

Health Benefits of Owning a Pet

It's often stated that dogs are a man's best friend. However, that also rings true for many pet animals, including cats, fish, birds, and exotic animals. Just as all of these pets offer companionship to their owners, beloved animals also provide a significant amount of health benefits to their owners.

The most common pets in the United States are cats, dogs, and fish. Birds, and small animals such as hamsters and mice, are a distance third and fourth. Some pets that were formerly considered exotic, especially reptiles, are growing in popularity. Although dogs are found in more households than any other pets, more fish are domesticated than any other animal. Although most households only have a single cat or dog, most fish "guardians" own more than a dozen.

Some exotic pets such as reptiles and birds don't seem all that unusual. However, there are a number of pets that you wouldn't expect to see as family friendly household pets. Animals must be bred and trained, sometimes for many generations, before becoming suited to human interaction and earning the distinction of "pet."

Uncommon pets that have grown in popularity include chickens, tame silver foxes, hedgehogs, monkeys, raccoons, piranhas, and even cheetahs. The list could continue, although some of the most unusual "pets" are actually domesticated illegally.

Regardless of what animal is selected by its owner, both receive benefits of the symbiotic relationship. Medium-sized pets, especially dogs, are great workout partners for a walk or run around the part. Fostering at least one pet has consistently been shown to provide such physical benefits as lowered blood pressure.

Some of the health benefits are directly related to physical fitness, but some of the most dramatic health benefits for the owner are psychological.

Therapeutic institutions provide animals for some of their patients to raise as part of the recovery process. Patients are given responsibility to care for another living thing. Studies have shown that pets help patients recovered from troubled pasts, and live healthier, longer lives. Another specific use of pets being beneficial to their owner is their use as guide dogs for the visually impaired.

Even though there are many valuable health benefits given to people who foster animals, owning a pet provides many difficult challenges. Many animals leave behind dander that may severely worsen allergies. The behavior and upkeep of pet animals may also provide a large amount of stress to their owners. In some cases, animals injure their owners or other people nearby sometimes even fatally. After all, animals aren't meant to be domesticated; their natural home will always be in the wild.

Because pets are living things, with their own personality and interests, there are a wide variety of laws set to protect both the pet and the owner. A large number of states have law in place that limits the quantity of pets in a home, and regulates which types of animals are allowed. Many apartment and condominium complexes don't allow their residents to raise pets, which is difficult for pet owners, but ultimately helps to ensure that pets are raised in a more suitable environment.

Although pets aren't for everybody, they have a considerable list of benefits, physically and emotionally. Adopting pets is a great opportunity to provide a quality place to live for an animal in need of love and attention.

About the Author

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