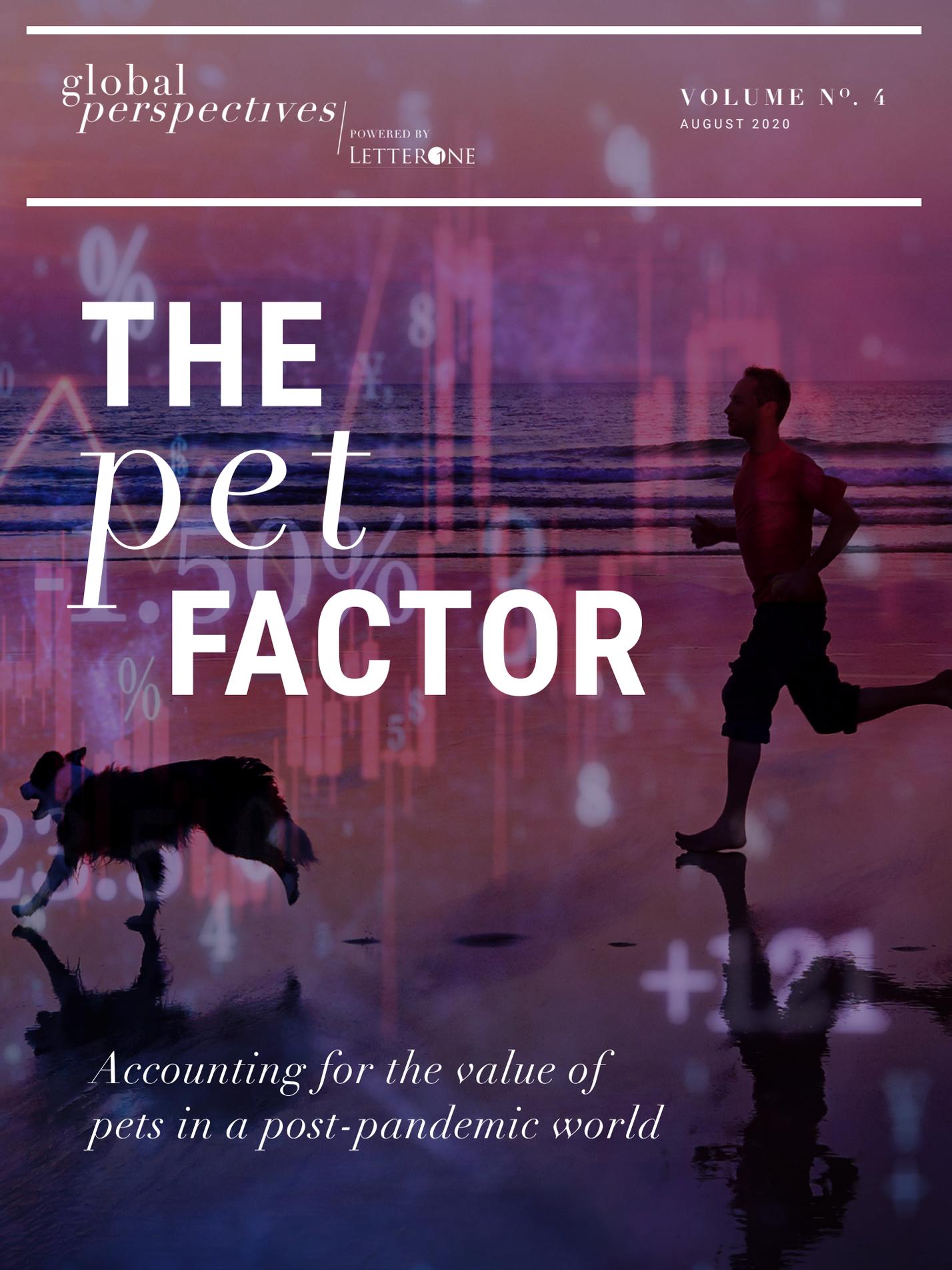


# THE *pet* FACTOR



*Accounting for the value of  
pets in a post-pandemic world*



# FOREWORD

## MIKHAIL FRIDMAN CO-FOUNDER, LETTERONE

*Mikhail Fridman is an international businessman, entrepreneur and philanthropist. He is Co-Founder of LetterOne, a global investment business focused on the telecoms, technology, energy, health and retail sectors.*



Welcome to the fourth volume of our Global Perspectives series, in which we explore some of the world's most important social and economic trends through the eyes of leading commentators. In this journal we examine the world of pets and their significant impact on the health and wellbeing of humans as well as our economy.

I write this as some parts of the world re-emerge from lockdown, while others face new highs in the number of those diagnosed with COVID-19. As we fight for survival and our healthcare systems are put under increased pressure, why then should we be focused on pets?

In a short space of time, lockdown has forced us to reduce our social and physical contact with other humans. At the same time, during this period our relationships with our animals have flourished. According to our research undertaken by Ipsos MORI, in the UK, a staggering 41% of pet owners said they bought a pet during lockdown.

The sense of companionship, responsibility and emotional support they provide has been vital to many during the pandemic. For example, 37% of Brits who were forced to work from home more during the height of the pandemic say that they now have a closer relationship with their pets than before. For all the advances made in our digital world, there is little that can replace our ability to interact and communicate with animals. What is clear is that to many these seemingly intangible benefits more than outweigh the price we pay for them. Germany alone spends €17.6 billion each year on its pets.

Our research into this topic shows that, for the majority of people, pets are indeed more than just an economic cost. The Ipsos MORI research confirms this, with 80% of Brits agreeing that their dog keeps them physically active, and 40% of dog owners saying that they intend to take their dogs for longer and more frequent walks as restrictions ease. Our meta-analysis shows that pet owners are more active and healthier than non-pet owners, but the question of why this might be is a complex one to answer.

To find out, we turned to some leading scientists in this field to provide an overview of the social-scientific consensus on the potential human health benefits of pets, during lockdown and more generally across nations and continents, such as, dogs as a motivator of physical activity and the roles played by pets during COVID-19 times. Our contributors also unpack some of the less easily measured benefits of this bond. We look at how a dog can make people feel less lonely or isolated; we consider soldiers in the British Army who develop long-lasting emotional bonds with the horses in their care; and we explore the intense and often complex bond between pets and those experiencing homelessness through a veterinary charity, StreetVet.

My hope is that this journal will be part of a wider movement that I have been championing for many years, to move beyond the reductionist account of economic value that exists presently. At LetterOne, we believe that society's progress is best understood when all forms of wealth are considered, fully accounting for natural, social and human capital alongside our financial assets. Rethinking how economies work has never felt more pertinent as the world recoils from a pandemic. And as this journal shows, our pets are playing a vital role in our ability to heal society but may indirectly be contributing a lot more to the health of our nations than many might expect. We call it The Pet Factor. ●

*Mikhail Fridman*  
**Co-Founder, LetterOne**

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*Global Perspectives Series Director*  
**Stuart Bruseth**

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# THE PET FACTOR

In 2008, Hollywood superstars Owen Wilson and Jennifer Aniston starred in *Marley & Me* – a heart-warming film about the impact that an uncontrollable pet dog has over a young couple as they start a family together. Described after its release by *Variety* as “likely to be irresistible to almost everyone but cats”, the movie has gone on to become one of the most recognisable in the genre. But far from being a work of fiction, the film is in fact based on the real-life memoir of John Grogan, centred on his family’s dog which, despite significant behavioural issues, was eventually loved by the whole family, having a profound effect on them when he died. The tale is one of love, acceptance, trust and grief, and is reflective of the relationship humans have with their pets all across the world, including in 67% of all households in the US.

Pets contribute a total of \$223 billion to the US economy

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic began, research and data suggests more people are seeking to purchase or to adopt a pet than ever before. In the UK, for example, inquiries through the Puppy Portal (an online platform for purchasing dogs) increased by 140%, while the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reported a 600% increase in visits to dog fostering pages. While there are inevitably well-founded concerns about the numbers of pets being acquired, and their welfare, our research of UK households conducted

by Ipsos MORI shows that the vast majority of those acquiring pets are existing pet owners. This demand among existing pet owners points to the positive experience of spending more time with their pets during lockdown.

Naturally, when we consider what benefits our pets might provide, we assume that “companionship” or “exercise” are the principal offerings. Unsurprisingly, our Ipsos MORI research tells us that 87% of British dog owners see their dog as a companion and 80% agree that their dog keeps them physically active. However, as the articles in this journal outline, some researchers believe that there are a myriad of ways in which a pet can benefit us, including supporting childhood development, giving us a sense of responsibility and reducing our risk of developing cardiovascular disease. In this way, pets could have an important and rounded effect on our wellbeing. The meta-analysis done for this journal looks at the levels of physical activity and number of visits to a doctor by pet owners versus non-pet owners; pet owners are more active and healthier and visit the doctor less. We just don’t yet know why.

The idea that a pet enhances the status quo of human and economic health is a phenomenon that this journal has coined the ‘Pet Factor’. We conducted a meta-analysis based on an extensive research and literature review which yielded 139 data sets from 48 papers. This work covers multiple countries

and a wide range of health conditions from physical activity and general wellbeing, cardiovascular health, mental health, through to the impact on children’s development and the effects on health of older people. This proliferation in academic interest in the benefits of pets, which has accelerated during the last decade, is welcome but, relatively speaking, our understanding is constrained by data limitations and the depth of research to date. While we can confidently say that, for example, having a dog means that you are likely to get more physical activity, the opinions over ‘to what extent’ vary. This nuanced difference in opinion is noticeable across this journal and one that we embrace, showing us there is often a mismatch between our own experience of a bond with our pet and what the current research is telling us.

Our analysis has drawn on all accessible published work to give the most rounded understanding of the themes and results to date. The conclusions are based on global research papers including source material from countries like Sweden and Japan; however, the main body of work concerned four main geographies: the US, the UK, Germany and Australia.

## POPULATION HEALTH

The crux of this project was to answer one simple question – “to what extent does a pet benefit an individual’s health and, therefore, what is their collective impact on society?”. Key to the answering of this question is



the ‘multiplier’, which is a measure of how much healthier pet owners are relative to non-pet owners - essentially a quantification (taken from an average of the numerical data available in the research) of how much more active and healthy pet owners are compared to non-pet owners, ranging across health conditions (physical, mental and heart health), age demographics and countries (primarily the US, the UK, Germany and Australia).

When we examine the analysis, there are some overarching themes that are evident. Typically, pet owners are generally 1.6x or 60% more physically active than non-pet owners, helping them to maintain a better level of general health. Other general multipliers are 1.3x for heart health,

which means pet owners have 30% better heart health than non-pet owners, and 1.2x for mental health - meaning that an individual pet owner is 20% less inclined to feel lonely, isolated, anxious or depressed.

Pet owners are generally 60% more physically active than non-pet owners, helping them to maintain a better level of general health

Another clear theme that came out of the research was the variance across age groups. For example, children with a pet typically are 11% healthier relative to children without pets. Key gains are in emotional health

through better self-esteem, an ability to combat loneliness through the companionship that pets provide, and increased social skills and behaviours. Meanwhile, adults with a pet are typically 50% healthier than their non-pet counterparts, with heart health almost 30% better and mental health 20% better than non-pet owners. In the UK, elderly pet owners are 68% more physically active than non-pet owners and overall, internationally are 25% healthier than those without a pet; have 35% better mental health and 24% better heart health than non-pet owners.

