



Jr. Animal Scientist

FEBRUARY 2020



**What's Your
Best Friend?**

What makes an animal a pet?

A **pet** is a **domesticated** or tamed animal that is kept as a **companion** and cared for affectionately. For an animal to be raised as a pet, it needs to be able to live a healthy life in **captivity**. For example, dogs, cats, and birds are common pets because they respond well to captivity. However, a koala may not be a good pet because living in captivity can drastically reduce their life span.

There are lots of animals that make good pets, and the type of animals may be dependent on your home. Common pets include dogs, cats, birds, and guinea pigs. Some other not as common pets include chickens, pigs, goats, donkeys, and even llamas and giraffes.



Being a responsible pet owner

Owning a pet is a big **responsibility!** They depend on us to take care of them and provide food, water, shelter, and love. It would be best if you always researched the animal that you intend to bring home as your pet. For example, some dogs like Weimaraner's require a lot of exercise and attention. If you live in a small apartment and are gone most of the day, a Weimaraner may not be the best dog for you. A little dog that doesn't require as much exercise or a cat may be a better fit for you as a pet.



The science behind why pets are good for your health.

Did you know that science has proven that pets are good for your health?

The science behind why a pet is good for your health is known as the human-animal bond.

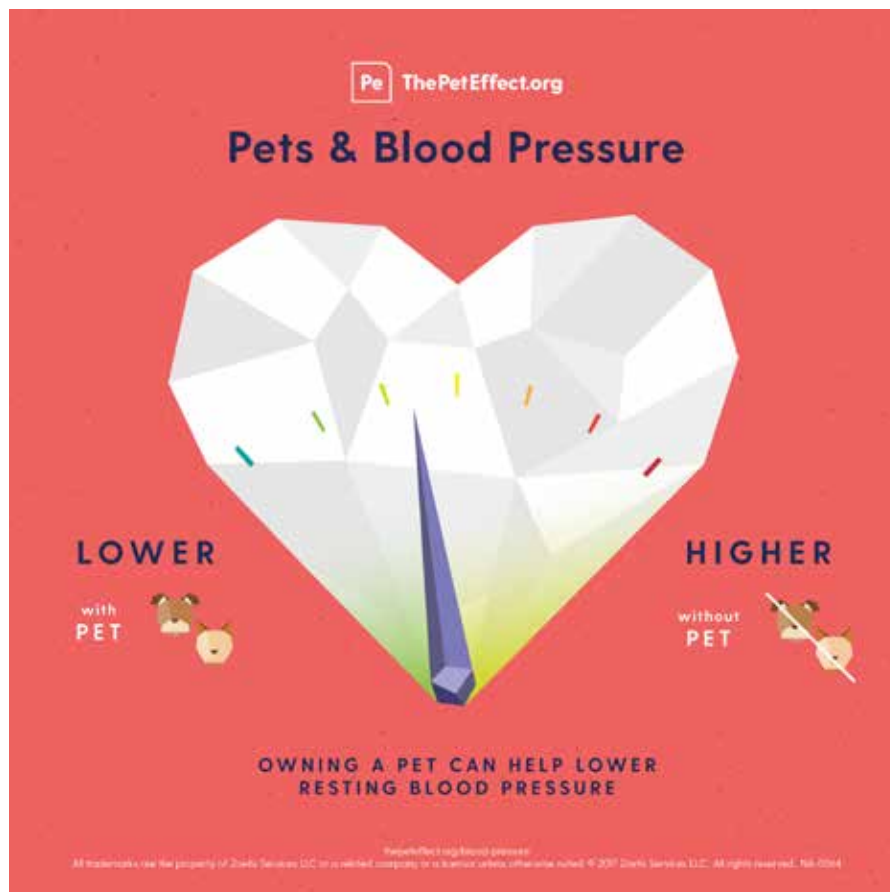
Scientists have found that petting your dog for only a few minutes a day can increase the **hormones** in your body that make you feel happy. A hormone is a chemical messenger that travels through the body in response to a signal from the brain. Hormones that make you feel happy like serotonin, prolactin, and oxytocin are increased.

