissement pour mineurs de Quiévrecain 









ILE DE FRANCE

- Maison d'arrêt de Fleury 
- Maison centrale de Poissy 
- Centre pénitentiaire du sud francilien 
- SPIP de Paris 

NORMANDIE

- Centre pénitentiaire de Caen adultes + quartier mineurs 
- Centre de détention de Condé-sur-Sarthe 
- Centre pénitentiaire le Havre 
- Centre de détention d'Argentan 
- Maison d'arrêt de Coutances 
- Centre de détention de Val-de-Reuil 
- Maison d'arrêt de Cherbourg 

NOUVELLE AQUITAINE

- Centre pénitentiaire de Vivonne 
- Maison centrale de St Martin-de-Ré 
- Centre détention de Bedenac 
- Maison d'arrêt de Saintes 
- Maison d'arrêt d'Agen 
- Maison d'arrêt d'Angoulême 
- Maison d'arrêt de Niort 
- Centre de détention de Mont-de-Marsan 







OCCITANIE




- Centre pénitentiaire de Béziers 




PACA

- Centre de détention de Tarascon 
- Maison centrale d'Arles 
- Maison d'arrêt de Nice 

PAYS DE LA LOIRE

- Maison d'arrêt de Nantes 
- Établissement pour mineurs d'Orvault 
- Maison d'arrêt d'Angers 
- Maison d'arrêt du Mans-les-Croisettes 
- Maison d'arrêt de Laval 
- Maison d'arrêt de La Roche-sur-Yon 

-  Funding from Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation
-  Funding from French Ministry of Justice
-  Funding from Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation and French Ministry of Justice

- 1 
- 2 
- 3 
- 4  + 





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ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION IN FRENCH PRISONS, THE EARLY YEARS

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STRASBOURG: AN ELEVEN-YEAR EXPERIMENT

Interview with Patricia Arnoux

Since childhood, Patricia Arnoux has been passionate about life sciences and human-animal relationships. This led her to study both human psychology and animal behavior. Hearing about “zootherapy” practiced in Quebec, she went there to train, then returned to France to integrate her new skills into her work with children and adolescents suffering from behavioral problems. While participating in a France-Quebec exchange program, she connected with Strasbourg Prison, which led to her running one of the first animal-assisted initiatives in a French prison. This pilot program is still running and has greatly expanded.



“In 2007, when we first got in touch with Strasbourg Prison, no one in France had ever brought animals into a correctional institution. Still, associate prison director Patrice Bourdaret¹ was very interested in the idea. He contacted me a year later, after two juvenile inmates committed suicide at correctional facilities in Metz and Strasbourg. Something had to be done to stop the wave of violence and cool down a very tense situation. Why not make the most of the beneficial effects of interaction with animals? That’s how I got involved with prisons.”

A dog, a turtledove, and a guinea pig

After meeting several times with senior prison management, the medical team, and prison wardens to establish a workable structure, Patricia Arnoux passed through the prison gates with a dog, a turtledove, and a guinea pig. “We had identified specific goals: suicide prevention and improvement of relationships between inmates and prison staff. I started in the juvenile ward. To get there, I had to walk through most of the prison. It kept taking longer and longer for me to make this journey, because guards constantly stopped me along the way to chat and pet the animals! I soon expanded the program to the women’s ward, then to the psychiatric ward, and finally, to the men’s ward. In eleven years’ time, we have gone from two hours of animal-assisted interventions every two weeks, to 35 hours per week. In 2010, I created an association, Evi’ence, to promote the benefits of animal-assisted intervention in correctional facilities. Evi’ence currently has a staff of nine, including three salaried positions: two people who intervene at Strasbourg Prison and one at Mulhouse. It is incredible how well this project has developed. Today, doors open more easily.”

1. See Interview p.26

Responding to needs

Patricia Arnoux and her team need to be flexible enough to respond to the very diverse needs of prison populations and staff. “We intervene in the arrivals section, where inmates stay for a maximum of 15 days when they first arrive in prison. We help them deal with ‘incarceration shock’. The risk of suicide is higher in this ward than in others, as people are often very nervous and upset, especially if it is their first time in custody. We feel out the situation and, if necessary, designate those who are at risk. Inmates in the departures section also present elevated risk. People who will soon be leaving prison sometimes have a hard time dealing with this prospect, especially if there is no one and no job waiting for them. We are there for them too. Between these two key transitions, inmates are placed in a ward according to their profile. We intervene everywhere, according to need, working hand in hand with prison personnel, who let us know about potentially problematic cases: people who tend to close up and isolate themselves. We are part of a multidisciplinary team and help deal with issues that arise in prison: suicide, isolation, violence, social reintegration... Animal-assisted intervention is not magic, but it helps a lot.”

Animal-assisted intervention: the first step is to create a connection

For Patricia Arnoux, “animals create and facilitate social bonds. They have this extraordinary ability to connect immediately, without bias or judgment. We practitioners are a continuation of the leash. An animal opens the door, and we are behind it to open the door even wider. Whatever the context or the crisis that needs to be handled, the basics are always the same: animals enable us to establish a trust-based connection and create a safe environment for change, self-assessment, and recovery. We generally work with animals that come from shelters, which is a strong symbol in itself. The animal was a victim; the inmate must take care of it; they will undertake reconstruction together. As AAI professionals, we have a responsibility to provide appropriate support for people in fragile states, while also monitoring our animal partners for signs of anxiety and taking steps to protect them from stressful situations. We try to work with emotionally healthy animals so that relationships are enriched by their spontaneity and authenticity. This combination of qualities opens endless possibilities and produces amazing results.”

Professionalizing animal-assisted intervention

In the past eleven years, Patricia Arnoux has seen several directors of Strasbourg Prison come and go. “The first ones supported and encouraged the project, and those who followed not only did not question our work, but actually encouraged its development. We are now really part of the furniture! However, there are still difficulties, especially when it comes to funding, which impacts the activity in the long term. The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation gave us a lot of financial



support in the early years, but now we have to find our own resources to continue. Prison administration contributes 25 to 30% of the budget, but we have to look elsewhere for the rest. We are often eligible for funds set aside for specific issues (fighting terrorism, suicide prevention). The central prison administration bureau is addressing this question and would like to professionalize the activity to keep it on track. More and more correctional facilities are interested in animal-assisted intervention. We are often asked to evaluate proposals, give advice, or share our experience.”

*The animal opens the door,
and we are behind it to open it even wider.*

Things are moving forward, and the potential is there. “Prison administration has commissioned us to define national occupational standards specific to the prison environment. Animal-assisted intervention practitioners from all over France are going to participate in this process. The idea is to structure the ensemble of procedures and create a certified training program, which will make it possible to call on qualified, experienced practitioners. To do this, we are using, among other things, research and studies from the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation.”



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ARLES: HORSES ENTER A LONG-TERM PRISON FACILITY

Interview with Thierry Boissin

A psychologist specialized in social psychology, Thierry Boissin began his career working with businesses, associations, and other organizations. He participated in an equine therapy training program in view of integrating animal-assisted intervention into his practice. In 2010, he started working with prison guards at Arles Prison, conducting horse-assisted workshops on the concept of cohesion. In 2011, he developed the first equine-assisted workshops for inmates as a way to fight recidivism.

Arles Prison receives inmates serving long sentences – twenty or more years. They are there because they have committed very serious crimes, and prison authorities are obliged to take drastic security measures. These prisoners have atypical psychological profiles, explains Thierry Boissin. “Cut off from society and other people, they suffer from a severe lack of affection and sensory stimulation. They don't know how to deal with their emotions and often have serious psychological problems. They come from a variety of backgrounds and are serving sentences for a wide range of crimes – robbery, murder, barbarous acts – and they must share common areas, live with others, and interact with guards. Still, some people remain alone, isolated in a cell where they take their daily meals without speaking to anyone, cut off from all family and social relationships.”

Horses help break out of isolation

In 2010, with the goal of helping inmates emerge from this isolation and relearn long-forgotten social gestures, as well as initiate a social and psychological rehabilitation process, Thierry Boissin et Jean-Philippe Mayol¹ decided to bring horses into the prison. “When we first presented our project to the inmates, we spoke, a little pompously, about ‘equine therapy’. This medical term really put them off, so we replaced it with a more concrete title: *Camargue Horses and Men*.”