## THE PET ECONOMY

The second stage of the project was to develop a broad economic evaluation.

This required additional data inputs, such as national expenditure on health and levels of pet ownership. These verticals were broken up by type of pet and split by age demographics, value of the national pet care sector and the wider societal costs of pet ownership (for example, insurance claims for animal-inflicted injuries, the costs of sheltering homeless animals and animal welfare law enforcement). Pooling all of this data together, a series of scenarios were run that applied the health multipliers for pet ownership vs non-pet ownership to doctor visits - average doctor visits were factored down for pet owners and factored up for non-pet owners, with the gap between them equalling the size of the health multiplier.

Applying per capita doctor visit costs enabled the relevant health expenditure to be determined for pet owners versus non-pet owners and the reduced spend amongst pet owners vs the overall average expenditure of doctor visits. Allied to levels of pet ownership and respective age demographics, pet owners are healthier than non-pet owners. If this health benefit is, as some researchers suggest it might be, derived from pet ownership, this translates to a potential reduction in healthcare expenditure of between 3% (for the UK, US) and 5% (for Australia, Germany). Precisely, these figures were: AU\$10.1 billion for Australia, €20.9 billion for Germany, £6.9 billion for the UK and \$117.8 billion for the US.

It is also important to remember that pet care generates substantial economic value in its own right. In Australia, consumers spend AU\$12.5 billion on their pets, while in Germany pet owners spend a considerable €17.6 billion. Across food, veterinary services, grooming and cleaning, toys and accessories, parasite prevention

and pet insurance, consumers are spending their hard-earned cash in the cumulative billions on their pets.

In Australia, healthcare spending by pet owners may be up to AU\$10.1 billion lower than those without pets

Taking this into account means that the potential health benefits derived from pet ownership could roughly double the economic value of pets. For example, in the US consumers spend \$106 billion on their pets. When added to a potential \$118 billion in reduced healthcare spending, less the costs of pet insurance, related accidents and animal welfare, it makes a total contribution of \$223 billion. Indeed, as the Woof Agency has illuminated in this journal, the sheer scale of the pet economy has led to the take off in the latest high-growth industry – the pet influencer industry.

Following lockdown, the world will start to focus on “building back better”. In part, this will involve examining what the pandemic has shown us about the true “health of our nations” and our resilience to combat a pandemic. Already, emerging research suggests that patients with heart disease, or who are obese, are at higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19. As governments, societies and economies shape this rebuild, we believe they should account for the value of pets in a post-pandemic world. Whether it’s boosting the wellbeing of an individual or jumpstarting an economy with consumer spending and reduced healthcare costs – the Pet Factor could make a crucial difference. ●

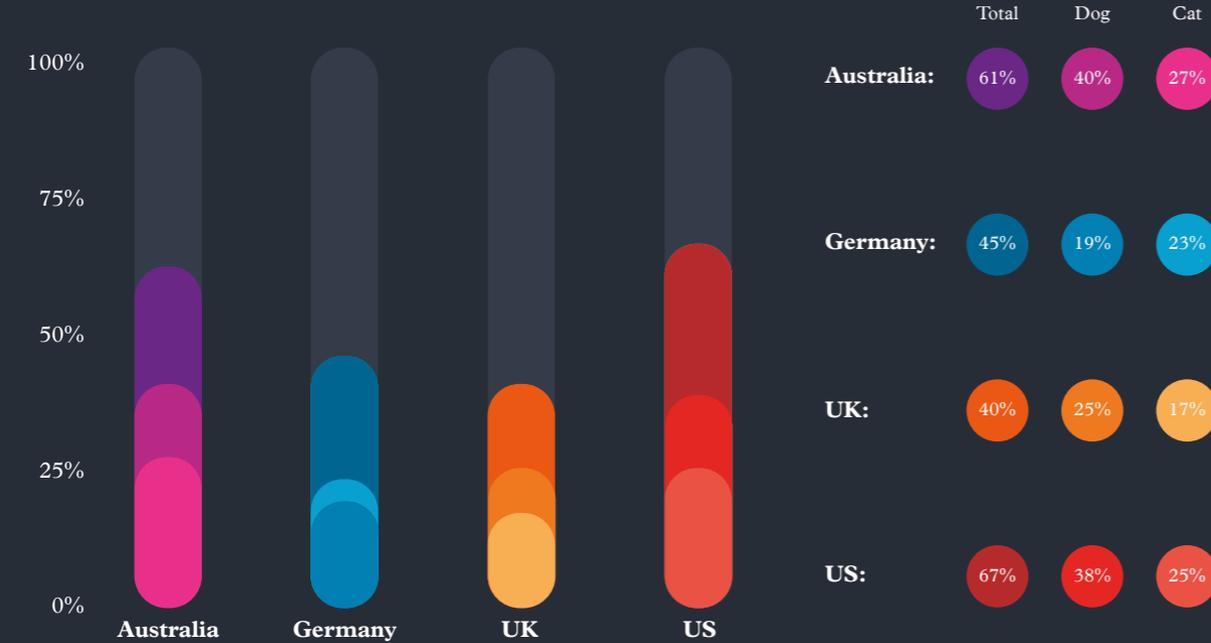


# THE PET FACTOR

## KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR META-ANALYSIS

\* All figures are in USD calculated using a 3-year average exchange rate

### PET OWNERSHIP BY HOUSEHOLD



### PERSONAL HEALTH: PET MULTIPLIERS

Pet owners typically have...

**60%**

higher rate of physical activity than non-pet owners

**50%**

better general health than non-pet owners

**30%**

better heart health than non-pet owners

**20%**

better mental health than non-pet owners

### REDUCED HEALTHCARE SPENDING \$BN



### Total economic contribution of pets

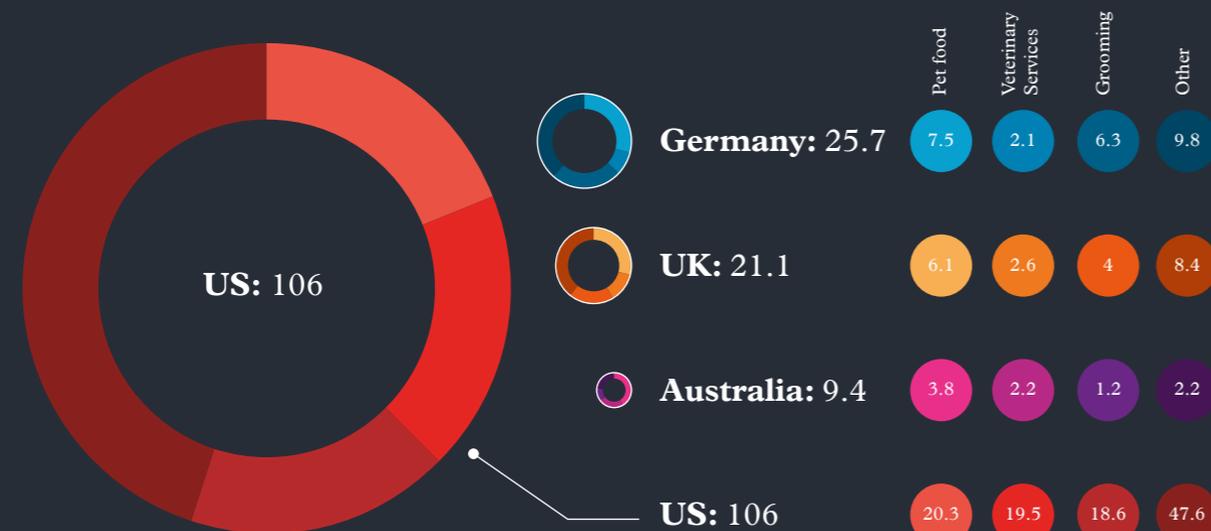
**\$49.7BN**

**\$30.1BN**

**\$16.7BN**

**\$222.7BN**

### TOTAL NATIONAL SPEND ON PETS \$BN



### REDUCED HEALTHCARE SPENDING BY AGE

Average per capita health expenditure with pet / age group average

#### Children:

with pet \$2,055  
age group average \$2,163

#### Adult 19-44:

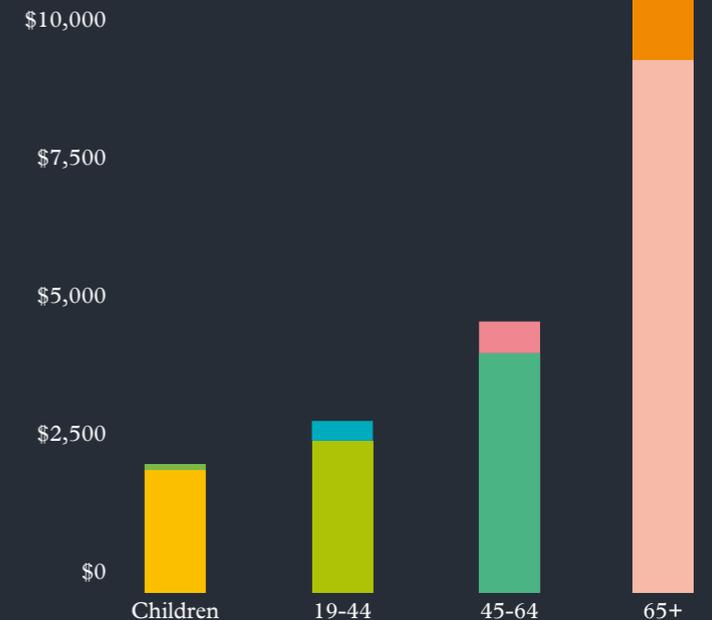
with pet \$2,568  
age group average \$2,903

#### Adult 45-64:

with pet \$4,049  
age group average \$4,582

#### Adult 65+:

with pet \$8,991  
age group average \$10,201



# PET DOGS ARE AN IMPORTANT MOTIVATOR FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## CARRI WESTGARTH

Dr Carri Westgarth BSc MPH PhD  
Senior Lecturer in Human-Animal Interaction at the University of Liverpool  
department of Epidemiology and Population Health, Institute of Infection and Global Health.

Given that dogs and humans have lived alongside each other for many thousands of years, surprisingly little was known about their effects on us until recently. Thankfully, there has been an explosion of research in this area in the last few years. Although many pet owners will tell you how much their dog benefits their lives, the science does not always support this premise<sup>1,2</sup>. In particular, for numerous reasons explored elsewhere in this report the data on emotional benefits is less clear cut. However, the hypothesis that dogs impact our physical health and activity holds up well. It is pretty clear that our furry friends are helping us to keep moving.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCIENCE

The scientific interest really began with a study in the 1980s by Erica Friedmann, who showed that pet owners were less likely to have died one year after suffering a heart attack than patients who did not own pets<sup>3</sup>. The important question was - why? - because the study found the effect in cat owners as well as dog owners and so it could not be explained through the benefits of dog walking alone. In another early study, people who adopted dogs and cats were compared to people who did not adopt a pet, over a ten-month period<sup>4</sup>. The new dog owners self-reported increased physical activity, and both dog and cat owners reported reductions in minor health problems. Whilst really promising,

these early studies had small numbers of participants and other limitations in terms of biases, so more believable evidence was required.