They also have found that pets can reduce stress levels, which is very good for your blood pressure. Improving your mood or emotional state with a pet is linked to a reduction in your body's autonomic activity. The autonomic nervous system controls your everyday bodily functions. Reducing stress on the body also reduces the need for your body to work overtime. This helps regulate things like heart rate, digestion, respiratory rate, and blood pressure!

What about exercise?

It is probable that while you are exercising your pet, you too become active. Owning a pet that needs exercise has been linked to increases in physical activity and a reduction in obesity.

Having friends can also be useful for your mental health. There are lots of dog parks and pet clubs that you can join, and that way, you make friends, and so does your pet!



Infographic: <https://habri.org/the-pet-effect/#infographics>





Exotic Pets

In recent years, exotic pets have become very popular. An exotic pet is anything other than the typical domesticated animal. Some of the most popular exotic pets include: Stick insects, hedgehogs, sugar gliders, and skunks!

Aquatic Pets

There are more marine species being domesticated today than ever before. Aquatic pets can be a great addition to your household, although, they are not pets that you can handle and play with. They can provide hours of entertainment for you and your family!

Are livestock pets?

Livestock are animals that provide us with some type of economic benefit. We eat beef, pork, and chicken; therefore, cattle, pigs, and chickens are considered livestock. Even some dogs are considered livestock. For example, a breeder sells puppies for exhibition or future breeding, and economically benefits from the sale. Those puppies are considered livestock to the breeder.



Pets & Depression

THE PET EFFECT



~~LONELINESS~~



MORE SENSE
~~LOSS OF~~
~~INTERESTS~~
OF PURPOSE



~~FEELINGS OF~~
~~WORTHLESSNESS~~
CONFIDENCE

http://thepeteffect.org/depression
All trademarks are the property of Ziaho Services LLC, or a related company or a licensee unless otherwise noted. © 2017 Ziaho Services LLC. All rights reserved. PA-0164

Infographic: <https://habri.org/the-pet-effect/#infographics>

Fun Animal Facts!

- The inner ear of a cat acts like a **gyroscope**. This is why they always land on their feet.
- Studies have shown that yawning can be contagious to our pets!
- Owners know their dogs so well that over 88% of dog owners can identify their dog by how they smell!
- Mice and rats share about 97.5% of human DNA!
- Playing classical music can reduce stress in many of our pets.





Photo: iStock / AleksandarGeorgiev



Photo: iStock / Andrii Atanov

5 things you should consider before getting a pet.

- 1 How much will it cost to buy the pet, as well as taking care of them?**
This includes food, veterinary visits and toys!
- 2 Would an animal add or reduce stress in your life?**
Some animals require more time for exercise and care. Are you ready?
- 3 What are the benefits of having a pet?**
Think about how a pet fits into your life and how things will change.
- 4 What kind of pet?**
After you have decided to get a pet, take time to ensure you pick the best pet for your family.
- 5 How old are you or the other children in the house?**
Some animals are perfect for families with children, and some are not. It is important to make sure the family and pet are happy and safe.

Try to match which pet eats what type of feed!



Birdseed



Wet food

Dog _____

Cat _____

Rabbit _____

Llama _____

Horse _____

Lizard _____

Parakeet _____



Carrots



Crickets



Kibble



Loose hay

Jr. Animal Scientist

Share Jr. Animal Scientist
with your favorite educators!

Sign up your student's
classroom or club at
animalsmart.org/jras

Sign up!



Photo: iStock / Nickbeer



AnimalSmart.org

Jr. Animal Scientist® is published by the American Society of Animal Science. All rights reserved.

CONTRIBUTORS: ASAS staff.

DESIGN: Jody Boles

CONTACT: jranimalscientist@asas.org

COVER PHOTOS: iStock / Xesai (large),
iStock / jmalov (small)

Mailing information for publisher use: