

From Wild to Beloved: Benefits and Challenges of Pet Animals and their Significant Impact on Human Health

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SUMMARY

This review paper clearly communicates the benefits of pet ownership for human health, friendship, and social engagement. Dogs were the first species to be domesticated, and pet ownership has been practiced since prehistoric times. While dogs provide various benefits to children, including as comfort, improved mental and physical well-being, and positive behavior modification, they also pose some concerns, including the ability to bite, scratch, or transmit zoonotic diseases. Pet owners should take precautions to reduce these dangers, such as keeping their animals clean, vaccinating them, and having them evaluated periodically by a veterinarian. In conclusion, dogs bring joy and good health to their owners but with that, responsible breeding is necessary to avoid any harm to the animals and the ecosystem. Further studies should be conducted to provide a better understanding of pet ownership, which in turn could help improve the quality of life for individuals and their contributions to society.

Keywords: Pets, Potential, Health, Ownership, Cardiovascular, Zoonotic disease

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INTRODUCTION

A pet is a term of endearment that denotes the kind of relationship a person has with their companion animal (Wilson et al., 2013). Pets are animals that provide human beings companionship and joy (Beck and Katcher, 1996; Walsh, 2009a). They have often been domesticated (Walsh, 2009a) and treated as family members among households (McConnell et al., 2019). The range of pets includes small rodents such as hamsters, Cheok et al. (2011) guinea pigs, and others to larger pets like dogs by Borgi and Cirulli (2016) and cats Tobie et al.(2015). Haraway (2003) pet animals include dogs. They are popular for their owners' love (Kalof and Iliopoulou, 2011) and loyalty (Archer, 1997), and they produce excellent guard dogs (Gee et al., 2021; Le Blanc and Mazcko, 2020; Sable, 2013; Tarone et al., 2019). Cats are another favored pet option (Tarone et al., 2019). Cats are active and fascinating creatures (Tsai et al., 2020), as well as can be quite devoted to their caretakers (Walsh, 2009a). They serve as efficient hunters (Crowley et al., 2019) and are able to

control mice and other pests out of the house (Kauhala et al., 2015; Mahlaba et al., 2017). Different kinds of pets encompass birds (Peng and Broom, 2021), rabbits (Hillyer, 1994), and reptiles (Alves et al., 2019). Pets may provide their owners an immense amount of pleasure as well as affection (Beck and Katcher, 1996; Tsai et al., 2020; Walsh, 2009a), and they want to be adored and appreciated.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This review examines the domestication of animals and its effects on human health, highlighting both advantages and disadvantages. It emphasizes the historical significance of domestic animals in our lives, focusing on their positive effects on physical, mental, and social well-being, including stress reduction and enhanced social connections. Ultimately, this review aims to interpret the role of domesticated animals in promoting human well-being and nurturing a positive relationship between humans and their animal friends.

HISTORY OF DOMESTICATION AND PETS

Domestication and pets have a long history (Serpell, 2000), dating back to when humans first began to create close ties with animals (Larson et al., 2012). Domestication first appears around thousands of years ago (Jing, 2008; Serpell, 2000), when people began to tame wild animals such as dogs (Scott, 1968) and cats (Zeder, 2008). Cats were worshipped and venerated as symbols of grace (Diesel, 2008; Eberhard, 2006) and beauty in ancient Egypt (Arden and Mays, 2019; Kurushima et al., 2012), and were kept as pets to protect grain storage from rats (Kauhala et al., 2015; Mahlaba et al., 2017). The ancient Greeks employed dogs as hunting partners (Barringer, 2001).

