PRESS RELEASE

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Do we understand what cats are saying? And do they understand what we are saying? The new research project *Melody in human–cat communication (Meowsic)* may find the answer!

Lund, Sweden – A new and pioneering Swedish research project is going to study the melody in human–cat communication. More specifically, the team will study the melody (intonation), voice and speaking style in human speech as well as in cat vocalisations. The results will have profound implications for our understanding of how we communicate with our pets in general, and has the potential to improve the relation between animals and humans within several fields, including animal therapy, veterinary medicine, and animal sheltering.

Cats are very popular pets, and they are increasingly being used in therapy and as companions in retirement homes and other human service care facilities. Therefore, it is essential to have a picture of the human–cat relationship, including the vocal signals used to communicate. Since its domestication about 10,000 years ago, humans and cats have learned to communicate using visual as well as vocal signals However, it is not well understood how cats and humans "talk" to each other. Our knowledge of the cat's vocal communication is limited, and systematic studies are still rare. We do know that cats vary the melody of their sounds extensively, perhaps using tonal patterns similar to those used in human speech. The purpose of this project is to study the vocal communication between humans and domestic cats.

The project represents pioneering work within human–cat communication, and has received a 5-year grant from the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg foundation. The research team has a long experience of research in human language as well as in animal communication, and they will collaborate with national as well as international experts in veternary medicine, zoology and linguistics. Understanding the vocal strategies used by humans and cats in human–cat communication will have profound implications for our understanding of how we communicate with our pets in general, and has the potential to improve the relation between animals and humans within several fields, including animal therapy, veterinary medicine, and animal sheltering.

Kind regards,

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