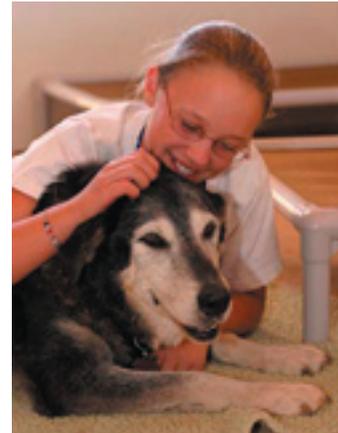


# The Significance of Animals in the Lives of People

## Why People Should Care About Animals

How we treat animals says a lot about who we are and what quality of life we have. Experts, from fields as diverse as the FBI and medicine, are recognizing the significance of animals in the lives of people.



## The Benefits of Pets

Studies have shown that pets provide a wide variety of benefits – physical, emotional and social – for their people.

People with pets report:

- A greater sense of well-being and less anxiety
- Greater ease of social interaction with strangers
- A feeling of relatedness
- More motivation to exercise and fight depression

Elderly people who have pets report greater satisfaction with life, and foster children find a sense of constancy with pets. Studies have shown:

- Blood pressure goes down when people interact with pets.
- Coronary heart-disease patients with pets have higher survival rates.
- Physical therapy patients with pets show improved balance, coordination, muscular strength, and language ability.
- Children with pets in the household have higher IQ scores.
- Preteens with pets show increased emotional reciprocity and sense of responsibility.
- Children with pets demonstrate increased ability to nurture and care for others.
- Young children with pets have an easier time interacting with their peers.
- Children exposed to two or more dogs or cats in infancy were half as likely to develop common allergies as children with no pets in the home.
- Mentally impaired people and prisoners show more appropriate social behavior when they have pets.

## The Violence Link

Research has also revealed that there's a direct link between cruelty to animals and violence toward humans. Here are some statistics:

- In 88% of families being treated for child abuse in New Jersey, the animals in the home had also been abused.
- In one study, 57% of battered women with pets said their partners had harmed or killed their animals.
- The first common link the FBI found among serial killers was cruelty to animals.

Sources: Stanley Coren, *Why We Love the Dogs We Do*; Dr. Marty Becker, *The Healing Power of Pets*; Leo K. Bustad, DVM, *Compassion: Our Last Great Hope*; Alison Gianotto, Director, Pet Abuse Statistics, [www.pet-abuse.com](http://www.pet-abuse.com); Janet Deery, President, Animal Awareness, [www.animalawareness.org](http://www.animalawareness.org); *Kids' Best Friends: Pets Help Prevent Allergies*, [www.cnn.com/health](http://www.cnn.com/health)