A considerable exploration of the effects of dog ownership on physical activity was then conducted in Australia, which found that adults who owned dogs had 57% to 77% higher odds of meeting physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes per week compared with those not owning dogs<sup>5</sup>, and these estimates have been repeated in research from the US and Japan<sup>6</sup>. This is impressive, but if most dog owners were walking with their dog every day, wouldn't we expect a larger effect? A follow-up UK study found a much greater difference - around 300%<sup>7</sup>, likely demonstrating cultural differences in how often we expect dogs to be taken for a walk. Greater physical activity of those who own dogs has also been shown in pregnant women<sup>8</sup> and the elderly<sup>9,10</sup>. However studies of children/adolescents have given mixed findings, with some showing positive effects<sup>11-14</sup> and others no difference<sup>15</sup>. One of the difficulties in conducting this sort of research, and a reason for often mixed and inconclusive findings, is separating cause and effect or asking the question: do more active people choose to own dogs? The small amount of longitudinal research does suggest that when you get a dog you start to walk more<sup>16,17</sup>.



The other issue is that owning a dog does not necessarily lead to more walking. 10% of participants in the UK study said they never walked with their dogs<sup>7</sup>. The strongest factor associated with whether or not someone walks with their dog appears to be their relationship with the dog<sup>18</sup>, including in children<sup>19</sup>. The reciprocal and intense relationship some people have with their animals engenders a sense of responsibility to meet their perceived needs for exercise<sup>20</sup>. Interviews with dog owners suggest that dog walking can be a great stress reliever, but only if owners enjoy walking with their dog; those that feel their dog doesn't enjoy being walked or does not need it find it easy to justify not bothering<sup>21</sup>. Dog walking is largely intrinsically motivated<sup>22</sup>, ie. we do it because it

makes us feel good. Anything that threatens that (for example no nearby places to let our dogs run off leash, behavioural problems) demotivates us. There are also different types of dog walks that occur, from shorter 'functional' walks in the rain and on busy work days, just for the dog; to longer 'recreational' walks in nicer weather, pretty places and on weekends<sup>23</sup>. It is the latter walks that owners feel they and their dogs get the most benefit from.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIETAL HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURES

Being physically active is touted to be practically the best thing we can do for our health, so what are the impacts

for dog owners? The American Heart Association published a statement reporting robust evidence for a positive effect of pet ownership on physical activity, and also some evidence for hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and cardiovascular disease<sup>24</sup>. Data from Sweden, referenced within this journal, where huge dog ownership and health information registers can be linked and studied, suggests that dog ownership is associated with a lower risk of death overall, or death from cardiovascular disease<sup>25</sup>. However, a reduction in cardiovascular disease was only seen in single-person households and greatest for those who owned more active dog breeds, showing it is probably due to that extra dog walking (which was not itself studied)<sup>25</sup>. In contrast, there is little evidence that dogs help us stay slim in either adults<sup>24</sup> or children<sup>26,27</sup>. As obesity is about what you eat as well as what exercise you do, perhaps it isn't surprising that getting a dog is not the perfect solution.

Given that physical activity has downstream effects on risks of many chronic diseases, cancers and mental wellbeing, it is likely that our dogs (or at least the ones we walk) are significantly improving our health. This will have a largely unrecognised impact on the costs of the health services that treat us, although calculating exactly how much is very difficult. One study estimated that due to fewer doctors visits by pet owners, for the year 2000 savings were being made of €5.59 billion for Germany and \$3.86 billion for Australia<sup>28</sup>. Even when accounting for potential health risks requiring treatment, such as dog bites, the money saved by having pets in society is likely far greater than the health costs added<sup>29</sup>. However, new research studying twins complicates the conclusions that can be drawn from many studies comparing pet owners with those who don't own a pet, by

suggesting the tendency to own a dog is quite largely genetic, thus dog owners may have a tendency to be 'healthier' in the first place; something that has not been accounted for previously<sup>30</sup>.

#### PETS AND PANDEMICS

At the University of Liverpool, we have recently conducted a survey to study the effects of COVID-19 restrictions in the UK on dog walking. Although the study findings have not been published yet, it seems that lockdowns and furloughs had mixed effects. Some dogs were walked more, some less, and some the same as normal. Many participants reported emotional benefits from owning their pets during this potentially stressful period, which makes sense given we have also seen reports of booming puppy sales during this unusual time at home. Whilst understandable, there are welfare concerns about this. Firstly, it is believed that puppies require extensive socialisation whilst they are young, in order not to be afraid of things later. In this situation, it has been virtually impossible, either for breeders or new owners, to accomplish this, especially given that veterinary surgeries in the UK were often closed for vaccinations. Unfortunately, as a result the recent puppies I have met have been rather cautious of the big bad world. Secondly, although my dogs would tell you that they love me being at home with them all day at the moment, it may not be good for them long term. Some dogs have struggled to adjust to their owners suddenly being around and disturbing their nap time, and many more may struggle when we all go off to work again. Careful training is advised to help with this, and time will tell if the pandemic caused our dogs problems.

Dog ownership is likely a strongly effective intervention that increases physical activity levels of the general population at a time when governments and public health specialists are trying hard to make us exercise more. Yet at the same time, we are seeing greater restrictions on who can own pets and where our dogs can be walked. Our furry friends deserve to be recognised for the health benefits that they bring us and need to be supported with dog-friendly policies where possible, so that dog ownership and/or dog walking is not discouraged. ●



# PETS AND OUR HEALTH

## TERRY L CLOWER & TONYA E THORNTON

Terry L. Clower, PhD, is Northern Virginia Chair and Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University. He is also director of GMU's Center for Regional Analysis.

Dr Tonya E Thornton is the Director for Extramural Projects with George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.



Perhaps the fastest growing demographic for American households is the number of pets. From fuzzy creatures to scaled aquarium dwellers and everything in-between, the number of households with pets has been on a steady multi-decade climb. According to the most recent annual survey by the American Pet Products Association<sup>1</sup>, 67% of US households, almost 85 million homes, own one or more pets, an increase of almost 34 million households since 1988. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the publication<sup>2</sup> of a seminal study on the health impacts of pet ownership marking one of the earliest scientific efforts to assess how pet ownership can affect our physical and mental wellbeing.

The leading research agency dedicated to understanding how pets, and animals in general, and humans interact is the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) based in

Washington DC.<sup>3</sup> This group has a broad research agenda that includes not only pets but also therapeutic and service animals. In 2015, we were engaged by HABRI to review the historic and emerging literature on the health benefits of pet ownership and, where data allowed, to estimate the healthcare cost savings associated with these benefits. Even with substantial data limitations, we found the health improvements associated with pet ownership lowers healthcare spending by billions of dollars each year. In honour of that pioneering 1980 study, we want to call attention once again to the physical and mental health and wellness benefits associated with pet ownership.

In 1980, Erika Freidmann and her colleagues published research showing that pet owners exhibited better long-term survivability after heart attacks. Though the authors did not claim definitive causation, largely due to a

lack of theoretical understanding of the human-animal bond, the findings were suggestive that these realised benefits came through physical mechanisms (physically activity associated with pet care) and psychological effects (companionship). While these findings are important by themselves, the larger benefit was setting the stage for the development of a new field of study, resulting in deeper understanding and improved health outcomes for humans based on their interactions with animals.

In our research, we reviewed the relevant literature on health benefits of pet ownership in studies that reflected the traditions of Western medicine. We also explicitly excluded the economic value of physical and mental health improvements from therapeutic animals, which can range from treatment of autistic children to helping veterans deal with PTSD, and service animals, which effectively allow

individuals with physical challenges to lead more productive economic lives. In quick-hitting fashion, here are some key research findings from the literature.

### PHYSICIAN VISITS

The studies we reviewed found a notable drop in the number of physician office visits per year for pet owners versus non-pet owners. Though there was variation in the findings, the most conservative decline was an 11% decrease in office visits.<sup>4</sup>

### CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

In 2013, the American Heart Association (AHA) issued a Scientific Statement<sup>5</sup> offering a comprehensive review of studies on the effects of pet ownership on cardiovascular disease. We have augmented the work reviewed by AHA with more recent studies. While the totality of all research is mixed, the weight of recent research

is turning towards confirmation that pet owners tend to exhibit lower blood pressure. In a 2017 study, hypertensive elders who own pets also had improved life spans.<sup>6</sup> The AHA statement also reports a few studies that observe clinically modest improvements in blood cholesterol associated with pet ownership. In a recent Mexico-based study, researchers found that older adults with a companion dog have both lower cortisol and total cholesterol.<sup>7</sup>

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OBESITY

In addition to the previously mentioned 1980 study, there are several reports that associate pet ownership and exercise levels. These studies often focus on dogs, but one recent study noted the benefits of horse ownership. A detailed study found that the incidence of obesity is 17% for dog walkers, 22% for non-owners and 28% for dog owners who do not walk their

dog. A more recent meta-analysis of this specific area of study finds the impacts of pet ownership collectively on obesity is not statistically significant but made no overt distinction between those that exercise their animal and overall pet ownership. Have you walked your goldfish lately?

**Stress:** Owning a pet reduces reactivity stress for individuals in high-stress occupations. Blood pressure, heart rate and plasma renin activity all decreased after having a pet for six months. This literature covers many types of pets including chimpanzees, fish, goats and snakes.

**Nutrition Supplements:** A Purdue University study<sup>8</sup> found that placing an aquarium in a memory care facility boosted patient food intake resulting in a decreased need for food supplements.

**Allergies:** Several studies have found that early childhood exposure to dogs or cats lowers the likelihood of developing pet allergies later in life, though at least one study found no impacts, positive or negative, on childhood asthma or pet allergies.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Perhaps the most exciting work in assessing the impacts of human-animal bonds on owners' health falls under a broad category of mental health. Pets can be a source of comfort for everyday stress, significant loss events (death, disasters) and in recovery from a variety of maladies. We believe that this is especially important in the time of COVID-19. The loss of social companionship and related mental health maladies, especially among the at-risk population who have had to endure separation from family and friends for months, can be greatly reduced by having a companion pet.

#### HEALTHCARE COST SAVING

Even though the supporting literature did not allow us to estimate the healthcare cost savings associated with all of the maladies listed above, we did have data on the costs of physician office visits and the cost to treat obesity-related diseases. For obesity, we used data to only account for the improvements in body mass for dog owners who report walking their dog at least five days each week. In 2020 dollars, we estimate that the US healthcare system and consumers realise more than \$12 billion per year in pet-ownership related savings. But for those of us who own pets, the fun and joy of a companion animal is truly priceless. ●



# HOMELESSNESS AND PETS: THE ANCHOR IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

## JADE STATT

Jade Statt BVMS (Hons) MRCVS DVM GP  
cert SAM is the co-founder of StreetVet  
[www.streetvet.org.uk](http://www.streetvet.org.uk)



StreetVet has grown more rapidly than we could have imagined since we founded it in 2016, but our ethos remains the same - to do everything we can to keep our clients and their pets together and preserve the bond between humans and animals. In many cases, this bond is the only thing that sustains a homeless person taking each day as it comes. This same bond can also be the catalyst that allows someone to turn their life around.

StreetVet is a charity that offers free accessible veterinary care for the pets of those experiencing homelessness. Started four years ago by two vets, Jade Statt and Sam Joseph, with a backpack of supplies, StreetVet has since grown into a charity with more than 500 volunteers working in 16 different locations across the UK.

Time and time again, the importance of these pets to their owners is highlighted to us through our work on the streets. As the co-founder, I am reminded on a daily basis why I wanted to set up StreetVet in the first place. As is often the case, it came from a chance encounter, an encounter that would change the course of my life.

At the time, I was dealing with the prospect of losing one of the true loves of my life – Oakley, my geriatric Labrador and soul mate, who had been with me through some tough times. Oakley had just been diagnosed with inoperable cancer. While coming to terms with this news, I met Dave and his dog, Brick. Brick was suffering from a skin condition, causing itching and soreness, which was something I knew I could help with. As Dave and I talked dogs, I was struck by the obvious anxiety he felt about accessing veterinary care. As I walked away, I had one clear thought, what would I have done if I was in that position with Oakley? I knew that I could have helped Brick if I'd had the right stuff in my bag. For me that was where StreetVet was born – reflecting on my

own bond with Oakley and seeing Dave's connection to Brick.

In my 18 years as a vet and having worked with countless homeless clients, I have been privileged to witness the most symbiotic and profound relationships through StreetVet. These are such special connections which truly embody the human-animal bond, a bond best expressed by those clients StreetVet has been supporting throughout the coronavirus crisis.

***"If I was separated from my dog, it would kill me. I've had no mental support since 2014, but my dog is my main mental health support. I'd rather risk my life in a pandemic than be separated from my dog."***

Mick talking about his dog, Benson.

***"When you are stood there hungry and people are walking by like you don't exist, my dog gives me a role; it's like having another heartbeat that is on your side. It's company; he's all the family I've got; he is my moral support; he is everything."***

Andy talking about his dog, Bailey.

Although the words are different, the sentiment being expressed is the same; companion animals make a difficult life worth living. In a lonely and often brutal world, the pets of homeless people provide companionship, security, warmth and unconditional love.

These pets - mainly dogs but also cats - can often be a link to happier times as many of our clients' dogs were in their lives prior to them experiencing homelessness. StreetVet clients often refer to their pet as their family, and I am in no doubt that pet ownership enhances our clients' social, physical and emotional health. They provide

a sense of routine, responsibility, an identity – and in many cases, a reason to live.

It is this sense of duty that can lead our clients to make better life choices, such as reducing substance abuse and criminal activity; the possibility of imprisonment would mean forced separation from their dog. But owning a pet on the streets also comes at a cost.

As well as restricting the mobility of someone who is homeless, owning a dog can often prevent their access to soup kitchens, healthcare and hostel rooms. This means that somewhere between 16,000 and 64,000 of the estimated 320,000 people living on the UK's streets do not access support because they have a pet.

Imagine being told to choose between a roof over your head or your pet. It is a choice none of us would want to make, but with only 10% of homeless hostels in the UK accepting pets, it's a choice facing StreetVet's clients every day. If they stay on the street, they are labelled

'voluntarily homeless', if they say yes to a hostel place, they may be forced to give up their only friend.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made some hostels realise that, in exceptional circumstances, they can accept dogs and it's not as much of an undertaking as they previously thought. We are optimistic as we launch the next phase in our story, the StreetVet Accredited Hostel Scheme, a project aimed at increasing the number of UK hostels that are willing to accept pets.

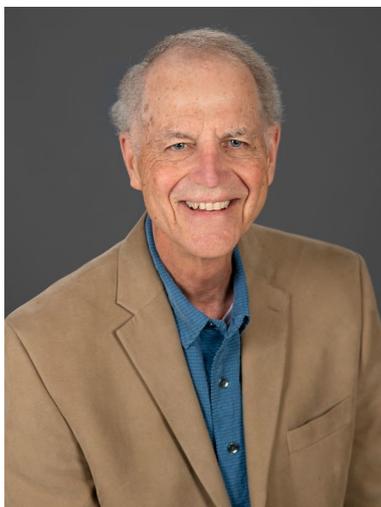
Our aim is that no one should be forced to choose between somewhere to stay and their best friend. But the fact that our clients almost always choose to stay on the street, rather than relinquish their pet is, I believe, the most powerful example of the complex and intense bond between humans and animals. ●



# Q&A / DR HAL HERZOG ANTHROZOOLOGY

## HAL HERZOG

Dr Hal Herzog is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Western Carolina University where he investigates and writes about the ways people think about and relate to other species. Dr Herzog is regarded as one of the world's leading experts on human-animal relations. We sat down with him to talk about what impact animals have on us and what they can tell us about ourselves.



## WHAT IS ANTHROZOOLOGY?

Anthrozoology is the study of human-animal interaction. An “anthrozoologist” is how most people that are doing this kind of research would describe themselves. In recent years, it has grown as people in more mainstream areas like psychology, sociology, medicine and epidemiology are increasingly taking the research on. This is great news as they come with really interesting research methods and methodological skills. As a child I was fascinated by reptiles, and animals generally, which naturally lead me into a life of studying them. Then as an academic, I started to think more and more about the ethics and moral dilemmas associated with keeping pets. Eventually, that got me to change my research from the study of animal behaviour to the study of our behaviour and our attitudes towards animals.

## CAN YOU PROVIDE SOME HISTORY OF ANTHROZOOLOGY?

Perhaps the most seminal paper was a paper by Erika Friedmann in 1980 (which is referenced several

times in this journal). She was a doctoral student working on the impact of social factors on survival from heart attacks. What she found was surprising. Pet owners had four times the survival rate than that of non-pet owners. That really kicked the whole field of anthrozoology off. Some studies have replicated those findings but other studies have not. Of course, there have also been important studies since. Karen Allen at University of Buffalo, for example, showed that interacting with a pet did have short-term cardiovascular effects including decreasing cortisol levels, changes in heart rate and blood pressure. However, it was only when I was writing my book that I started encountering all these counterfactual data and studies. And it seems like in recent years we're getting more of these studies that cast doubt on the idea that owning pets has health benefits, but it is difficult to get conclusive answers either way due to socio-economic factors and small sample sizes. I did not originally come into this idea as a sceptic. Indeed, I became a sceptic reluctantly, because I'm a pet lover myself.



## EVERYONE YOU SPEAK TO REALLY FONDLY REMEMBERS THEIR CHILDHOOD PETS AND I WAS WONDERING IF YOU THINK THAT'S WHY PEOPLE GENERALLY THINK PETS ARE GOOD FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH?

Our intuition is definitely that pets are good for children's mental health. This idea dates back to the late 19th century when the belief spread that for American boys, the presence of pets would have a calming, taming effect on them and help them to be socialised. But the idea that pets provide very serious benefits to the health and happiness of people, including kids, really began to take off about 20 years ago. Since then there's been this spectacular growth in the

idea that dogs made good therapists and that pet owners are healthier and happier than non-pet owners.

## YOU DON'T AGREE?

I do not. There's a mismatch between what the public thinks the research says about the impact of pets on health and happiness and what the research actually says. That's the crux of the matter. I think most of my colleagues in the field agree with me on this. Let me give a couple of examples. I recently took a deep dive into research on pets and loneliness. I located 21 empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals which examined whether getting a pet will make you less lonely. Only six of these studies actually found that pet owners were

less lonely. Similarly, I found 31 studies in which depression levels of pet owners were compared to those of non-pet owners. Only five found the pet owners were less depressed. Even I was shocked by this. I found the same pattern with claims about pets and obesity. One of the claims made by the media is that dog walking is strongly associated with lower levels of obesity, so if you get a dog you will lose weight. That is not true. It might be true in terms of increased physical activity for some but, the majority of studies to date have not found that there's any connection between pet ownership and obesity, and at least one study has shown pet owners are even more likely to be obese.

BUT IN 2017, A GROUP OF STATISTICIANS FROM THE RAND CORPORATION DID A PROJECT TO DEMONSTRATE THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF COMPANION ANIMALS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT USING THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY AS DATA. IT FOUND THAT CHILDREN RAISED IN FAMILIES WITH PETS HAVE BETTER GENERAL HEALTH, THEY'RE MORE OBEDIENT, MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, LESS MOODY, HAD FEWER BEHAVIOURAL AND LEARNING PROBLEMS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

They did find those things but they also found that once you include the socioeconomic differences, the kids with pets are more likely to come from wealthier intact families. They're more likely to live in homes where the parents actually own the home, as opposed to renting or living in a trailer. They're more likely to be white, in a country in which there are great racial and socioeconomic disparities in health coverage. They are also more likely to have healthier parents. So, this relationship between wealth and health is one of many factors that are associated with better health and happiness. In the grand scheme of things, pet ownership makes a relatively small difference in how kids turn out; although, it may play a big role in some kids' lives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK EXPLAINS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN THE RESEARCH TO DATE AND OUR INTUITION THAT PETS ARE GENERALLY GOOD FOR YOUR WELL-BEING?

An idea by Daniel Kahneman, the Nobel Prize winning psychologist, called the 'availability heuristic'. The availability heuristic says that when we think about a problem, we shortcut to the things that come to

mind first. In this particular case it's down to media coverage. The media has really pushed this idea that pet owners are better off than non-pet owners. I recently turned to Google to examine media stories related to the pet effect. Using the Google News search engine, I located 81 news items on the pet effect between 2010 and 2020. I searched using the phrase "the impact of pets on human health and happiness". The articles fell into three categories - the good news, the bad news and the balanced news. 70% of the articles fell into the feel-good category. The media and the pet products industry has really pushed this idea that pet ownership will save money on your medical bills and make you happier. And this, of course, is what people want to hear based on our own personal experiences with pets.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE WITH PETS?

When I tell my wife I have found yet another article which did not show the expected findings around children's wellbeing and pets she says: "Well, I don't believe you. I think you're wrong because I know from our experience with our own kids...". To me, what's really fascinating is the mismatch between our personal experiences and what the research currently says. On the one hand, we have this body of research, most of which does not show these benefits, but then we have our personal experience, which often conflicts with that. There's a mismatch between what the public believes, what the research shows and our personal experience.

FINALLY, HOW WOULD YOU SUMMARISE WHAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANIMALS CAN TELL US ABOUT HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY?