What does the horse think of me?

Thus renamed, and based on voluntary participation, the workshop got off the ground. It was rapidly successful among both inmates and guards. “I start the activity with individual interviews to help adapt the process to each participant's profile. We then hold a group meeting where we explain how the day is going to unfold. In the morning, each participant approaches and gets acquainted with a horse. At midday, we all eat lunch together: inmates, guards, psychologists, instructors... I remember a man who hadn't eaten a meal with anyone else in over twenty years...”

1. See Interview p.46



“The afternoon is devoted to group exercises, often in pairs mixing inmates and guards. In the evening, we take time to debrief. Each participant shares what he experienced and gives his personal version of how the day went. I later have a private interview with each inmate. I give each person a photo taken that day as a starting point. I also use a technique that was inspired by a schizophrenic inmate. ‘What does the horse think of me?’ he kept asking. This kind of wording helps pass along certain kinds of messages. Here, the horse fulfils its role as an effective mediator.”

Four modules over several years

These early workshops produced noteworthy results, creating positive relationships between inmates and guards who learned to help each other. Very rapidly, inmates started to ask for more workshops, and the program matured and developed. “We divided the activity into four modules that can be spread out over several years. Module 1: the learning phase, inside the prison, as a group. Module 2: becoming a facilitator, passing on knowledge or insight to other inmates. Module 3: preparation for the national equestrian exams, *Les Galops*, which obliges inmates to study, read, and work. Module 4: preparing to leave the prison, which includes some activities outside the prison.”

Of the 120 inmates in the facility, 98 volunteered for the program. *Camargue Horses and Men* lasted several years, as successive prison directors extended the program.

Horses help break through defense mechanisms

Freedom of expression

Thierry Boissin elaborates, “During sessions with the horses, there are no ‘inmates’, no ‘guards’, no ‘director’, no ‘psychologist’ – everyone is a participant. This symbolic aspect is of fundamental importance; it encourages freedom of expression. Everything is mediation: the horses, obviously; the shared meals, prepared together; having coffee together. Touch, contact, odors. Inmates stroke and brush the horses, and this can last for hours...I’m the one who tells them to stop! When they are taking care of a horse, inmates think about their wives or children, and later, we talk about it. Horses help break through defense mechanisms. In prison, you have to appear strong and not reveal anything. A horse weighs 600 kg. No need to pretend with him. You can expose yourself. He won’t judge; he doesn’t cheat, he’s just there, all strength and gentleness. He sees the man, not what he has done. After a day with the horses, returning to the cell block can be a real emotional shock, with repercussions that can be felt for weeks or even months: tears, major changes in how a person relates to others....”

...



“The rhythm of prison life follows an unchanging set of rules. The horses bring a little bit of freedom into the prison, some air from the outside. During visiting hours, inmates show their families photos of their day with the horses. For once, they have something to show, something to tell their families about.”

Regaining a bit of humanity

One inmate made a particularly deep impression on Boissin. “The person had committed absolutely odious acts. And he spent 22 years in isolation in a 9 square meter cell. The first person that he saw outside of his cell was me. I spoke to him about *Camargue Horses and Men*. The experience enabled him to regain a bit of humanity: ‘I’m not a monster, I’m also a man.’ Today, he is in the normal prison. He is married and has a child. For him, I wasn’t a shrink, I was just the guy that takes care of the horses. I was interested in him. And during the activity, he was looked at as a participant like any other. Not like a monster.”

Today, Thierry Boissin continues to work with inmates in prisons in Arles and Tarascon. Correctional establishments regularly contact him for advice on how to set up animal-assisted initiatives. He takes part in seminars and group projects. “There is a common denominator in all this: you have to love people, because there is good in everyone. If you don’t feel that deep inside, do something else.”

Interview with Catherine Mercier

In 1991, after earning a degree in psychology at the University of Paris 5, Catherine Mercier did an internship at Fresnes Prison. She has worked in correctional institutions ever since. “I loved that first experience. It corresponded to my civic values and instantly shaped the rest of my professional life.” In 2008, while working as a psychologist at the Rennes women’s penitentiary, where she directed an individualized monitoring program (PEP), Catherine Mercier organized a first experimental animal-assisted workshop.

“We had to find an appropriate response to a particular case: a woman condemned to 18 years of prison completely rejected the very idea of leaving prison one day. She’d been abused and destroyed by a painful past, had an empty stare and no prospects for the future. The usual social reintegration tools did not work with her. This was the context that gave me the idea of using a horse as a partner to guide her towards the outside world. An animal seemed like the most appropriate intermediary, one that would allow her to recover her self-esteem and develop constructive social skills.”

The first experimental activity

Thus, with the full moral and financial support of the prison’s general management, horse-breeder and equestrian enthusiast Catherine Mercier created the prison’s first equine-assisted activity. “The workshop was held over three full days. Mornings were devoted to various horse-related activities (grooming, leading with and/or without a rope); afternoons were for debriefing and collective writing sessions. The results were spectacular, especially with the prisoner who inspired the initiative. The horse revealed her unsuspected capacity for action, for interaction, and sparked a will to live, not just to survive, and to atone. The last I heard, this woman now leads a full life on the outside.”

Horses and inmates, inside and outside prison walls

After the success of the first workshop, the initiative was not only renewed for the next year, but also supplemented with a second workshop outside the prison for women who qualified for leaves. A two-day activity included a 30-kilometer ride and a night in a cabin. “The animal-assisted activities are tools for social reintegration, which is a component of a PEP psychologist’s mission. The Multidisciplinary Commission evaluates who can or should participate in the activity based on a person’s profile, individual needs, and specific objectives. Women can volunteer, but in the end it’s the Multidisciplinary Commission that decides and then asks the Sentencing Commission for authorization for the trip.



Since the beginning, everyone has been cooperative, and the results observed have been generally very positive, so it has been natural to incorporate the workshops into the institution’s overall program. The equine program has now existed for ten years, and dog-assisted activities were introduced in 2015.”

Staff involvement makes it all possible

According to Catherine Mercier, the involvement of staff, including health and education partners, at every level is essential to the success of animal-assisted activities in prison. “It takes the whole team. No single person should be responsible for such a project, because it can be threatened by power struggles and seduction issues. Furthermore, animal-assisted activities help improve relationships between inmates and guards, because they generate the spontaneous deconstruction of their respective personas. This effect lasts beyond the actual activity. Inmates who have participated in the activity engage more easily in dialogue with staff. The two-day horseback trip is a high point of the project. Some inmates have stepped outside of the prison for the first time in ten years. During this event, hierarchy disappears. We are all on the same level.

*Since the activities with horses, I’m much less impulsive.
I think twice before reacting erratically!*

the words of an inmate

Animal-assisted intervention is not an end in itself

Catherine Mercier insists on the fact that animal-assisted intervention is not an end in itself. “It’s a means of reaching an objective, which might be disengagement from violence, building a sense of self-worth, taking control of one’s life in prison, or developing psycho-social skills. Animal-assisted intervention often complements and reinforces programs with a larger scope, like health education, suicide prevention, or Respecto, a program that gives inmates more liberty within the prison. Animal-assisted activities allow inmates to discover capacities and qualities that they often are not even aware exist, and to reconnect with a more positive part of themselves. By testing these qualities with horses, inmates build self-confidence, develop other ways of being with others, and head out on a new path that will help them move away from delinquency. The program organized with HandiChiens (organization that trains service dogs for people in wheelchairs) is a good example. Inmates who help train a dog that will then help someone else realize their contribution is valuable, and this boosts their self-esteem. We were able to observe first-hand this process of symbolic repair when a handicapped person who had received a dog that had been partly trained by inmates came to visit.”



The DISP Steering Committee: an essential step

Other correctional facilities are setting similar projects in motion. In 2018, Loïc Ben Ghaffar¹ of the Interregional Directorate of Penitentiary Services (DISP) in Rennes, set up a steering committee for animal-assisted intervention, with the help of Catherine Mercier. “This was a major initiative that started a process favorable to animal-assisted intervention in prison. The steering committee mobilizes influential forces, brings together different actors in prison administration, and inscribes animal-assisted intervention on the list of tools for social reintegration, like sports and culture. It provides structure, legitimacy, and credibility for what is being done on local levels. It also highlights the fact that AAI practitioners must be trained appropriately, and if possible, in a training program that has been approved by the institution. Animal ethnology and human psychology skills are indispensable.”

