



COMPANION ANIMALS

Animals have been domesticated by humans for thousands of years for multiple reasons...

- Food.
- Their skins/wool as clothing and shelter.
- To work: carrying/pulling cargo/vehicles/people; herding sheep/cattle; hunting.
- To make money from sport: race horses/greyhounds, even crabs and snails!
- As experimental animals to prove scientific experiments.
- To show which human has the best animal in competitions.
- To keep down the levels of rats/mice in housing/on farms.



In modern times animals are also trained to help humans...

- In search and rescue.
- To detect mines.
- For security.
- With various therapy methods: guide dogs for the blind; Autism; hospital visiting.

*As well as all of these amazing functions that animals perform, many live with humans as **companions**, also called pets.*

Companion animals are often bred to be sold as human companions, or pets. They also come from Animal Rescue Centres, where they have been taken in as unwanted. Some farm animals will, for some reason, find themselves taken out of the food chain and kept as a companion, or taken to a sanctuary to live for the rest of their natural life. It is scientifically proven that spending time with an animal is beneficial to our mental health, but we must respect all animals.

When considering if a pet is advisable, it is important to think about the...

- Effect on the environment.
- Animal's welfare.
- Legality in relation to what animals may be kept.
- Conditions they are kept in.

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The Five Freedoms are internationally accepted standards of care that affirm every living being's right to humane treatment. Living conditions for any animal must be considered from the viewpoint of the animal.

Covid 19 and lockdown has brought to the forefront of many people's lives how mental health can suffer from being contained in a close environment with little stimulation or exercise.

Imagine what this must be like for an animal with no control over their own living conditions, spending their whole lives in a small cage, with nothing to do and no companions of their own species.

Dogs

The domestication of dogs began in our hunter-gatherer past, as they had an important role in the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. In modern life, they have been adapted to: sheep herding, protection, guarding, search and rescue, as well as other uses such as guiding blind people.

In recent years dogs intelligence and innate ability with smell has been harnessed to learn how to detect diseases like diabetes and cancer. Dogs are social and hierarchical animals, and their roles in society reflect this. In many households today, the dog is a member of the family.

Cats

Cats were traditionally kept for their ability to catch rats and other small animals, which can be a problem in the home. Cats now live in practically every human habitat. From country cottages, to suburban housing and apartment blocks, even living with people who spend their lives in mobile homes on the move, given proper care and thought, cats will adapt. They traditionally ate scraps, but in recent times whole aisles in supermarkets are devoted to tins and bags of processed meat for pets.



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Many country or farm cats are "barn" cats, kept to live outside, not as pets. They are there to control the rats/mice/wild rabbit populations. They are so much more successful than using other methods, as they keep a balance in nature without the dangers of using poisons. These cats will often not be interacting with the people, and will remain shy, but need to be handled to check their health. They also need their natural diet supplemented with some food.

It is also important to have cats neutered, so that there are no kittens. One female cat can be responsible for 1000s of kittens in her lifetime. This causes a big problem to the resident cat population, the wildlife, and the local human population. It is equally important to castrate the male cats, who will otherwise spend their lives searching for fertile females, fighting, and spraying strong smelling urine everywhere. This goes for barn cats, as well.

*When working the soil, it is important to remember the danger of **Toxoplasmosis**, this may be spread by contact with cat faeces that may be found buried in the soil.*

Small Animals

People often find injured or ill animals. Around the world and at all times, people have often chosen to help animals or to rear abandoned baby animals. These often make good companions---people may even train birds to steal and the like. Geese, for instance, can make good alarm animals, raising awareness of people or threats approaching and even attacking intruders.

There are many species of small animals kept as "pets" or companion animals, from rabbits and guinea-pigs, birds, reptiles, through to unusual things like land snails and spiders. Some species are protected by law, such as land turtles, under the Cites Treaty.



Large Animals

Many farm animals are reprieved from the slaughterhouse, especially if they become emotionally attached to their keepers. It is legal to keep large animals as pets, but there are now regulations on some of the largest or more dangerous kinds. Having larger animals---cows, horses, etc.---living as part of the family brings such joy, it is a unique experience for the humans and for the animals themselves.

Related Videos & Websites

⇒ [Health Benefits Of Companion Animals, Andrew Weil, M.D.](#) ⇐

⇒ [World Animal Foundation](#) ⇐

⇒ [Five Freedoms - Animal Welfare](#) ⇐

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