I think it tells us a couple things. This gets to Daniel Kahneman's work on thinking fast and thinking slow. It's that our interactions with animals; the way we think about animals is very complicated. And it's complex, in part because it's moderated by two different systems and one of these is intuitive: it's fast and it's unconscious. The other is more thoughtful: it's cognitive, it's slower. Especially when we think about moral issues associated with animals, often our thinking, our moral judgments and our behaviour are more motivated by gut level decision making or the 'fast part', as Daniel Kahneman puts it. Then there is the slow rational part. As the psychologist Jonathan Haidt argues, our moral lives are this uneasy relationship between our head and our heart. Often our emotions take over. It's no wonder that we have this mismatch of factors affecting our judgments. I think this applies in all aspects of all facets of human thinking - especially moral thinking, not just to animals, but to other people as well. Animals can tell us a lot about the human condition. ●



# THE IMPORTANT ROLE DOGS PLAY DURING COVID-19 TIMES

## LORI KOGAN

Lorri Kogan PhD is Professor of Clinical Sciences for the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at Colorado State University. She is a licensed psychologist and the Chair of the Human-Animal Interaction Section of the American Psychological Association; Research chair for the International Association of Animal Hospice and Palliative Care; and Editor of the Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin



Our dogs play an important role as valued companions, contributing to both our emotional and physical wellbeing. During the COVID-19 lockdown this interdependency has become more apparent and new research shows there is a growing reliance on our relationships with our dogs.

Numerous studies in the past have found that those with a dog are healthier and happier, perhaps helping to explain their popularity. People sharing their homes with dogs are sick less frequently, make fewer visits to the doctor, have lower blood pressure

and risk of heart disease and are less depressed and stressed than those without a dog. Dogs also help people relax and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. For older adults in particular, dogs can buffer the negative effects accompanying a lack of human social connections. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the responsibility of caring for a dog gives people a sense of purpose that contributes to their overall wellbeing. In fact, just looking at dogs can make us feel happier, as one study found by examining the increased levels of oxytocin found when people look at their dogs. Are we surprised? Those of us with dogs know

that just taking a minute to pause and watch them, whether they are sleeping or acting goofy, helps ground and centre us. They remind us of what is important.

All these benefits occur during normal times, yet with COVID-19, things are far from normal. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought countless changes to how we live our lives. It has made for an uncomfortable level of uncertainty - altering our daily routines, creating financial stressors and increasing social isolation.

How do dogs help us during this time? And how has COVID-19 impacted the relationship we have with our dogs? Researchers from four different US universities (Colorado State University, Washington State University, University of San Francisco and Palo Alto University) set out to answer these questions through an online anonymous survey for those with dogs. One of the first things we wanted to explore was how COVID-19 and related schedule/lifestyle changes have impacted the amount of time people are spending with their dogs.

The results, published in June 2020, suggest there are a lot of very happy dogs - 72% of people report spending more time overall with their dog, with 64% reporting more play time and 42% more walk time. Most participants report that this increased time has strengthened the bond they feel with their dog. Sentiments like "He is getting me through this" were common responses. Given the fact that 29% of respondents reported feeling they have minimal social support now (compared to only 8% who felt that way before COVID-19), this bond is more important than ever.

So, perhaps due to a lack of other social connections, it would appear that one effect of COVID-19 is a growing reliance on our relationships with our dogs. It is perhaps not surprising then that dogs appear to help people cope with the myriad of negative emotions that can accompany the changes created by COVID-19. We found that over 50% of people report feeling that their dogs help reduce their feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation and loneliness. As one owner explained, "I'm not lonely because he's here." Additionally, 54% of owners reported that their dogs help provide them with a purpose.

Over 50% of people said their dogs helped reduce feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation and loneliness

It is clear from these early findings that dogs play a critical role for many people during these stressful times. As one respondent noted, "I can't imagine going through this without them." It is not surprising therefore, that many

owners are concerned about being able to provide for their dog in the future. This concern includes the ability to afford and access veterinary care and dog food/supplies, as well as being able to care for their dog if they themselves contract COVID-19. To this end, 60% of respondents reported that they have identified someone to care for their dog if they become ill. Yet that leaves 40% who have not designated a caretaker for their dog. There are so many things that are outside of our control these days, but having a plan for our dog if we become ill and need to be hospitalised is something we can do; and, being prepared can help reduce feelings of panic. One tangible way to take control and prepare for the future is to ensure our dogs are cared for in the case of an emergency.

In summary, as we lean into this new future, those of us with dogs can take comfort in knowing that they are here with us on the journey (with more walks along the way). To learn more, you can access the full report at [FidoFortCollins.org](http://FidoFortCollins.org).

## DOGS' IMPACT ON NEGATIVE EMOTIONS



# THE CHARITY PERSPECTIVE: ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

JAN MCLOUGHLIN

Director General, The People's Dispensary  
for Sick Animals

The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) is the UK's leading veterinary charity and has been providing free and low-cost veterinary care to the pets of people in need for over a century. Helping over 470,000 pet patients each year, the charity is a lifeline for owners in financial difficulty. In this piece, PDSA Director General, Jan McLoughlin, reflects on how the organisation swiftly adapted to help the most vulnerable during the pandemic and what the enduring bond we have with our pets has meant to people during lockdown.



As I watched the Prime Minister announce a lockdown of the UK on 23 March 2020, I knew that his words were marking a historic moment. Leading PDSA, an organisation which was founded during the First World War and weathered the Second, survived the financial challenges of the Great Depression of the 1920's right through to the global financial crisis of 2008, means you feel the weight of that history. PDSA is a unique organisation, one which recognises the incredible value of the human animal bond, and allows people, no matter what their financial circumstances, to experience

the benefits of pet ownership, by providing a lifeline of free and low-cost veterinary treatment to the pets of the most vulnerable in our society.

Our research has shown that 84% of pet owners say their pet makes them mentally healthier and 64% physically healthier, rising to 85% for dog owners

The benefits of pet ownership to people are well documented; our own research shows that 84% of owners say that having a pet makes them mentally healthier, with 63% of pet owners agreeing that having a pet makes them physically healthier – this rises to 85% for dog owners. Findings like these show us one aspect of why pets are so important to us, and why they have been such a comfort to so many throughout this pandemic. Our responsibility to the hundreds of thousands of pets, owners and their families who rely on us meant that we needed to change ways of working in our Pet Hospitals almost overnight – including a rapid digital transformation, so that we

could continue to protect animal welfare whilst also playing our part in safeguarding public health.

In line with Government advice that only essential travel could take place during lockdown, only emergencies and the very sickest of pets were able to attend our 48 Pet Hospitals across the UK. All of our preventive healthcare (such as neutering and vaccinations) was stopped and telemedicine – such as consultations done over the phone or online – replaced many face-to-face hospital visits. To give you an idea of the scale of this, since lockdown we have provided 231,000 remote consultations via phone or video call, provided a further 64,000 consultations at our Pet Hospitals, and carried out over 6,000 emergency operations. And we are now seeing more pets as we get used to the new ways of working. In June we helped 57,000 pets – which was 20% more than in April. That's an encouraging response at the most difficult of times, especially as we develop new ways of working within the new normal and adapt to further challenges such as localised lockdowns.

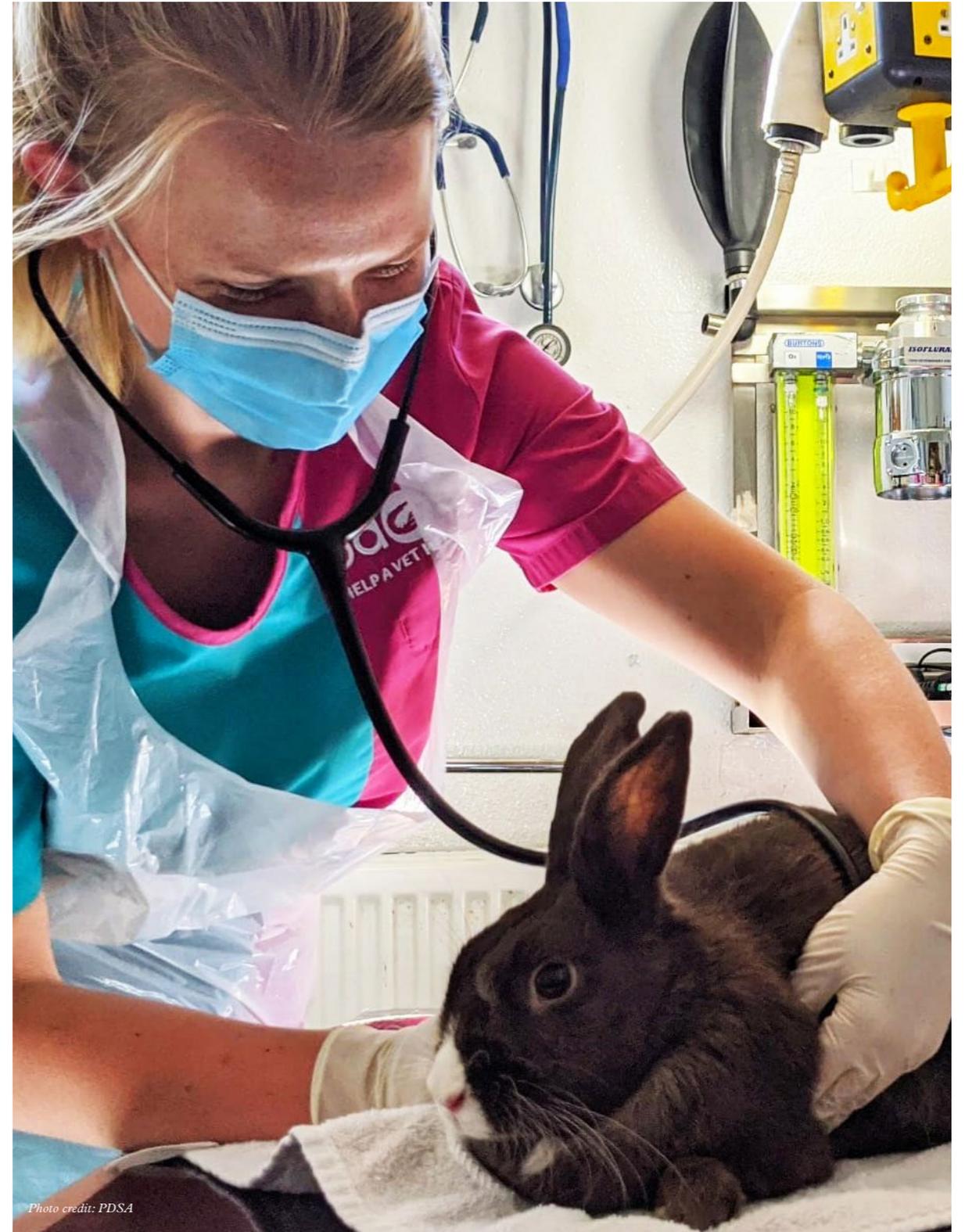


Photo credit: PDSA

Every year we bring peace of mind to over 300,000 owners who have nowhere else to turn when their pet falls sick or is injured. With the current crisis putting people out of work, we anticipate a significant increase in those becoming eligible for our service. Unfortunately, to protect our staff and in line with Government guidance, we had to close our 120 high-street charity shops and furlough those teams, with significant losses of income, and we anticipate the situation will worsen with major fundraising events cancelled and a predicted fall in donations from our loyal supporters who donate every month.