Evaluation is crucial

Designed to reach specific objectives, animal-assisted interventions must be evaluated by prison administration. “This is one of the steering committee’s main duties. Animal-assisted intervention is relatively expensive, and it is important to measure its effects via clinical evaluation or interviews with inmates and staff. At Rennes Prison, for example, we have been working with Christopher Valente² of the University of Rennes criminology laboratory.”

Rennes women’s prison will remain a point of reference

In 2017, after over twenty years as a member of prison staff, Catherine Mercier left her job as PEP psychologist at Rennes Prison. She is continuing to work there as a consultant, but she is also intervening at prisons in Angers, Brest, and Orvault, often with her own horses. “I do training, equine therapy, and equine coaching. I intervene regularly at the National School of Penitentiary Administration with Thierry Boissin³, and although my status has changed, I am still involved with Rennes Prison.”

In conclusion, Catherine Mercier stresses that “without the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation, animal-assisted intervention in prisons simply wouldn’t exist.”

1. See interview page 48
2. See interview page 36
3. See interview page 17



Booklet created by inmate participants in the horse workshop

3

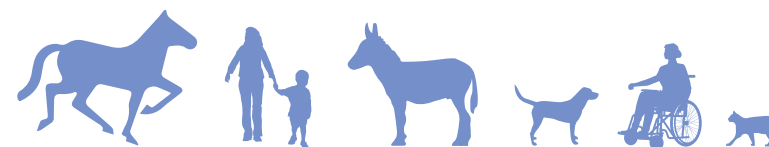
A PRACTICE THAT IS GAINING GROUND



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A PRISON DIRECTOR WHO IS CONVINCED AND CONVINCING: HOW SOMETHING THAT WORKS GAINS GROUND

Interview with Patrice Bourdaret

Patrice Bourdaret entered prison administration as a civil officer in 1997. Since passing qualifying exams in 2004, he has held positions as deputy director of Strasbourg Prison (2005-2009), deputy director of Rennes men's prison (2009-2013), deputy head of Châlons-en-Champagne Prison (2013-2015), director of Villenauxe-la-Grande Prison, and currently, deputy head of Lille-Loos Prison. "We have what we call an 'obligation to relocate,'" explains Patrice Bourdaret. "The work is rough, so it's important to move around frequently."

Patrice Bourdaret first heard about bringing animals into a correctional facility during his first directing job at Strasbourg Prison. "In 2006, some people from Quebec came to Strasbourg to set up an animal-assisted activity in the geriatric ward of the hospital. They asked if they could come to the prison to discuss animal-assisted intervention in this context, knowing that this type of thing was already done in Canada. We opened the prison doors to them, and after some particularly convincing discussions, I told my supervisor, 'We've got to do this here!'"

Inside the cells, at the heart of the prison

In this resolute state of mind, Patrice Bourdaret met Patricia Arnoux, and together they organized the first animal-assisted intervention of his career. "At the time, we were dealing with a wave of juvenile suicides at Metz and Strasbourg Prisons. One way or another, it was urgent to try something to improve the way we were dealing with inmates. At first, Patricia and I focused on minors and sexual offenders. She arrived with her golden retriever and a whole menagerie of small animals – rabbits, turtledoves, and so on. Our position was very clear from the start: we wanted to go into the cells, into the heart of the prison."

The activity was in no way recreational or there to provide any sort of distraction. "We wanted to leverage the animals to get closer to inmates, including those who rarely, if ever, left their cell. Our goal was to genuinely reach them, to allow them to express themselves, come out of their shells, and reconnect with the trajectory of their life. One day, Patricia went to the isolation block to meet with a long-term prisoner who never uttered a word. When he saw the dog, he started to speak and kept going for a long time. It was miraculous! During this first activity, we saw many minors. When they were with the animals, they were incredibly calm and respectful to one another. Such calm interludes act as first step toward a positive reconstruction process. The impact of the contact with animals is so rapid and so spectacular that it's impossible not to be convinced."

...

A foundation for future initiatives

This first experience in Strasbourg was a turning point in Patrice Bourdaret's professional life. Throughout his career, he has expanded and enriched what he learned during the first animal-assisted interventions. "I was immediately convinced of the benefits of AAI in prison and subsequently spent a lot of energy convincing my colleagues and breaking down resistance from general administration." When he moved to his next job in Rennes, his new colleagues were waiting impatiently. His reputation had preceded him, and they were counting on him to set up an AAI project there. "If general management is not on board, it's very difficult to make any headway. But when the results are there, it's hard to deny them. Animals in prison change lives. They do everyone an incredible amount of good and ease tension." For four years, Patrice Bourdaret deepened and intensified this work, with the help of Emmanuel Doumalin of Umanima (an AAI organization). "We allowed some inmates who had almost finished their sentences to leave the prison to go take care of animals, via an agreement with the animal protection society. This was a positive first step into the outside world before conditional liberation or definitive release."

Knowledge of AAI has spread through word of mouth, and success has created a ripple effect. "It's important to note that not all prisons are conducive to animal-assisted intervention. At Châlons-en-Champagne, for example, the prison is an old building without grounds, so animals wouldn't be comfortable. Sometimes you have to know when to give up. On the other hand, Villenauxe-la-Grande Prison features large grassy areas, so we brought in donkeys, which are very patient animals. They worked wonders with pretty violent people. Every animal has its own characteristics and enables you work on something specific. The subject is complex and the possibilities are infinite."

*Inmates really like the activity with dogs.
Something happens to make them come out
of their shells and help them socialize.*

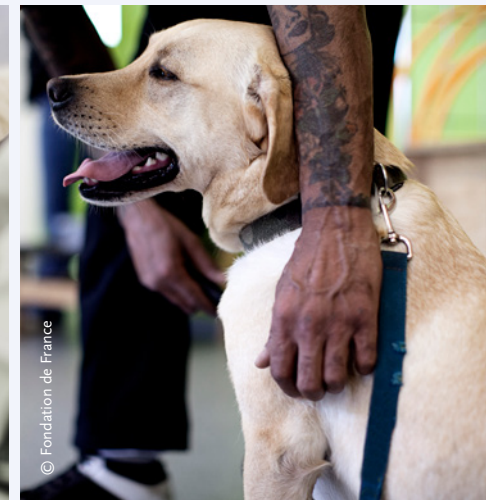
the words of a guard

...

A LIBERATION OF VOICES

Jérémie Lecru has been working at Angers Prison for 17 years. He is head guard in charge, among other things, of penal labor and activities. He oversees an animal-assisted workshop for extremely isolated inmates.

“The workshop started in July 2018 and is run by Laetitia Beaumont. Designed for extremely isolated inmates who never leave their cells, it lasts a little over an hour and is held every two weeks. Five inmates participate. They were selected by the Multidisciplinary Commission and strongly urged to attend. A large room is reserved for the activity, and Laetitia Beaumont arrives first with a dog, a rabbit, and three guinea pigs. I take care of set up and make sure that everything goes smoothly. I accompany the inmates to the room but don't stay for long. And when I leave, there is a liberation of voices. The inmates speak out, they talk to each other. After each session, Laetitia Beaumont reports back to us and to the SPIP on how things went for each participant. This is helpful as it enables us to detect problems that inmates may be having faster. Because part of my job is to take charge of disciplinary action, I'm often the bad guy in the prison. With the workshop, inmates see me differently and in a different role. I pet the dog, I play with him, I'm someone like them.”



Financing activities and ensuring the long term

Patrice Bourdaret repeatedly stresses that animal-assisted intervention in prison is a serious subject that deserves deep reflection and learning. For an initiative to be effective and produce satisfying results, it has to be carefully thought out and planned beforehand. “AAI is relatively expensive. At Rennes, we devoted approximately 20,000€ per year to it. As usual, money is key. The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation has provided funds to help get initiatives off the ground. However, the administration (i.e. regional funds) has to then take over and find support from local prisoner assistance associations. Regional budgets should include a line called *animal-assisted intervention*. We haven't yet reached that point, but I hope that we will.”