Pets were predominantly kept by the wealthy and aristocratic classes in the Middle Ages i.e. from the fifth until the late fifteenth centuries (Walker-Meikle, 2012), who frequently kept cats, and dogs as status symbols (Cekavicius and Pajarskaite, 2012). Dogs became popular hunting companions throughout the Renaissance (i.e. fourteenth through seventeenth centuries) (Palumbo, 2008) and were bred for specific tasks such as pointing, flushing out game, and retrieving (McHugh, 2004). Small breeds of dogs such as terriers and pugs became desirable companions as the middle class expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries (Coren, 2012; Wilsdon, 2008). Pets became more popularly regarded as family members in the twentieth century (Strathern, 1992), and the contemporary pet industry began to take shape (Salzman, 2000). Improvements in veterinary science and nutrition have resulted in pets living longer and better lives (Bontempo, 2005), have become popular as pets (Lascelles et al., 2010). Pets are now cherished for their companionship (Holbrook, 2008), entertainment (Ping et al., 2004), and therapeutic advantages (Cusack and Smith, 2014) and they play an important role in many people's lives (Cusack, 2014; Walsh, 2009b).

CAT AS A PET

The interaction between people and wild cats most likely began around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago (Driscoll et al., 2009). The domestication of wild cats into pets is a notable example of the human-feline relationship's slow evolution (Serpell, 2000).

Over thousands of years, a mutually beneficial arrangement developed in which cats assisted in rodent population management, so protecting human food supplies (Kauhala et al., 2015; Mahlaba et al., 2017). Unlike dogs, which were purposefully bred for certain features, cats appear to have been domesticated more passively, with cats with naturally gentle or friendly temperaments being more likely to stay around humans and procreate (Bernstein, 2007). This unofficial collaboration grew slowly but steadily, eventually leading to the appearance of cats in homes all over the world.

DOG AS A PET

It is thought to have started as early as 20,000 to 40,000 years ago (Botigué et al., 2017). Some wolves, the ancestors of contemporary dogs, may have been drawn to human campsites by the fragrance of food and the ability to scavenge in these settlements (Morey, 1994; Wayne, 1993). Those wolves that were less scared of humans and more sociable with them would have had an advantage, resulting in a progressive process of natural selection favoring more docile and friendly wolves (Fritts et al., 2003). These early dogs would have evolved into a separate and companionable species that we now call domestic dogs over generations (Marshall-Pescini and Kaminski, 2014).

BENEFITS OF PETS

Pets can bring numerous physical and emotional benefits to their owners (Figure 1). Companionship is one of the most noticeable advantages (Haraway, 2003; Holbrook, 2008; McConnell et al., 2011; Walsh, 2009a). Dogs may be wonderful companions, bringing unconditional love and affection that can help relieve loneliness and stress (Abotaleb et al., 2020; Cusack, 2014; Cusack and Smith, 2014; LeBlanc and Mazcko, 2020; Tarone et al., 2019; Walsh, 2009b). Pets can provide comfort and emotional support to their owners, whether it's a dog wagging its tail (Giaquinto and Valentini, 2009), a cat cuddles up on a lap (Limb, 2019), or a bird singing (Abotaleb et al., 2020; Cusack and Smith, 2014; Giaquinto and Valentini, 2009; Lachman et al., 2003; LeBlanc and Mazcko, 2020; Limb, 2019; Tarone et al., 2019; Walsh, 2009b).

Pets can provide a variety of health benefits in addition to companionship (Gee et al., 2021). Petting a dog or cat, for example, has been found in tests to reduce stress (Shiverdecker et al., 2013), lower blood pressure (Sable, 2013), and increase general happiness and well-being (McNicholas et al., 2005). Pets, particularly dogs, can motivate their owners to exercise more (Johnson and Meadows, 2010), which can benefit their physical health (Hodgson et al., 2015).

Physiological Benefits of Pet Ownership

Investigators have been looking into the possible link between pet ownership and cardiovascular health, specifically whether having a pet promotes increased physical activity. One observational study found that dog owners walked more frequently than non-owners, yet their walks were not longer. In contrast, a survey-based study discovered that dog owners walked for longer durations of time but not more frequently than non-owners, and they were also less likely to fulfill recommended levels of physical activity (Bauman et al., 2001; Rogers et al., 1993).