However, we know from our experience navigating the 2008 crisis, severe financial times only increase the need for PDSA – at a time when our income is most affected by donors often being no longer able to financially support us. In addition to these financial concerns affecting our frontline service, there are also wider animal welfare implications to consider.

Pets have provided companionship to those shielding, many of whom live alone, whose pet has been their only source of company. They have provided stress relief to tired, emotionally drained keyworkers, got families out walking, made comical appearances on work video meetings and have generally cheered us with their endearing habits, possibly overlooked previously when we spent less time at home. In the same way that many have turned to nature to provide a sense of consistency and respite from what can seem like endlessly sad and challenging news, many have relied on their pet to ease their own personal burdens.

During the pandemic, perhaps seeking these benefits, higher than

usual numbers of people have sought to acquire pets. However, taking on a pet is a decision which should be undertaken thoughtfully, with full consideration of how you could care for that pet once life resumes its previous pace. Owners have a duty of care to their pets, to provide for their five welfare needs (diet, environment, behaviour, companionship and health), as enshrined in UK law. We have a responsibility to consider if we can provide those for a pet before we look to acquire one. There is a concern shared across UK animal charities that rapid pet acquisition during lockdown may lead to abandonment or relinquishment in cases where there hasn't been this thoughtful consideration of the pets' long-term welfare needs.

There is a concern shared across UK animal charities that rapid pet acquisition during lockdown may lead to abandonment or relinquishment.

Irresponsible breeders and puppy farmers have seen an opportunity to make a profit from this high demand, with puppies selling online for thousands of pounds and travel restrictions allowing them to be delivered to purchasers in a manner which may usually raise red flags for prospective owners. Fraudsters have cashed in too, with reports of some posing online as breeders, taking deposits for puppies who never existed in the first place.

With vets unable to provide many preventive procedures such as vaccinations or neutering, outbreaks of preventable disease are possible, and rehoming charities are braced for a tide of unwanted kittens, as unneutered cats can become pregnant from as

early as four months old – something many new owners won't have realised. In addition, with the end of the furlough scheme approaching, many workers will resume their previous working hours and we expect to see issues, such as rabbits being forgotten in their hutches and separation anxiety developing in dogs who have, until then, spent all of their time at home with their owner.

PDSA has worked tirelessly with other charities and pet organisations to prevent some of these likely consequences, producing social media and press advice for owners at each stage of lockdown. We've also reached almost a million people who have visited our online Pet Health Hub for veterinary information and supported over 500 families and thousands of children with pet-related home-schooling resources and our fun PetWise activity packs.

However, despite all of this hard work, there are difficult times ahead, both for animal welfare, and for organisations like PDSA at the forefront of efforts to prevent suffering while under extreme financial pressure. Nevertheless, I remain optimistic about some of the opportunities to improve the care of our pets presented by this pandemic. The huge increase in use of telemedicine, surge in sales through our online shops and staff moving to homeworking, for example, have moved our organisation forward significantly in terms of our capability in these areas as well as reducing our environmental impact. We're adapting fast and endeavouring to build back better. ●

*Thank you for all your hard work and dedication. I know it will be tough for you all right now because you care. This crisis is real, this crisis is huge, and the ramifications could spell disaster and catastrophe for so many. The existence and frankness of PDSA is an index of a decent society and I am extremely proud to support you. Your role is significant in this national effort, in this global pandemic. The therapeutic value of pets to society – their companionship, love, and affection, particularly for those living through illness or poverty – is essential for the physical and mental wellbeing of millions of pet owners. Thank you for all you do.*

*John Nettles OBE*

# WAR HORSE 2020

LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
PATRICK WILLIAMS MC  
RHG/D

Commanding Officer, The Household  
Cavalry Mounted Regiment



Photo credit: HCMR

*“There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”*

This quote is popularly attributed to Rt Hon Sir Winston Churchill, former Cavalryman, adventurer and latterly British Prime Minister. But these are in fact the words of a similarly multitalented pioneer of his time John Lubbock, 1st Baron Avebury, in his 1894 book *The Use of Life*. Many of us have seen or experienced the passion, devotion and expenditure that our equid friends demand in the civilian world, but what of horses in the Army? Why do we still have them and what do they do for our soldiers that work with them? Why is a horse good for a man?

Hidden away on the southern edge of Hyde Park in London, behind Sir Basil Spence’s brutalist and unwelcoming architecture, are stabled 250 horses of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. The Regiment’s role since its formation in 1661 has been the protection of the Monarch. This is a role it still fulfils today, escorting Her Majesty The Queen’s carriage on National occasions, the massed use of horses able to act as a shield for Her Majesty, should the situation require it. The Regiment also fulfil daily duties



Photo credit: HCMR

of The Queen Life Guard – providing sentries mounted on horses or on foot to stand guard – at Horseguards, next door to Downing Street on Whitehall. A nod to our past and an element of how those outside our Nation see us.

But what possible relevance could this role have in 2020? Surely men and women on horseback in outdated uniforms is a look back to an Arcadian world that never really existed. Beyond horses, the men and women of the Household Cavalry are also trained as armoured reconnaissance soldiers to be the covert eyes and ears of commanders on today’s battlefield. What marks them out from their peers in the rest of the Army is that for every Household Cavalry soldier their military journey started by teaming up with a horse.

What is quite extraordinary is that more than 60% of soldiers joining the Regiment have never sat on a horse before and even the few that have struggle to adapt to the military riding style. And yet, in just 20 weeks it is possible to teach a soldier who has never seen a horse before to ride on

parade in front of Her Majesty The Queen and 8,000 spectators.

During their training, the soldiers gain remarkable riding proficiency: riding one-handed, with huge thick boots, wearing a helmet that is difficult to see out from and carrying a sword. But the real change in these young soldiers comes from their interaction with the horses. The responsibility to look after a living, breathing, sentient being; having to feed it, groom it, muck it out and ride it develops the soldier into something special. Through their relationship with a horse and the unique way horses and humans communicate with one another, my soldiers become highly attuned to physical movements, developing an instinct and an awareness for the slightest changes in situation, something which lasts a lifetime.

In training, soldiers spend almost every waking moment around the horse they are paired up with. It is the strength of this bond that helps to explain the incredible progress soldiers make in learning to ride. But once they have completed the riding course, they will

be expected to know up to 30 horses and may be called upon to ride any one of them. With the constant interaction, the occasional kick or friendly (or not so friendly) bite, the soldiers soon understand that each horse has its own personality. Each has a name and number, from which you can tell its age and the year it joined the army, like a birth certificate. But my soldiers know each horse’s character as they know each other; whether it is social or shy, fearful or boisterous, and can tell within moments its mood on any particular day. As such, each interaction with every horse is subconsciously assessed and approached differently.

Michael Morpurgo captured this sentiment beautifully in his book *War Horse*:

*“Can you not see that he’s something special? This one isn’t just any old horse. There’s a nobility in his eye, a regal serenity about him. Does he not personify all that men try to be and never can be?”*



Photo credit: HCMR



Photo credit: HCMR

The legends of these horses take on anthropomorphic tones and quite often the most boisterous horses are those remembered with the greatest fondness. Our horses are named alphabetically year on year. This year all of our newly trained horses' names will begin with the letter 'U'. Often horses will live up to their name. Neptune loves swimming, Javelin and Nitro are exceptionally fast and Quasimodo kicks at his stable door until he is fed or paid some attention.

Horses' names are also reused. Our most famous horse, Sefton, was badly injured in a terrorist attack in London in 1982. He survived terrible wounds and won the hearts of the Nation for his bravery and determination. Today we have Sefton III and one of the first soldiers to ride him on a parade was Trooper Sullivan whose father narrowly avoided serious injury in the 1982 attack. Sefton is a favourite with many soldiers, but like his namesake before him, he still likes to give an occasional kick or bite to keep them on their toes.

However, the daily monotony of guard duty, the hours spent cleaning kit and looking after horses, with little prospect

of time off, can take the enjoyment out of riding. But each summer the Regiment usually get the opportunity to take the soldiers and horses to the Norfolk countryside. Here we get the chance to improve our riding skills, taking part in the fun activities for which most people take up riding: show jumping, cross country, beach rides and even just a quiet hack out to the local pub. It is here that the interaction and bond between the soldier and horse is best seen. In a relaxed environment away from the pressures of ceremonial duty, both soldiers and horses can have some fun and challenge themselves. I will never tire of seeing new recruits riding their horses bareback into the sea for the first time, more often than not, white with fear. But, after 10 minutes swimming alongside their horses, they come back to the beach with beaming smiles and brimming confidence. The same is true of a long exhilarating gallop along the seemingly endless Holkham beach. Not only do these experiences reinforce the connection between soldier and horse, but it boosts the confidence of young men and women in a way few other experiences can.

Whether a soldier enjoys their time at the Mounted Regiment and develops a passion for riding or not, they will always have a favourite horse or horses etched into their memory. Each can recount tales about why a horse was so good or bad or the funny things they did. In fact, the bonds can be so strong that we keep a list of applications from soldiers who have asked for the opportunity to buy a particular horse when it retires.

What they have learned while at the Mounted Regiment and through their bond with horses is courage, grit, devotion, consideration, patience, respect and teamwork. All these qualities are essential when they are asked to put their lives in danger on the battlefield away from the parade squares of London. Today the skill, élan, and dash of the Cavalry Brigades that fought at Waterloo is alive today with the Household Cavalry, in large part due to our continued partnership with the horse. Long may it continue. ●

# Q&A

# ASSOCIATION NATIONALE ETUDE NEIGE ET AVALANCHES

## DOMINIQUE LÉTANG

Director, Association Nationale Etude Neige et Avalanches

The French National Association for the Study of Snow and Avalanches (ANENA) was formed in October 1971 on the recommendation of the Saunier Commission. The Commission was set up a year earlier to investigate the deaths of 39 people in the popular ski resort of Val d'Isere caused by an avalanche which devastated a local hotel. French President, Georges Pompidou, declared the event a national tragedy and ordered numerous other hotels to be evacuated amid fears of further avalanches. However, during the same winter, other tragic avalanche accidents in the French Alps left many more victims dead or injured. As a consequence, the Saunier Commission saw its raison d'être extended to "the study of mountain safety".

The subsequent Commission report laid the foundations for global policy in the field of snow and avalanche research. Among the recommendations in the report was the creation of an organisation focused on the coordination of avalanche research. And so ANENA was born. The first objectives of the newly formed organisation were aimed at improving an understanding of avalanches in forecasting, prevention and protection. Today, ANENA uses the latest research to inform public safety information and training in snow and avalanche rescue.

### WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF DOGS' INVOLVEMENT IN AVALANCHE RESCUE?

The first dogs used to search for people in the snow were the St. Bernard dogs of the Grand St Bernard Pass hospice in Switzerland. Originally thought to have been bred as guard dogs, evidence of these dogs rescuing lost travellers first appeared around

1690. However, it wasn't until the 1930s that smaller and more agile dogs were used in Switzerland to search for victims buried by avalanches.