Qualified practitioners and respect toward animals

“I'm often contacted by colleagues who want to set up an animal-assisted activity and want my advice. I think it's great that these programs are being developed all over France. However, I always tell them that they must take care to ensure high quality by working with experienced practitioners who know what they are doing. During my career, I've seen proposals that have been very shallow and even plagiarized. Over time, I've learned to recognize serious practitioners. They care about the animals' well-being and have a clear idea of how things will go with inmates. A practitioner is the third party that steps into the inmate-guard relationship. This is a delicate matter that is nonetheless essential to the success of an undertaking. I have very precise specifications in my head that allow me to eliminate inappropriate proposals. In fact, it is crucial that AAI programs approved by prison administration respond to a need that has been clearly identified by the establishment. Are there problems with violence? With isolation? Bringing an animal into a prison is not trivial. It's not a gimmick or a magic wand. For AAI to be effective, it has to make sense.”

A new project in the making at Lille-Loos

There are approximately 700 inmates at Lille-Loos Prison, mostly young people from underprivileged suburban areas with problems related to drugs and violence. “It's a rough place, and relationships between inmates and guards are very tense. The director has given me free rein, and I've chosen a canine-assisted program offered by a registered association. Héléne Courby, the social worker who is behind the project, has myopathy and uses a wheelchair. Though she looks fragile, she gives off an incredible energy. The inmates and the guards will have to look out for her. I think it's going to work.”

A GUARD LOOKS BACK ON A YEAR OF EQUINE INTERVENTION

Interview with Sonia

Angers Prison houses 384 inmates, all men. They are either awaiting sentencing or serving short sentences (less than two years). Sonia has been a member of guard staff since 2009. In 2018, she participated in her first equine intervention workshop. She relates her experience.

“In 2018, prison management set up two animal-assisted activities. The involvement of the DISP steering committee got the activities off the ground, but the prison director and deputy director had been thinking of doing this for a while. The first activity involved small animals and was meant mostly for inmates who were isolated and suffering from relational difficulties. The second activity, which I participated in, was designed for young prisoners who were generally aggressive, resistant to authority, and disinclined to follow the rules of good conduct. General management, the social reinsertion and probation unit, and the judge in charge of enforcing sentences collectively chose five inmates for the activity (two of whom had to stop the activity in the middle for reasons that had nothing to do with the workshop). Four of us volunteered to take part and guard the inmates. We were all familiar with horses as well as capable of handling crises if necessary (it wasn't necessary). We know each other well, complement each other, and are used to working together. In front of the inmates, we present a united front.”

The workshop was run by Catherine Mercier¹ and organized in three parts. “First, for a half-day, we brought horses into the prison courtyard. The idea of this first step was for the inmates to deal with and overcome their nerves. They touched, groomed, and cleaned the horses. They gave them water and walked them around the courtyard. That's how they became more comfortable with the horses and started to understand that they wouldn't get anything from them by using force.”

Phase II took place a few weeks later. “The inmates had received permission leave the prison. We spent 24 hours at an equestrian center in Ille-et-Vilaine. The inmates first met the horses that they were going to work with. The horses were in a field, untethered. The men and the horses chose each other naturally, forming pairs based on affinity and character.

You cannot impose anything on horses. You have to understand them and create positive contact to get them to cooperate. You have to control yourself and channel your energy. Inmates who don't have the right mindset can't get anywhere with them. After the day with the horses, we did the shopping all together and prepared the

1. See interview page 20



evening meal. The inmates were relaxed and wanted to please. Catherine Mercier gave feedback on day, sharing information and observations. The next morning, we went back to the equestrian center to continue working on how to approach the horses. We went into the corral, and the inmates mounted the horses for the first time. It was a big step forward!”

The third part of the program came a month later. “We went out again, this time for a trip on horseback with a night in a cabin in the Brocéliande forest. It was the deer mating season, and we found ourselves in the middle of a herd, deep in the woods – it was very impressive! The next day, we went back to the center, where we cleaned the horses and said goodbye to the team. Catherine came to the prison shortly afterward with photos from the trip. She interviewed the inmates individually to see if they had achieved the objectives set out prior to the workshop. I obviously wasn't present during the interviews, but I can say that all the participants have very good memories of the experience; their smiles were proof of that.”

For Sonia, the workshop was very positive. “The inmates who participated learned things that will help them move forward in life and help them deal with the rest of their sentence better. You can tell that it has made them see things differently and will induce changes in their behavior. Of course, as soon as they came back, they were overtaken by the others, by group pressure. But they have regained some self-confidence; some of the good of the experience has stayed with them.”

*A little stressful, tiring,
but a very positive experience.*

“I wouldn't say that the workshop changed my relationship with the inmates, but it changed the way the inmates look at us, the guards. They were surprised to see that in a different context, there can even be a certain connection between them and us. Of course, we were stressed, worried about someone trying to escape. But that's fine, it's our job. We always have to be on our guard, even if, as we saw that everything was going well, the stress gradually lessened. Nobody obliged me to participate in the workshop. I volunteered and took personal time to do it. I was motivated by the project and wanted it to work. When we got back, we were tired but happy! We are working on the next workshop, and I'd like to do it again. But it shouldn't always be the same people who take part. We should take turns, tell the other guards – even those who feel hesitant about the program – about our positive experience, so that they go away too. I hope the program continues in the long term.”

A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE IN PRISON

Interview with Franck Piron

Head guard at Brest Prison, Franck Piron supervises the Respecto unit, a special program for selected inmates who will soon be leaving prison. In November 2018, an equine-assisted activity was set up in Respecto to help pave the way to social reintegration.

Established in October 2017, the Respecto unit is where inmates that have been selected by the Multidisciplinary Commission (CPU) enjoy relative freedom within the prison to get them ready for life on the outside. During the day, the inmates concerned have the keys to their cell and can come and go as they please, as long as they respect the rules and the contract for good conduct that they have pledged to honor. In return, they have access to activity rooms and can participate in various workshops.

Horses as intermediaries

In November 2018, the prison decided to offer an equine intervention workshop. “The workshop took place once a month, over two half-days, and was designed for six inmates. With the approval of general management, the social reinsertion and probation unit (SPIP), the head of detention, and the CPU, I suggested inmates according to requests received or staff suggestions. The inmates had a variety of profiles: introverted or extraverted, correctional or criminal procedure...and it worked. At the start of the workshop, the horses were untethered and free to roam around the sports field in the center of the prison. Participating inmates arrived, met Catherine Mercier¹, and were then invited to approach the horses. We didn't oblige anyone to do anything. The inmates paired up however they wanted and got started at their own pace by brushing or walking the horses. I saw a shy and introverted boy convicted of a sexual offence helped out by a drug trafficker, a tough guy. Against all odds, they got to know each other. The animal played its role of mediator and enabled each person to approach the other.”

The horses' presence calms everyone

Currently, only people in Respecto have access to the equine activity, but it will soon be available to other inmates. “The prison buildings look out on the sports field, so on the first day I expected to hear hoots and jeering...but not at all. In fact, it was the opposite. The other inmates were all at the windows, watching what was happening below, but without making a sound. The prison is never that quiet except during this activity. Afterwards watching, several inmates asked how they could participate... which for the moment means first being admitted into Respecto. That's how working

1. See interview page 20



with the horses in front of everyone has had unintended repercussions and initiated a virtuous circle. It has made other inmates want to be proactive. They realized that the prison administration could offer them an opportunity, that it could do something for them.”

An intense, emotional experience

Equine interventions reinforce the positive effects of Respecto. “Already, this unit offers an incredible opening in the correctional universe. So to add horses to the equation... I admit that I was skeptical at first. I wondered the point was, why prisoners were receiving such a gift, what they had done to ‘deserve’ it...But in spite of everything, I was curious. And from the first session, I was blown away by the inmates' attitudes toward the horses, and the horses' attitudes toward the inmates. When they first arrived, the inmates were edgy, and I wondered how they were going to treat the animals. Catherine Mercier met and spoke with them, and then told them to go to the horses. What then happened between the men and the horses, almost spontaneously, was intensely emotional. Once, an inmate – a real tough guy – was keeping his distance. A horse walked towards him and pushed him with his head, gently. He kept doing it until the boy played along. The next morning, when the inmate came back, he had tears in his eyes. The horses allow inmates to reconnect with deeply buried emotions and to open up to others. You should see them petting, brushing, and cuddling the horses.

