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Mars Petcare Ushers in Future of Pet Care Industry with New Accelerator and \$100 Million Venture Fund

World's Largest Pet Care Company Will Cultivate Startups, Fast-Tracking Innovation to Improve Lives of Pets, Pet Owners, and Vets

AUSTIN, TX -- Mar. 9, 2018 -- Mars Petcare today unveiled two new programs to support startup innovation and the next generation of disruptors in the pet care industry. Leap Venture Studio (Leap) in partnership with Michelson Found Animals and R/GA is the first accelerator focused on the future of pet care, and Companion Fund is a \$100 million venture capital fund in partnership with Digitalis Ventures. These programs are new ways of reaching innovators and entrepreneurs whose companies are at various stages, from ideation to execution to scale. Leap and Companion Fund will be showcased at Mars Petcare's Leap Lounge (#LeapLounge2018) on March 11 in Austin.

"We're excited to support entrepreneurs and innovators in creating new products and services that deliver on our purpose: 'A Better World for Pets,'" said Poul Weihrauch, President, Mars Petcare. "The extraordinary opportunities of connected technology and data are open to all. Match them with the expansive reach, resources and core capabilities of a company like Mars, and together we can create a powerful force for change."

Leap will foster early stage pet care startups by providing mentorship from industry executives and leaders in science, veterinary health and pet advocacy, access to world-class partners, and the opportunity to secure funding from Mars Petcare, Michelson Found Animals and the broader venture capital community.

Companion Fund will fuel the growth of pet care businesses to help fulfill their promise. The fund will be managed by Digitalis Ventures, focusing on both early and growth-stage startups. Companion Fund's goal is to be at the service of pet care founders, connecting them to business development opportunities to accelerate each startup's trajectory and to contribute to the future of the pet care industry.

"Our ambition is to become a partner of choice for everyone willing to change the rules of the game in pet care. Mars Petcare is leveraging our own success stories, Whistle and Wisdom Health, to identify and support the next wave of industry disruptors," said Leonid Sudakov, President of Connected Solutions, the global ventures, consumer technology, data and analytics division of Mars Petcare. "Mars Petcare's unique global scale and network of connected businesses will support the founders in taking their ideas from whiteboard to pets and their owners' homes."

Founders and entrepreneurs in the pet care industry have a huge market opportunity in an industry where sales exceed \$100B annually, according to Euromonitor International. Millennials now make up more than a third of pet owners, and they expect both data and connected technology to optimize more aspects of their lives, making pet ownership more seamless and attractive.

About Companion Fund

Companion Fund is a \$100 million venture capital fund managed by Digitalis Ventures. Companion Fund will provide startup capital and support to entrepreneurs addressing the needs of pets, pet owners and vets. The fund will focus primarily on the investment opportunities in Digital Health, Diagnostics, Nutrition and Services, but is excited to explore new areas of need with exceptional entrepreneurs. Digitalis Ventures has offices in New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles and London. To learn more, please visit www.companionfund.com.

About Leap

Leap is the first startup accelerator focused on pet care innovation, led by Mars Petcare, R/GA and Michelson Found Animals. Leap is based in Portland, Oregon, at R/GA's office in the heart of the innovation-centric Pearl District. Leap is targeting early stage startups and will be split into two cohorts of six companies each. A customized team of R/GA's award-winning strategists, technologists, designers and consultants will collaborate with the startups to help execute their business plans and prepare them for future milestones, including fundraising, pitching and business development. The startups will receive mentorship from industry executives and access to world-class partners. To learn more please visit www.leapventurestudio.com

Applications for Leap opened on March 7, 2018, and admissions will roll throughout the year. The first program module will commence at the end of July. Leap Venture is open to companies at a variety of stages, from pre-seed to seed to Series A, and business models including B2B and B2C. The program will conclude with a Demo Day in fall 2018, when participants will have the opportunity to showcase their business plans and secure funding from Mars Petcare, Michelson Found Animals and the broader venture capital community.

The 2018 Leap Venture Studio areas of Interest and Technology include:

- Pet Nutrition and Wellness
- Pet Health and Medical
- Pet Diagnostics
- Solutions/Platforms/Services for Pet Owners/Vets
- AI and Machine Learning
- Advanced Analytics
- Connected Products and Spaces
- Genetics

For more information about Leap or to submit an application, please visit: www.leapventurestudio.com and follow #leapvs on Twitter.

About Mars Petcare

Mars Petcare is the world's leading pet nutrition and health care business that strives to bring to life their purpose A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS®. As the global leader in pet care, Mars Petcare helps

make millions of pets' lives better by providing quality nutrition and health care, creating foods that pets love, and bringing them closer to their owners.

Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, Mars Petcare is a growing segment of 50 brands, made up of about 75,000 Associates in 54 countries who serve the nutrition and health needs of dogs, cats, horses, fish and birds every day. Mars Petcare has been in operation for more than 75 years and now includes three of the top five pet food brands in the world - PEDIGREE®, WHISKAS® and ROYAL CANIN® and includes billion dollar brands VCA®, and BANFIELD®. Other leading brands include: IAMS®, CESAR®, SHEBA®, NUTRO®, DREAMIES®, EUKANUBA®, BLUEPEARL® and PET PARTNERS™, and the WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition, a leading scientific authority on pet nutrition and well-being. For more information about Mars Petcare, please visit www.mars-petcare.com. Join us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Mars, Incorporated

Mars is a family-owned business with more than a century of history making diverse products and offering services for people and the pets people love. With almost \$35 billion in sales, the company is a global business that produces some of the world's best-loved brands: M&M's®, SNICKERS®, TWIX®, MILKY WAY®, DOVE®, PEDIGREE®, ROYAL CANIN®, WHISKAS®, EXTRA®, ORBIT®, 5™, SKITTLES®, UNCLE BEN'S®, MARS DRINKS and COCOAVIA®. Mars also provides veterinary health services that include BANFIELD® Pet Hospitals, Blue Pearl®, VCA® and Pet Partners™. Headquartered in McLean, VA, Mars operates in more than 80 countries. The Mars Five Principles – Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency and Freedom – inspire its more than 100,000 Associates to create value for all its partners and deliver growth they are proud of every day. For more information about Mars, please visit www.mars.com. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).