Several descriptive studies have shown a strong human affinity to pets. For example, research has shown that dog owners frequently form bonds with their dogs that are comparable to those they have with family members (Trigg et al., 2015). Furthermore, self-administered surveys have investigated the link between pet companionship and depression. In one study, young women who had been sexually assaulted stated that their pets provided more comfort than human companions during their youth (George et al., 1998).

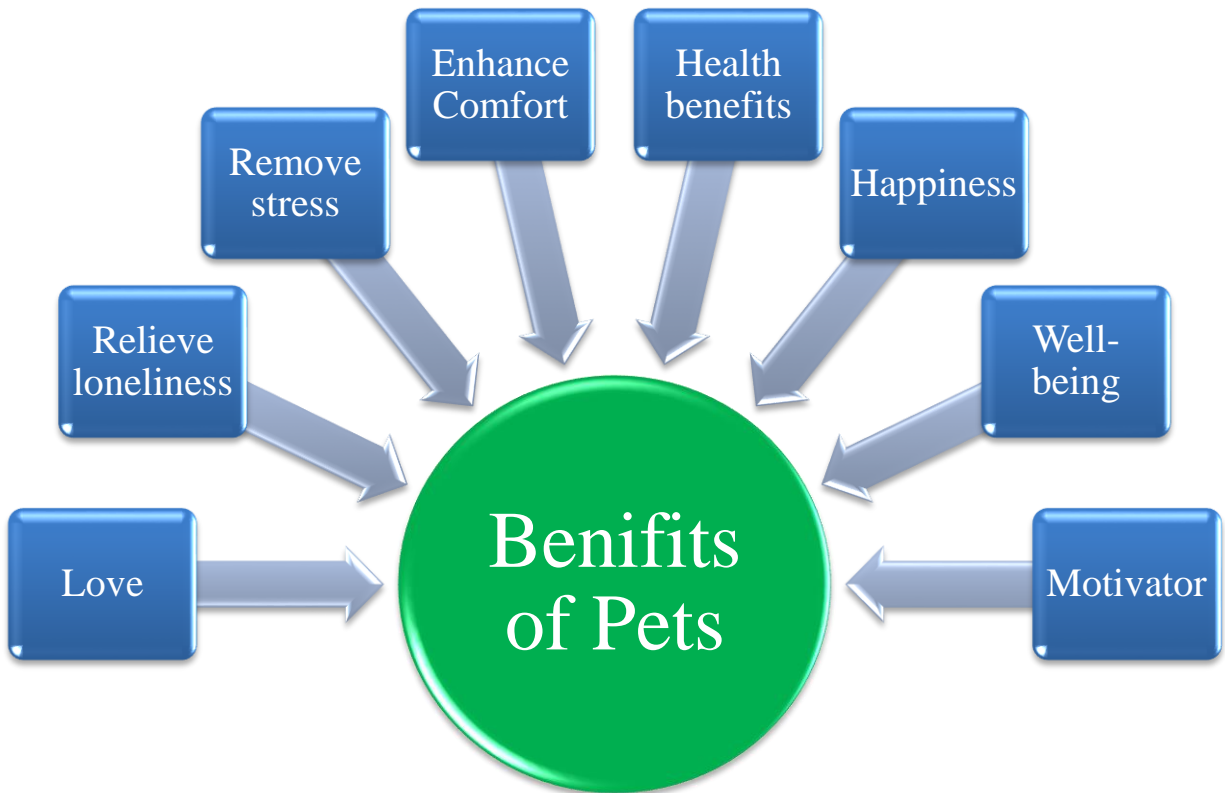


Figure 1: Benefits of Pets.

Effects of Pets on Children

Research on the psychological effects of pets on children generally reveals positive outcomes. Studies suggest that pets can enhance autonomy, self-concept, and self-esteem in elementary school children (Van Houtte and Jarvis, 1995). Additionally, strong connections have been found between children's empathy, attachment to pets, and the presence of a positive family environment in school-age children (Endenburg and van Lith, 2011).