Another example that struck me concerned an inmate who was watching the activity from his window above. He had never seen anything as beautiful as a horse galloping. He begged me to sign him up for the activity. Since his behavior was hardly exemplary, I made him wait, on purpose. His attitude changed completely. When he was finally able to take part in the workshop, there was this phenomenal sense of osmosis between him and the horse. He regained confidence in himself, and he is now living outside with an electronic bracelet.”



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4

SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL PERSPECTIVES



Interview with Christopher Valente

Clinical psychologist Christopher Valente discovered animal-assisted intervention when doing a master's degree in psychology¹ with a focus on criminology and victimology. During an internship at Arles Prison, he observed the positive effects of animal-assisted activities on social relationships and on enabling inmates to envision the future. He consequently decided to write his doctoral thesis on the impact of animal-assisted intervention on the dynamic of desistance².

Measuring the effects

"Animal-assisted activities were organized after a wave of suicides in several prisons. The presence of animals had positive effects and eased tension. In addition, the activities created a connection between guards and inmates, which helped the latter to refocus on their social reintegration plan. But for animal-assisted intervention (AAI) to be recognized as a useful tool and to be acknowledged and financed by the penal system, we have to be able to evaluate its effects. Otherwise, the dynamic will lose its steam. Actions taken without measurable results are likely to fade away over time."

Putting experience into words

Christopher Valente clarifies, "We particularly need to show that AAI is not merely occupational, something much deeper goes on. At the end of an equine-assisted activity, inmates don't go back to the starting block. A horse brings an inmate from point A to point B; it awakens something in the inmate; it creates a bridge between the person and his inner self. The next step is to re-leverage what happened during the workshop to allow the inmate to move on to point C, then D, then E.... Formal evaluation allows us to put the experience between an inmate and an animal into words and give it meaning. After that, the real work on positive development can begin."

A variety of evaluation techniques

He continues, "Animal-assisted intervention evaluation relies on different techniques and depends on the profile of the inmates, the institution, and the activity leader. Some AAI practitioners use a grid that helps inmates to analyze the path from their 'before' self to their 'current' self. Others spend time gathering feedback from inmates at the end of the day. Still others have inmates keep a journal...Whatever the

1. University of Rennes 2

2. "Desistance is the cessation of delinquent or criminal acts by a person through a proactive process on the part of that person. This individual and ongoing process requires maturity, and therefore continuity, that may be facilitated by on-the-ground actors using appropriate methods, approaches, and measures." (Liebling & Maruna, 2005).

method, the important thing is to verbalize the emotions felt in order to draw out the potential of the experience and go further."

A field of study and analysis

"Over the last few years, there has been a lot of talk about animal-assisted intervention in prisons. The ENAP³ is carrying out research; prison directors are calling attention to positive experiences; journalists are focusing on the topic. In 2018, a steering committee was launched at the Rennes DISP⁴. The committee has focused on evaluation and proposes tools based on feedback from the field. The tools are given as frameworks for to adapt according to specific situations.

Evaluation of animal-assisted activities is still in an embryonic stage and can also be done in partnership with a university. Departments of criminology and ethology are starting to investigate this subject. It's now or never. Something is happening that could, in the long run, change the prison landscape in France."

Animal-assisted intervention: a vector for dynamic security

"Animal-assisted intervention is a key tool for supporting inmates' social reintegration, and it can also be valuable in the detention task of correctional institutions and for 'dynamic security' schemes. In contrast to static security measures, like video cameras and watch towers, dynamic security relies on the creation of positive relationships inside the prison. If people know each other, it is easier to defuse conflict and establish a more peaceful co-existence.

Animal-assisted intervention helps reduce the divide that often exists between inmates and guards. During AAI activities, these two groups see each other in a different light and establish a different kind of connection. Subsequently, if there is a conflict, inmates are more accessible to guards and problem resolution is quicker. In this way, just like with sports, for example, AAI is a vector of dynamic security that is worth exploiting on a broad scale. It could even lead to redefining, in the philosophical sense of the word, what it means to be a guard, or an inmate, and what it is that unites them. This cannot happen without a degree of upheaval, and the penal system, like any system, needs time to integrate this type of change. But the evidence is there."

3. National School of Prison Administration

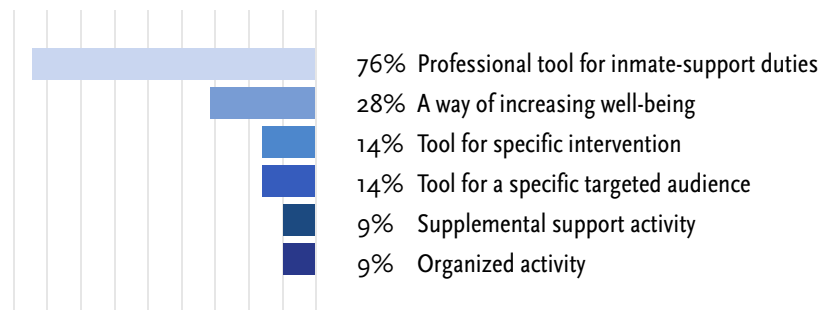
4. Interregional Directorate of Penitentiary Services

AAI Steering Committee: Animal-assisted intervention assessment, standards, and evaluation

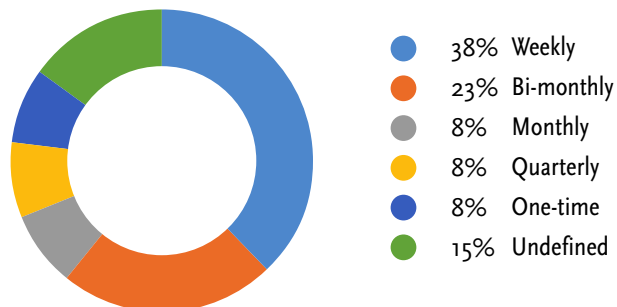
Established in 2018 by the Interregional Directorate of Penitentiary Services (DISP), the AAI Steering Committee was created to conduct an inventory of existing initiatives, to harmonize practices, and to design a development and evaluation methodology for animal-assisted activities. To do this, the DISP worked with prisons in both closed and open settings, providing questionnaires on themes including perceptions of AAI, barriers, catalysts, etc.

Animal-assisted intervention as viewed by prison administration staff in the Greater West region of France*

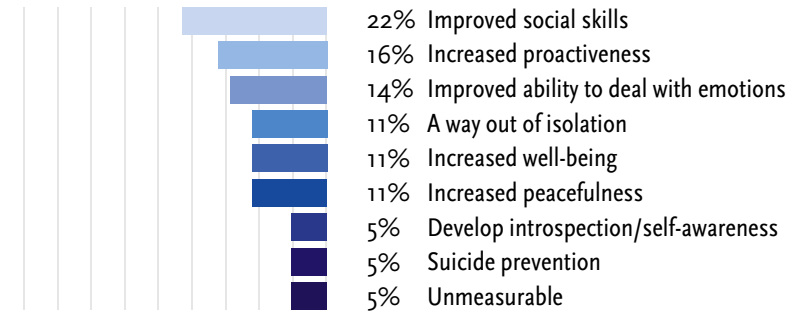
General perceptions of AAI activities



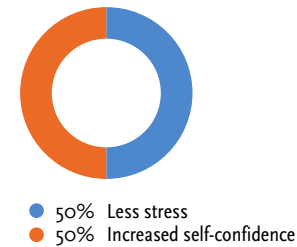
Frequency of AAI activities in the Greater West region of France in 2018*



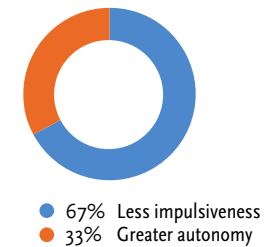
The benefits of AAI for people in detention



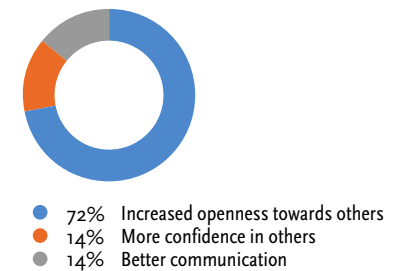
Emotion management



Proactiveness



Social Skills



*Source: Rennes DISP Steering Committee (2018)

HORSE-ASSISTANCE TO GUIDE PSYCHOTIC INMATES BACK TO TREATMENT

Interview with Céline Gorla

Céline Gorla is a psychiatric nurse in the medico-psychology unit (SMPR) of Val-de-Reuil detention center. She is associated with Rouvray Hospital in Normandy, which specializes in mental health. In January 2019, she launched an equine therapy initiative to help psychotic or psychologically fragile inmates.