In France, the first dogs were used by mountain rescue teams from the National Police in the mid-1950s. Following the Saunier Commission report, a national diploma in avalanche rescue was created in the late 1970s.



Photo credit: ANENA



Photo credit: ANENA

ANENA has been responsible for the training of civil security avalanche dog-handlers since 1992. The association trains around 20 expert dog teams each year.

So, while dogs have been used in the mountains to search for people for hundreds of years, it is only in the last century that they have been formally used in avalanche rescue.

### WHAT ROLE DO DOGS PLAY IN AVALANCHE RESCUE AND WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

When a victim is buried by an avalanche, there are a number of ways they can be located: using an avalanche transceiver, Recco (rescue technology), through probing, or with avalanche search dogs. Alongside the use of probes, dogs are the oldest method of finding someone buried under the snow. The dog uses its sense of smell

to detect a victim's scent which has risen up to the surface of the avalanche deposit.

So today, if a person is buried by an avalanche and they are not carrying an electronic tracking device, a dog search team is the fastest way to locate them.

### WHAT TRAINING DO DOGS AND THEIR HANDLERS HAVE TO UNDERGO TO BECOME QUALIFIED BY ANENA?

The dogs must be between one and four years old to begin their training. The team, made up of dog and handler, must undertake a minimum of 30 hours pre-training (with an accredited ANENA instructor) before attending the official training course. The official certification course lasts two weeks, at the end of which the team hopes to achieve a diploma.

It is important to say that the diploma is awarded to the team and not to an individual or dog. Therefore, each time a person has a new dog, he or she must train for and pass the diploma again with their new dog, certifying the new 'rescue team'.

### HOW IMPORTANT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOG AND HANDLER? WHAT PART DOES THIS RELATIONSHIP PLAY IN THEIR EFFECTIVENESS?

The relationship between the dog and its owner is practically 'fusionnel' which roughly translates from French as symbiotic. The connection is vital for the team and its efficiency on the job. The rescuer spends a large part of his or her personal and professional time with their dog. They are a real work couple which, in the end, allows the team to work more quickly and effectively.

## HOW COMMON IS THE USE OF DOGS FOR MOUNTAIN AND AVALANCHE RESCUE?

When an avalanche occurs, if a person is thought to have been buried, then at least one dog team will be deployed in seven out of ten incidents. When a rescue is conducted by an official mountain rescue team (and not by a member of the victim's party), 20% of the buried victims are found by a dog; compared with 37% found by transceivers; surface clues (21%); in line/organised probing (17%); Recco device (3%); spot probing (2%); and other means (1%).

In the ten years from 2008 to 2018, at ANENA we recorded 87 people found by an avalanche search dog. Of these 87 people, 15% were found alive. Some people may ask why this figure isn't higher – it is not due to the skill of the team but the time it takes for them to reach the site of an avalanche.

A search team will rarely be in position to reach the site of an avalanche in under 30-40 minutes, by which time a victim's chances of survival (buried under the snow for half an hour) are estimated to have fallen to 35%.

However, as soon as a search team is at an avalanche deposit, dogs are the fastest way to find a person buried under the snow.

## WHAT IS THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM - HOW MANY RESCUES ARE THE DOGS INVOLVED IN EACH YEAR?

On average about 200 people are caught in avalanches each year in France. In 2019, 92 people needed to be rescued from avalanches and 13 of them died.

An increasing number of people now carry avalanche transceivers and as a result more people have been located using one, either by their companions or by organised rescuers, such as ski patrollers, police and gendarmerie. Between 1999 and 2004 only 18% of people buried were found by avalanche transceivers, rising to 42% between 2013 and 2018. Over the same period between 1999 and 2004, 30% of victims were found by search dogs; between 2013 and 2018, 13% of those rescued were found by dogs.

Although there has been a decrease in the number of people being found by search dogs, the avalanche dog teams are always involved in every departmental mountain rescue plan because not every person will be equipped with an electronic location device.

## HOW HAS THE USE OF DOGS SHAPED MOUNTAIN RESCUE PROCEDURES?

Each year, the mountain rescue coordinator decides which dog teams will be included in the mountain rescue plan. Ski patrollers and their dogs are assigned to ski resorts. They will operate in their own resort but also, on demand, react to avalanches in other resorts.

They are not usually dispatched on high mountain rescue operations - that is to say - in mountain areas outside of ski resorts. These areas are operated by national rescue institutions, the PGHM (military police) and the CRS (civilian police).

## CAN YOU PUT A PRICE ON HOW MUCH THESE DOGS SAVE RESCUE TEAMS?

It is impossible to put a monetary value on these dogs. What I can say is that, to search and locate a victim

buried in an area 100 m x 100 m, it will take approximately 5-10 minutes with a transceiver, 15-20 minutes with a dog but up to four hours with a line of ten rescuers equipped with probes.

As I mentioned earlier, for those victims buried in the snow, every second counts. For the families of those caught in an avalanche, these rescue dogs are literally invaluable.

## HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE WIDER IMPACT OF SEARCH DOGS? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF DOGS COULD NOT BE USED IN THIS WAY?

In spite of the trend towards electronic locating devices, many of those buried each year are still not equipped with avalanche transceivers. Our ability to find these people still relies on the same methods which have been used for years: dogs and probes. Sadly, the time it takes for the search team to reach the avalanche site means that many people do not survive, but a significant number of victims are found alive. There is no question that without avalanche dog search teams, more people would lose their lives as a result of avalanches each year. Of course, it's impossible to put a price on the lives that have and will be saved by these dedicated teams! Therefore, the highly trained pairing of dog and handler will always have a role in avalanche rescue.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE EXAMPLE SET BY ANENA IN THE USE OF DOGS?

What is clear to us at ANENA is that a very special 'fusionnel' relationship exists between a dog and their human handler. The strength of this bond and the mutual understanding which comes from it means the teams are highly effective at saving lives - even in the 21st century. ●



Photo credit: ANENA

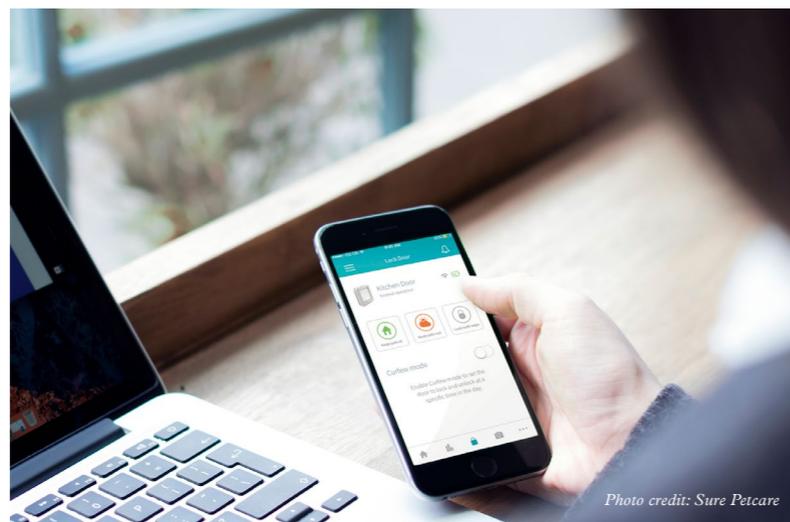
# PET HEALTH ADVANCES: ARE YOU KEEPING UP?

## MATTHEW C DOBBS

Matthew C Dobbs, BVM&S, Cert CHP, GDLaw, MRCVS is Global Chief Medical Officer, Destination Pet; Co-Chairman of the Clinical Advisory Board, MWI Animal Health; Director of AgriEPI; Head of Digital Strategy for Stonehaven and Trustee of the Animal Welfare Foundation.

In recent years, researchers and psychologists have demonstrated that there is indeed science behind the old adage that dogs look like their owners! These findings focused on the intense bonds that we as humans have forged with “man’s best friend”, noting the allure of familiarity, both in physical features and through shared personalities. These similarities are founded in our attraction for ‘similarity to ourselves’ and are believed to resonate from the appeal of an individual dog when we first choose him or her as our animal companion. So, with dogs proven to reflect our true nature - acting like us and looking like us - can the fullness of this similarity be extended to health too? Our opportunity to improve our lifestyle through exercise, diet and health screening has never been more convenient, all ensuring that we don’t just look like our pet but that we keep as fit and healthy as our pet too.

But if you thought that advanced healthcare is just for humans, you would be missing out on the revolutionary new shift now happening in animal health, as a plethora of new innovations and technologies are coming to the market. All of these help



pet owners and their veterinarians to provide a proactive approach to their animals’ wellness. Driven by the advances made in diagnostics, wireless technology, machine learning and data applications, new apps, wearable pet tech and diagnostic tests are not just gimmicks, but provide detailed insight to a pet’s health and behaviour, allowing proactive health interventions and true preventative healthcare.

From wearables to geriatric health screens, our pets have never been better cared for

Many recent advances in pet health mirror developments in our own healthcare systems, and with the humanisation of pets, these services have been developed to provide an animal application, supporting pet

health, from the new puppy or kitten, through to geriatric animal care. The latest advances include new genomic tests that can not only determine a young dog’s parentage, but can now screen for hereditary diseases, the likelihood of health problems associated with old age such as liver or kidney disease, and even be used to provide an insight into future temperament. Supporting the arrival of a new pet, new apps can help signpost owners to the suitability of a specific breed and nutritional advice and diets can be created, bespoke for each pet.

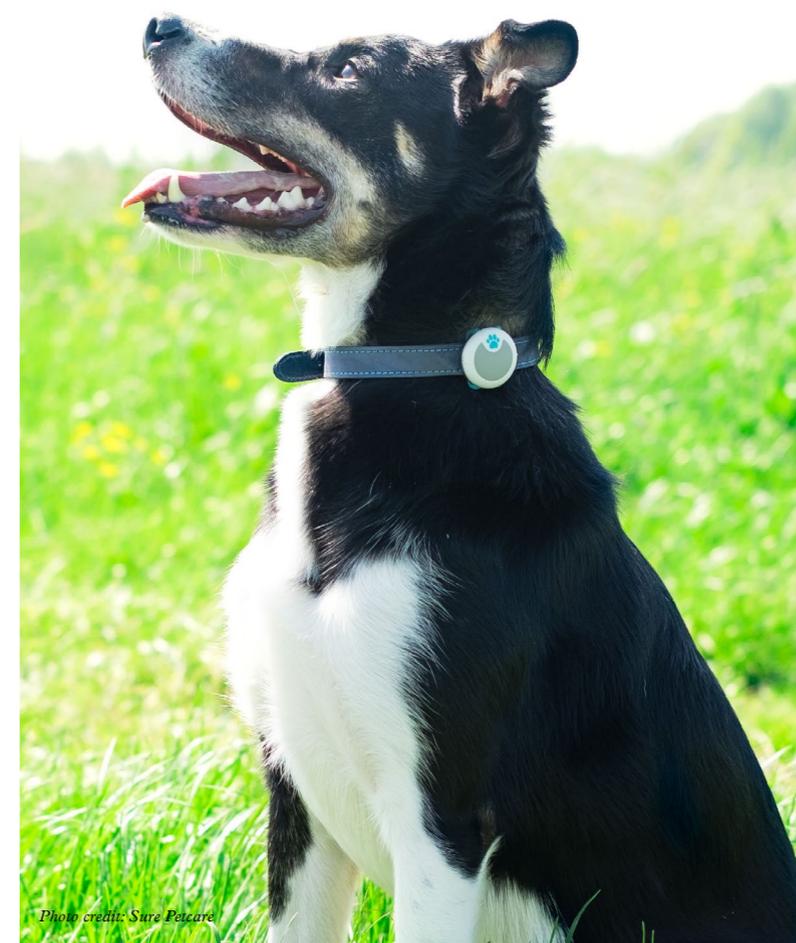
The aging pet is also well cared for with geriatric health screens commonplace as part of an aging pet profile. Screenings help pick up early onset disease that can be treated or managed earlier in the process. Pet wearables using accelerometer technology can monitor exercise and

rest period and be a useful adjunct to the growing obesity problem in pets. And supporting your pet with a prescription or age/breed/sex specific diets are now common ways of supporting positive health.