THREAT FROM PETS

While pets can provide several benefits to their owners (Figure 2), they can also offer some risks (Overall and Love, 2001). The potential of bites or scratches is one of the most common risks (Avner and Baker, 1991; Stull et al., 2012). Many people are allergic to pets, particularly cats and dogs, and symptoms include sneezing, wheezing,

and skin rashes (Murray et al., 1983). Furthermore, some pets can spread diseases to people, such as salmonella, ringworm, or Lyme disease.

Zoonotic Diseases from Pets

These Zoonotic diseases originate from animals, with pets serving as potential carriers (Altaf, 2020). While the transmission of zoonotic diseases from pets to humans is relatively rare, pet owners should be aware of the risks and the ways they might be exposed (Stull et al., 2015). Some of the most common zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from pets to humans include Salmonellosis (Drózdź et al., 2021), ringworm (Donnelly et al., 2000), and Toxoplasmosis (Cong et al., 2014). Salmonella, a bacterium associated with foodborne illnesses in humans (Stull et al., 2015; Stull et al., 2012), can also be linked to interactions with pets (Abdel-Moein and Samir, 2011). Ringworm, a skin disease caused by a fungus, is transmitted through contact with affected animals (Donnelly et al., 2000).

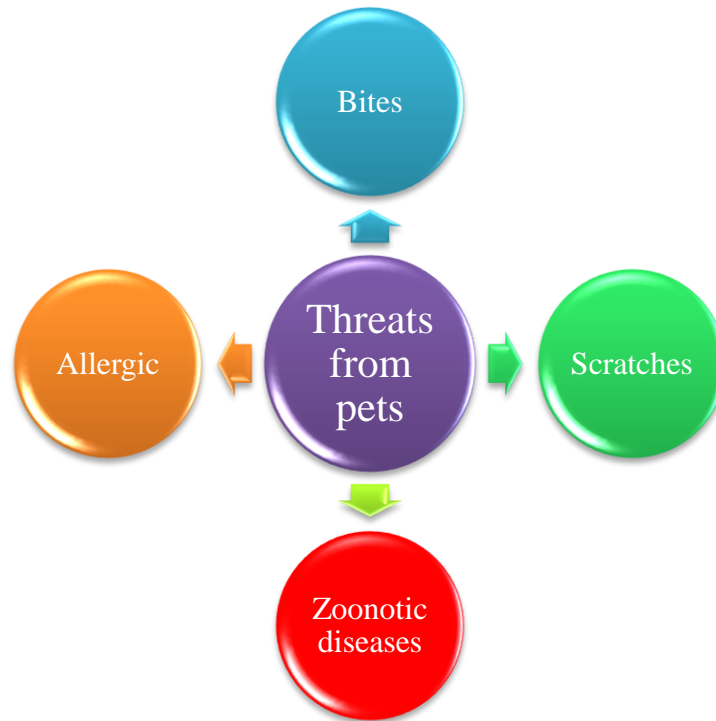


Figure 2: Threat from pets to owner.

Preventing Zoonotic Diseases

In order to minimize the chance of acquiring a zoonotic illness from a pet, caretakers should thoroughly cleanse their hands after contacting pets and periodically wash places like as animals litter boxes (Stull et al., 2013). Animal lovers have to make sure that their pets get vaccinations and visit the veterinarian whenever necessary (Damborg et al., 2016). In order to minimize the possibility of zoonotic illnesses, pet owners and their family should adopt the measures (Stull et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

Pet keeping has various advantages, like better psychological and physiological health, more community contacts, and a sense of affiliation. Pets can help diminish stress, enhance body movement, and build passionate bonds, making them excellent companions. However, pet possession has several drawbacks, including the spread of zoonotic diseases as well as the possibility of allergic reactions. While the advantages frequently outweigh the risks, pet owners should be knowledgeable and proactive in preventing health complications by keeping proper hygiene and safeguarding their pets receive regular medical treatment or/and vaccines.

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