“The inmates are serving prison sentences for anywhere from two years to life. Some of them suffer from serious psychiatric problems. In 2016, the Psychiatric Treatment Unit (USP) cared for 19% of inmates, people diagnosed as psychotic in active detention. These patients are often very isolated, staying alone in their cells without ever seeing anyone. After several years of detention, many become withdrawn. They lose the sense of time. We see a decrease in their sensory environment, social and emotional withdrawal, changes in their ability to understand and judge situations, low self-esteem. Once they've lost the desire to communicate, depression can add another layer of difficulty and associated consequences: increased aggressiveness, suicidal tendencies, fear, frustration, weakened bonds with their entourage, including caregivers. All of this makes treatment difficult, if not impossible.

Indeed, at this point, they are often reluctant to consider or keep up with psychiatric treatment. To guide them back to treatment, we decided to set up an equine therapy program. We had several corollary objectives: to create or sustain the relationship between the patient and the therapist to foster a therapeutic alliance; to get inmates to leave their cells and go toward others; to rebuild self-esteem; and to work on body image, which tends to be in particularly bad shape after years in a 9-square-meter cell.

I suggested this project to the Ecuries du Marottin, a nearby stable and horse-riding center. The instructors regularly work with handicapped people with excellent results. We had several meetings



with the prison's general management, the head of security, and the guards. Pretty much everyone was in favor of the project. The proposal was sent to the regional healthcare agency (ARS), which financed the initiative. During the first year, we planned 20 two-hour sessions involving two horses or four ponies. I led the project with Mr. Broustail, a fellow psychologist at the SMPR.

After the first few sessions, we observed remarkable progress. The inmates, including some people who had not left their cells in several years, all came down to the field and stood behind the door waiting for us to come and get them. There was no need to force them. People who were virtually mute, in a state of total lethargy, started to speak. They talked to each other and shared their thoughts with us. A man who had barely spoken, and only in a low voice, suddenly started speaking up when addressing a horse. Another, a severely handicapped man with whom it was impossible to shake hands, became the first to go and brush or care for a horse. Another person was able to leave the closed ward and move to an open unit.

People who were virtually mute, in a state of total lethargy, started to speak. They talked to each other and shared their thoughts with us.

We evaluated the effects of this equine activity on participating patients in several ways: clinical meetings with nurses from the Psychiatric Treatment Unit, individual self-evaluation interviews where initially established objectives were reviewed, commentary from prison staff regarding progress they observed, and evaluation of the entire group at the end of each session.

The equine activity made things happen that might never have happened or been possible in a two-person nurse-patient relationship. It is a good example of how an animal can serve as a third-party facilitator and help break down resistance and barriers to treatment.

Given the success of the first program, the prison has requested a renewal of funding from the ARS in order to continue this therapeutic activity and open it up to other prison units.”

THE ISSUE OF HYGIENE

Dr. Olivier Baud, physician-hygienist, infectious disease specialist, Clermont-Ferrand University Hospital

To minimize risk of infection, any animal-assisted intervention must conform to strict rules of hygiene. Olivier Baud provides an overview of key points to consider.



The establishment

Verify that the establishment is up to date in terms of insurance and liability. Identify all animals and practitioners. Be aware of criteria regarding exclusion of animals. Keep a record of all visits.

The animals

Check all animals' vaccine status as well as how they have been trained. Make sure animals receive regular clinical and microbiotic check-ups, are given any appropriate preventative treatments, and are fed appropriately. Set aside specific areas for animal feeding and defecation. List places that are or are not accessible to animals.

The practitioner

Make sure the animal-assisted intervention practitioner is properly trained and insured. Check that the animals involved are correctly cared for. Ensure that interventions are carried out in places deemed accessible to animals.

The beneficiaries

Obtain their agreement and that of medical staff, taking into account any personal or medical issues.

Participating staff

Check that they are well briefed on what will happen during an animal-assisted activity, any necessary hygiene measures, and appropriate conduct in case of contact or defecation.

ANIMAL WELL-BEING: A CRITICAL FACTOR OF SUCCESS

Marine Grandgeorge, associate research professor, University of Rennes 1, Ethos laboratory¹

At this point in time, no specific studies on animal well-being during animal-assisted interventions in prisons have been done. Generally speaking, animals involved in such activities should be allowed to behave naturally, but prison is not a natural environment for animals. It consists of closed,

confined areas, shut off from the outside world. It presents particular odors and sounds, like unfamiliar echoes from empty rooms. Animals do not have the same sensory perceptions as humans, and they may experience discomfort in some of these circumstances. It is important for the people involved in an AAI activity to look out for signs of discomfort and to set aside time for the animal to rest in a clean place. Inmates involved in an activity should be taught to observe an animal to see if it is happy or not, as well as how to react in case of a problem.

To my knowledge, most animal-assisted intervention in prisons is done with dogs or horses, which seem to me to be more appropriate than, say, small animals, both for transport reasons and risks related to deviant behavior.

Finally, in the rare case of animals living in prison with the inmates –such as a dogs— it is important to allow them to regularly leave the prison, so they can be outside, in nature, with other smells and other animals.



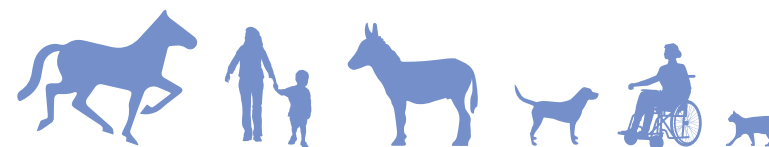
1. Laboratory of Human and Animal Ethology

5

“ *The animal-assisted activity is an unconventional experience that truly contributes to closing the gap between life inside prison and life on the outside.* ”

the words of a probation and social reintegration counselor

WHEN PRISON ADMINISTRATION TAKES CHARGE



Interview with Jean-Philippe MayoL

Jean-Philippe Mayol has worked in prison administration for 38 years. During his career, he has managed every type of correctional institution, opened three of them, and worked in two of France's overseas territories, Réunion Island and French Guiana. He is currently deputy director of France's National School of Prison Administration (ENAP).



"Animal-assisted intervention? It's old news for me! It goes back to the middle of the 1990s at Angers Prison. There was an extremely violent climate between inmates and guard staff. Several prisoners committed suicide. To ease tension and improve relationships, I had the idea of bringing in a horse. At the time, animal-assisted intervention in prison didn't really exist. I just went and talked to the Angers equestrian center...and we rapidly saw significant improvements."

Horses facilitate communication with men

Jean-Philippe Mayol is a horseman and knows these animals well. "I know where the difficulty lies when it comes to directing a horse. It takes rigor, will, and discipline – not force. In the early 2000s, during the opening of La Farlède Prison near Toulon, I used horses again to prepare the staff. What I had observed empirically at Angers happened again at La Farlède: a horse enables you to communicate better with men, in a non-violent way. You can avoid power struggles."

Later, at Arles Prison, Mayol's appreciation of animal-assisted interventions in prison deepened. "**Animals allow you to reestablish communication between staff and inmates. Conflict can't be avoided, but it can be expressed, which opens the path to resolution.** Animal-assisted intervention touches on the more general concept of dynamic security. This means safeguarding and calming relationships between inmates and guards to get the former to accept learning activities that will help them avoid recidivism when they get out of prison. After all, if they are imprisoned, it usually means that they have difficulties relating to others."