New apps, wearable pet tech and diagnostic tests are not just gimmicks, but provide detailed insight to a pet’s health and behaviour

Fueling the development of animal health advances is the rise in the number of households with a pet. This is driven by the growth of younger people with more flexible lifestyles who are owning more pets and retired people who are living more active lives in old age. This growth is now predicted to further accelerate following the global COVID-19 pandemic, as more flexible working patterns allow people to accommodate pet ownership, which in turn is contributing to the market for new products and services that support the times when we are away from our pet.

One example is the Furbo, a new product that links via Wi-Fi and allows owners to interact with their pet by video and even provide them with a treat when they are away from home. Dog daycare in Europe and the US is growing exponentially, often using dog-cams to allow pet parents to “check in” to see how their pet is enjoying animal kindergarten. And for those pets who are stuck home alone, automated feed bowls and pet flaps can be remotely controlled to allow owners the opportunity to feed their pet while away or let them out into the garden for a doggy comfort break. If these new remote opportunities to interact with your pet don’t work, there are new medications to treat separation anxiety, supporting the mental health of any pet



who can’t cope with time alone, away from their owner.

With the growing application of digital medicine and the growth in spending on our pets, routine health care for pets is now often superior to the healthcare of their owner. One example is dental care, where traditional veterinary services, limited to extractions, is now being replaced by advanced veterinary orthodontics, including root canal treatments, crown replacement and corrective braces, alongside the veterinary hygienists scale and polish, which no self-aware French Bull terrier should miss!

Developments in veterinary medicine and new pet service businesses are enhancing and improving the life of our pets and strengthening the human animal bond. From wearables to geriatric health screens, our pets have never been better cared for. Science can prove you may indeed look like your pet and now technology can demonstrate and support their health too. With all of these advances becoming popularised, it will help answer the question of whether or not your health keeps pace with your pet’s health too. ●

# Q&A

## THE WOOF AGENCY

JANE PEH

Co-founder of The Woof Agency

The business of pet influencers is a high growth industry that shows no signs of slowing down any time soon. We spoke to Jane Peh, Co-Founder of Singapore-based 'The Woof Agency', to discuss the pet economy and the power of pets as a marketing tool.



Photo credit: The Woof Agency

### WHAT IS THE WOOF AGENCY?

The Woof Agency is a digital and social media agency that specialises in pet marketing. We work closely with pet influencers to launch strategic social media campaigns and create engaging content for brands. When we first started the company, we were a generalist influencer marketing agency with a speciality in pet influencers. However, as we started to work with more brands, we realised that the pet industry is rapidly developing, especially with the increased

humanisation of pets in general. This is something we wanted to harness and so we increasingly did more work with pets. Now that is our main focus.

### WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE WOOF AGENCY - HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF REPRESENTING PET INFLUENCERS?

We have always been pet lovers, so we would actually spend hours looking through pet photos and videos on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. We became emotionally

attached to these dogs and would purchase their branded merchandise or rent their Airbnb to play with the pups. After a while, we had a thought: why are there human influencers but not pet influencers? So, we set out to change that, and let the world know that a pet can be a great influencer too! Because of my background in advertising, I saw an opportunity and I took it. That's how I started The Woof Agency with my co-founder Tay Sijun.

### IS THERE A BUSINESS REASON TO BASE THE AGENCY IN SINGAPORE?

It was a natural choice since we are based here and Singapore is renowned as an accommodating place to start a business in terms of regulation. However, beyond that, for pet ownership, Singapore is a great place to be in since people here have higher disposable income and many see pets as family members, as opposed to just an animal. There is also a gradual shift towards owning a pet versus having kids, and Singapore is very similar to the US and Australia, for example, which are our key markets due to the huge potential.



Photo credit: The Woof Agency



Photo credit: The Woof Agency

### WHAT IS A PET INFLUENCER?

Think of Kim Kardashian - but a four-legged version. Technically, in this context, an influencer is an individual who has the power to affect the purchase decisions of consumers because of his/her authority.

### HOW HAS THE PET INFLUENCER ECONOMY DEVELOPED IN RECENT YEARS?

Overall the influencer marketing economy has been increasing year on year, with the influencer marketing industry size set to hit \$15 billion by 2022. Pet influencing is a relatively new phenomenon, but with the rising popularity of pets and increasing internet penetration across the world,

more and more people are actively engaging with pets on social media, which in turn has exponentially expanded the pet influencer economy.

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR A PET TO BECOME SOCIAL MEDIA FAMOUS?

Great content. A lot of pet owners misunderstand that taking Insta-worthy photos (great background, aesthetic, and photo edit) is the way to get famous, and whilst that might have worked for some, we do believe that it's the content that makes people engage. Each pet has a story. Your dog might be a fussy eater, your cat might be a diva who hates the bath, your hedgehog might have been abandoned but living his best life now, etc. Go beyond the photos, videos and the screen - tell the

story, share your pet's everyday antics and treat your followers almost like they are co-parenting your furkids with you. We find that the best performing account often has a unique trait and the pet owner creates great content around that.

### WHO IS THE AUDIENCE FOR THESE PET INFLUENCERS? IS IT PRIMARILY OTHER PET OWNERS OR IS IT BROADER THAN THAT?

It ranges from other pet owners following their furkids friends, to everyday people wanting to follow the life journey and daily happenings of a particular pet they like! Nowadays, with the humanisation of pets, more and more people are curious to find out the general life of pets on social media because it's so cute and heart-warming.

### WHAT DO PET INFLUENCERS TELL US ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND OUR PETS? HAS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGED THAT RELATIONSHIP?

The increase in the social media presence of pets means that we are now increasingly personifying and humanising our pets, treating our pets as a companion rather than just a pet. The rise of social media has definitely increased the humanisation factor in pet ownership and provides an avenue for pet owners to share their pets daily lives with people all over the world.

### WHAT KIND OF BRANDS ARE ENGAGING PET INFLUENCERS AND WHY ARE THEY DOING IT?

The most common brands working with pet influencers are pet related verticals such as pet food, treats, accessories and Internet of Things devices as they have direct synergy with pet ownership. However, there is

also an increasing number of brands from human verticals, such as vacuum cleaners, TV, home furnishings and furniture working with pets. This is because the growing number of pet owners now take into consideration their pet's wellbeing and journey when making a purchasing decision for their home. For example, a pet owner may purchase a strong portable vacuum cleaner so that they can make cleaning up their pet fur easier, or a pet owner will not furnish their house floors with wooden floorboards as it scratches easily with their pet's nails.

### HOW EFFECTIVE IS THIS KIND OF MARKETING?

It can be really effective, but the brand just needs to be able to resonate with pet owners. Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2024, and brands know that. That is why they are using pets as an entry point to speak to the end consumers. By talking about something most millennials love (dogs, cats, small animals - pets in general), it is easier to cut through the noise and get the attention of these people, as opposed to advertisements that all brands do. For example, Mercedes-Benz Canada also came up with #DogsofMercedes to promote their models and speak to millennials.

### ARE THERE CONCERNS ABOUT THE WELFARE OF PETS BEING USED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA FAME? ARE PEOPLE BUYING PETS TO MONETISE THEIR VALUE ONLINE? HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT YOUR CLIENTS ARE NOT EXPLOITING THEIR ANIMALS?

Within The Woof Agency, we conduct stringent checks on the profiles before accepting them under a campaign. Our rationale is that - pets do not lie. You can tell by their body language when they are under huge stress or being forced to do things against their

will. We have a social media team (not bots, actual humans) going through each application, their newsfeed and information to ensure that there is no abuse of the system. This is something we are very strict about as pets form the core of everything we do within the company. We also look at a range of criteria when selecting profiles - mainly on the type of content they push out on their newsfeed. This will give us a good insight into how the pet owner interacts with the pet on a daily basis. We work with animal shelters and push out a series called #TWAstories to encourage adoption versus buying pets. We don't want people to have the mindset that only pure breeds and cute dogs are loveable - all pets are beautiful and there are very successful pet influencers such as @keepingfinn and @Popeyethefoodie who were adopted and evidently loving every moment of their life now. The value we provide to our clients is that we know our pet influencers. Some of them are friends in real life, and we engage with them over social media to form a working relationship with our active users within the community. Clients trust us because we are the experts when it comes to pet marketing and so far, many of them are recurring clients with us.

### WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF PETS ONLINE? DO YOU THINK PET INFLUENCERS ARE A LASTING PHENOMENON OR A PASSING TREND?

We believe that pet influencers are here to stay, especially in today's world where humans crave the emotional support pets provide. Data shows that pet influencers often perform 10x better when it comes to online engagement as compared to their human counterparts. People love looking at pets and their content just makes people happy. Additionally,

more and more people are turning to pet ownership as opposed to having kids, or at least that's a trend we are observing in Singapore. With pet spending poised to exceed \$100 billion in the US in 2020, brands know and understand the potential of the pet market, and what better than actively using pets to convince consumers to spend on their's. On the side, we have also done lots of research of pet owners within our network and find that more than 90% of them found reviews really important before they decide to purchase a product. This closes the feedback loop of why we believe pet influencers are here to stay.

### YOU ALSO RUN 'PAWJOURR'. WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Pawjourn is all about making pet ownership affordable. It's a one-stop platform for pet owners to find and compare brands, read authentic reviews and redeem free samples. Pawjourn is not just about making pet ownership affordable, but also about building an ecosystem to support pet owners around the world, be it from a price-saving perspective and/or an educational angle. Many pet owners do stress over what to feed their pets, behavioural issues and health problems - but if you take a close look, there's really no company around the world helping to solve this problem. There's Ollie's Food, Chewy, BarkBox, etc, but these companies are fundamentally selling to pet owners but not helping to solve the main problem - conflicting information. Pawjourn aims to be the only website a pet parent will ever need; almost like a friend who is there to advise on problems or questions you might have during the course of ownership whilst at the same time acting in your best interest from a price and time-saving perspective. ●

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**Dr Carri Westgarth / Pet Dogs are an Important Motivator for Physical Activity**

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