Over the years, AAI has become better known, and its benefits in prison have started to be officially recognized. "It has become easier for me. I no longer have to explain and convince the hierarchy and personnel, unlike early on, when I had to fight for the activity and cope with cutting criticism from the unions! When I was working on Réunion Island, I had to deal with inmates who were really suffering. They were withdrawn, silent, totally uncommunicative. Since horses are rare in Réunion, we



worked with stray dogs and a trainer. Dogs were rehabilitated in the prison with the help of inmates, who in this way learned how to establish relationships with others and thus became more sociable."

Dynamic security and animal-assisted activities

After years of experience in correctional institutions, Jean-Philippe Mayol joined the National School of Prison Administration (ENAP). But he didn't renounce his ideas about animal intervention. On the contrary. "At ENAP, several directors had worked at Arles, where they had been involved in effective equine-assisted activities. This topic is now included in the prison director training program. Thierry Boissin¹ regularly leads training seminars on activities with horses, during which he explains the complex mechanisms at work in relationships with animals. As for me, when I address the subject of dynamic security in class, I always talk about animal-assisted intervention as a professional tool. Recently, we organized an exhibit on dynamic security featuring mind maps. They allow you to organize information in a non-linear fashion, in the form of a diagram with a central nucleus (the theme) from which radiate lines that correspond to other levels of information associated with this central theme. One of these was devoted to animal-assisted intervention. To put it simply, anyone attending ENAP today will hear about AAI at least once during their training. We've come a long way in 25 years!"

A methodology to guide staff

In 2018, when a steering committee² was being set up at Rennes DISP, Jean-Philippe Mayol was called in to help. "The idea came from Boris Albrecht, director of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation. He wanted to continue to help develop AAI in prison, but he'd noticed that there were considerable discrepancies in activities among different establishments. He therefore recommended that central prison administration create a guide to harmonize procedures and methodologies. The ENAP isn't authorized to directly lead this sort of process, but after discussion with then-director Sophie Bleuët, we decided to incorporate animal-assisted intervention into the methodology guide for dynamic security that we were in the process of writing. It features guidelines for prison staff that include procedures and techniques for defusing conflict and preventing violence. Animal-assisted intervention figures prominently in this document, which is available to everyone."

1. See interview page 17

2. See interview page 48

A STEERING COMMITTEE TO STRUCTURE PROJECTS AND HARMONIZE OBJECTIVES

Interview with Loïc Ben Ghaffar

Loïc Ben Ghaffar started his career as a special education instructor, working extensively with handicapped people, temporarily- or fully-homeless people, and women victims of domestic violence. He then went into public service and worked as an instructor in the educational service of the Lyon Court for 5 years. He joined prison administration as a student director in 2010, and in 2011, he was appointed deputy director of Brest Prison. Since 2017, he has served as head of the Department of social reintegration, probation, and recidivism prevention policy at the Interregional Directorate of Penitentiary Services (DISP) in Rennes, where he makes daily use of the skills he acquired as a special education instructor.



Establishing an institutional framework

“I had heard about animal-assisted activities in prison, but it wasn't until I arrived in Rennes two years ago that I really thought about it. Several facilities had set up activities, and they were asking the department for support and advice, presenting results of activities, requesting funding to keep programs running... I met many AAI practitioners and talked with the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation. Right away, I sensed the huge potential of this kind of program, as well the strong motivation of prisons and staff. But it seemed important to work on an institutional framework for this type of activity. Deeply dedicated practitioners, like psychologist Catherine Mercier¹, wanted to develop their projects further. Meanwhile, the DISP was focusing on how to reduce violence in correctional institutions, and animal-assisted intervention seemed like a worthwhile approach. What's more, ENAP² was working on methodology guide for prison staff that included animal-assisted intervention. The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation, which has provided funding for animal-assisted activities in prisons, was willing to work with us and help us figure out what type of framework we needed. The planets all aligned! We were all in the right place at the right time with the same goal. That's how the AAI Steering Committee was created.”

1. See interview page 20

2. National School of Prison Administration



Building a better toolbox

In March 2018, all the correctional institutions in the greater region (24 prison institutions, 14 penal services for social reintegration and probation) were invited to a first Steering Committee meeting. “We wanted to explain what animal-assisted intervention is, and above all, what it isn't. We purposely mixed people who were experienced with this type of activity with those who knew nothing about it. We wanted to take inventory to subsequently harmonize practices, with the idea that animal-assisted intervention could contribute to achieving interregional objectives (disengagement from violence, social skill construction and improvement, and envisioning a future after prison) and become part of existing programs. The point was to enrich our toolbox!”

The second Steering Committee meeting took place a few months later. “This time, participating facilities came with their partners to explain methodology and share program results.” The third meeting was in December 2018. “When we started this period of study and teamwork, 9 institutions in the greater region had an animal-assisted activity. Six months later, there were 17, and this number will probably increase in 2019. We had hoped that our work would encourage the growth of animal-assisted initiatives in prisons, but we didn't expect it to happen so fast! Some institutions moved very fast. Angers Prison, for example, set up two activities at the same time. One, with small animals, was designed to help inmates who feel isolated recreate bonds; the other involves horses and addresses a younger, potentially violent audience.”

Taking roads less traveled to ease social reintegration

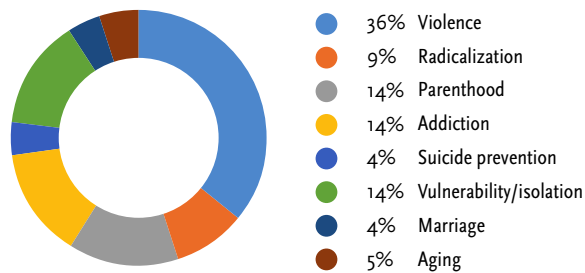
In the 12 months of its existence, the Steering Committee succeeded in spotlighting AAI in prison, modifying negative impressions that some people had expressed, and motivating several facilities to try this type of activity. All of this adds up to results that are more than satisfying. “But we need to go further. Animal-assisted intervention needs to become part of the larger framework. At the Rennes DISP, we are absolutely convinced that for some people in custody to successfully reintegrate into society, they need to take alternate paths like sports, culture, or animal-assisted activities. AAI often opens inmates up to other programs. Social reintegration happens in stages, and animal-assisted activities can facilitate the process. The Steering Committee has used studies, questionnaires, feedback, and multidisciplinary projects to structure our thinking about animal-assisted intervention and insert it into our larger framework of interregional objectives. AAI activities are not occupational therapy or entertainment; they are genuine tools for social reintegration. That's why we have been able to put an ‘animal-assisted intervention’ line in our 2019 budget! We are now better equipped to evaluate project proposals. We can assess methodology and objectives, and if necessary, help institutions reconsider or redesign them.”



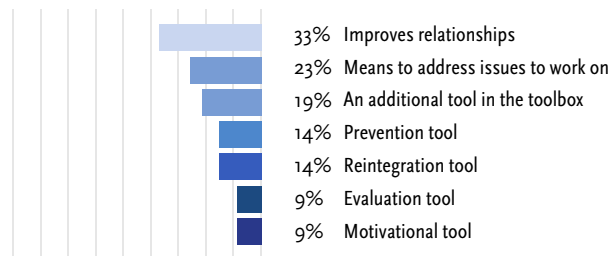
Setting up local steering committees

The last Steering Committee meeting will take place in the second half of 2019. “We still need to work on a project evaluation method that take original objectives into account without being too directive or too rigid. Correctional institutions need to take charge of their projects and feel free to adapt them to their specific context. For animal-assisted activities to succeed in either closed or open correctional establishments, they must have the support of guards and social reintegration and probation officers. So we also have to address the question of staff training. We would like the work we did last year to be taken up by local steering committees that are closer to the different facilities. They could effectively help sustain AAI programs and help them evolve, continually reviewing and bringing them into perspective.”

Issues targeted by animal-assisted intervention programs*



Benefits for prison administration professionals*



* Source: Steering Committee of the Rennes DISP (2018)

STANDARDS FOR ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTION PRACTITIONERS

Interview with Catherine Porceddu

Catherine Porceddu has been working in prison administration for 23 years. Initially a social reintegration and probation officer, she has worked her way up and is now a director of probation and social reintegration. She has worked at the national department of prison administration for the last eight years, in charge of partnerships with associations. Animal-assisted intervention is a subject of particular interest and one of her areas of expertise.



“Animal-assisted intervention began in French prisons about 12 years ago, with pilot projects here and there, specifically at Strasbourg and Arles Prisons. Results were generally positive, others heard about the practice via word of mouth, and the media started to talk about it. AAI is a generally effective tool to help prevent recidivism, diffuse violence, ease tension, and reduce aggressiveness. It helps inmates to regain self-confidence, see themselves in a positive light, improve social skills, and reestablish connections with others in the prison. But its effectiveness depends on defining clear objectives and ensuring animal-assisted activities are conducted in a professional manner, according to established guidelines.”

What, how, who

After a few years of animal-assisted initiatives on local levels, national prison administration stepped in to create an institutional framework and harmonize practices. “The National School of Prison Administration (ENAP) added animal-assisted intervention to its curriculum and wrote a methodology guide. That answers the question of ‘what’. The AAI Steering Committee¹ has addressed the question of ‘how’, and we are keeping up with their extremely enriching work. Our department has focused on the question of ‘who.’ Who should lead an animal-assisted activity? What profile, training, and skills are needed? We need bona fide professionals, no lightweights or low-cost providers. Leveraging animal-assistance is not a casual undertaking, and simply bringing an animal into a prison doesn’t mean a person is working toward a specific goal.

From this standpoint, we have signed a partnership agreement with Evidence, an association that has worked with Strasbourg Prison for 10 years. We are aiming to develop a set of professional standards to distribute to all correctional institutions in 2019-2020 to help them choose the most qualified AAI practitioners for their projects.

1. See page 38 and interview page 48

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The national department of prison administration is financing a part of this undertaking; the professional standards will then be used by everyone. We don't deal with local initiatives as they don't come under our jurisdiction. However, we provide impetus and make tools available to decentralized facilities.”

A social reintegration tool yielding sometimes spectacular results

Catherine Porceddu stresses that AAI is one social reintegration tool among many others, including sports, cultural activities, job training, and education. It is not a universal remedy, and it is essential to find the most appropriate activity for a given individual, no matter what it is. Still, she has been deeply affected by certain first-hand observations of animal-assisted activities. “At Rennes women's prison, several young women participated in a 2 day horse-riding trip that came at the end of a series of horse-assisted sessions. When I saw what they were like when they come back, and remembered how they were when they left, I was truly impressed. I also remember some 'tough guys' at Tarascon detention center who didn't seem to know how to behave other than with violence or intimidation. But in front of a 600-kilogram horse, their behavior changed completely. It was truly amazing!”



The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation would like to thank the Ministry of Justice and its representatives for their commitment and availability for the creation of Animal-Assisted Intervention in French Prisons.

The Foundation thanks all those who contributed to this fourth issue of the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation Journals.

English translation by Margie Rynn

RESSOURCES

RESEARCH PAPERS

- ▶ **Dogs trigger attention during AAI in prison**, poster, IAHAIO 2019 Conference
Marine Grandgeorge, Christine Heyraud, Martine Hausberger, Astrid Hirschelmann
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/dogs-trigger-attention-during-aa-i-in-prison/>
- ▶ **Étude d'un dispositif de médiation animale en milieu carcéral**
« Des Camargues et des Hommes » (An equine-assisted activity in a French prison)
Jessie Ansoorge Jeunier, Bénédicte de Villers
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/etude-dun-dispositif-de-mediation-animale-en-milieu-carceral-des-camargues-et-des-hommes/>
- ▶ **Étude exploratoire consacrée au « lien » (link) entre violence domestique et maltraitance animale** (Investigation of the link between domestic violence and animal abuse)
Bénédicte de Villers
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/etude-exploratoire-consacree-au-lien-link-entre-violence-domestique-et-maltraitance-animale/>
- ▶ **Évaluation du dispositif « Médiation Animale » à la Maison d'Arrêt de Strasbourg**
(Evaluation of the AAI program at Strasbourg Prison)
Claire-Emmanuelle Laguerre
<http://www.enap.justice.fr/les-dossiers-thematiques-du-cirap>
- ▶ **Measuring the psychological impacts of prison-based dog training programs in prison and outcomes for inmates**, IAHAIO 2019 Conference
Erin Flynn, Katie Massey Combs, Jaci Goldenberger, Philip Tedeschi, Kevin Morris
Institute for Human-Animal Connection – University of Denver
- ▶ **Prison-Based Dog Training Programs: Standard Protocol**
Institute for Human Animal Connection, University of Denver
<https://animalstudiesrepository.org/anitobe/2/>
- ▶ **Médiation animale : guide pour un référentiel des lieux de vie et d'accueil (LVA)**
(Guidelines for animal-assisted intervention at French foster residences)
Edited by the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/mediation-animale-guide-pour-un-referentiel-des-lieux-de-vie-et-daccueil/>

PUBLICATIONS

- ▶ **Préparer la réinsertion sociale des personnes incarcérées : quels apports de la médiation équine ?**
(The contribution of equine-assisted activities to the social reinsertion of prisoners)
Christopher Valente, clinical psychologist and PhD candidate
L'observatoire, n°85 L'animal dans le champs social – 2015
<http://www.revueobservatoire.be/Preparer-la-reinsertion-sociale-des-personnes-incarcerees-Quels-apports-de-la?return=publication>
- ▶ **Des animaux pour rester des hommes. La médiation animale en milieu carcéral**
(Interacting with animals to feel like people—animal-assisted activities in prison)
Patricia Arnoux, founder of Evi'dence
L'observatoire, n°85 L'animal dans le champs social – 2015
<http://www.revueobservatoire.be/Des-animaux-pour-rester-des-hommes-La-mediation-animale-en-milieu-carceral?return=publication>
- ▶ **Paws for Progress at Polmont Prison**
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/paws-for-progress-en-ecosse-education-de-chiens-de-refuges-par-les-detenu/>
- ▶ **L'île aux prisonniers – En Norvège sur l'île de Bastoy, un centre modèle de réinsertion**
(A model social reinsertion approach in Norway)
Espen Eichhöfer – 6 *MOIS*, Autumn 2012/Winter 2013
<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/lile-aux-prisonniers/>
- ▶ **Centaures en prison – Atelier équestre à la prison des Baumettes**
(A horse workshop in a French prison)
Francesca Todd - *Zadig* March 2019

DOCTORAL THESES

- ▶ **Médiation animale en milieu pénitentiaire : analyse des processus de désistance dans la (re)construction psychosociale**
(AAI in correctional institutions: analysis of desistance in psycho-social reconstruction) (pending)
Christopher Valente, clinical psychologist, PhD candidate
- ▶ **L'animal « missionné » : Une socio-ethnographie de dispositifs de médiation animale en milieu carcéral**
(Animals with a mission: a socio-ethnographical study of AAI in correctional institutions) (pending)
Julie Rodrigues-Leite, anthropologist, PhD candidate, Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les enjeux Sociaux EHESS

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Justice et Médiation Animale – L'animal nouvelle aide à l'insertion

(Animal-assisted intervention and the penal system: a new tool for social reinsertion)
Conference booklet by the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation, November 2015

<https://documentation.fondation-apsommer.org/produit/justice-et-mediation-animale/>

► L'animal à l'âme - De l'animal-sujet aux psychothérapies accompagnées par des animaux

(The soulful animal, from animal-objects to animal-assisted psychotherapy)

Sandrine Willems, Seuil, 2011

The Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation *supports you*

• Call for projects:

Each year the Foundation provides funding for animal-assisted intervention programs in social welfare, educational, and therapeutic settings, following a rigorous set of standards.

• Research:

The Foundation offers doctoral research grants and financial awards for academic work focusing on animal-assisted intervention.

• Educational activities:

The Foundation organizes and provides funding for educational activities and workshops to raise children's awareness of domestic and companion animals.

• Information:

Online documentation center, social networks, practical guides, videos, free seminars.

Involving animals, improving lives



Involving animals, improving lives

Created in 1971, the Adrienne & Pierre Sommer Foundation is currently the only private and independent non-profit organization in France that supports the development of animal-assisted intervention, a practice based on positive interaction between humans and domestic or companion animals.



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