

97% of Australian pet owners are surviving 2020 thanks to their pets

We all know Aussies love their pets, but how vital are they to coping with life's ups and downs? According to a new study from Pawshake, pets are hugely beneficial to coping with tough times: especially reflecting on the coronavirus pandemic and other major events of 2020.

Pets have been a source of strength during COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has overshadowed 2020 for most of us, with 60% of survey participants saying the pandemic has had a significant to moderate impact on their lives. It's hardly surprising then that pets have been an essential source of strength for many Aussies. Many pet shelters have reported an increase in adoptions and fostering during 2020, likely due to more people being stuck at home and seeking comfort from a furry friend.

Of the 97% of Australian pet owners who say their pet helped them through tough times in 2020, 69% also said their pet has helped them to deal with loneliness, 56% say their pet has helped them maintain a healthy routine and 52% say their pet has motivated them to exercise.

When asked what their pets meant to them, most frequent answers included 'Everything!', 'My whole world', 'Part of the family' and 'My sanity'.

2020 has forever changed our relationship with our pets

With coronavirus turning many of our lives upside down overnight, Aussie pets have had to see a lot more of their owners around the house than ever before. Indeed, 68% of survey participants confirmed that they had spent more time with their pet in 2020 than in previous years.

Being in lockdown for weeks (even months) has altered how many pet owners feel about their fur kid - with 37% confirming that events of 2020 have changed their relationship with their pet.

Of those who have noticed a change in their relationship with their pet, 67% say they feel closer to their pet, 47% say they now take their pet more into account when making decisions and 45% say they now notice subtle details in their pet's behaviour.

Some pet owners have taken to pampering their pets, with 32% of pet owners spending more money on pet products in 2020 than in previous years. Pet owner anxiety has risen too, with 37% now worrying even more about leaving their pet at home alone. This is a big shift from the days when most pet owners would head off to work and not think twice about leaving their pets home alone all day.

Pawshake CEO Tanguy Peers comments on the research, "Separation anxiety can be a problem, especially when pets are used to us being at home all day then experience a drastic change in routine when we go back to work. The change can be quite unsettling for them."

"At Pawshake, we hope our pet sitting and dog walking services will alleviate some of the stress. We are continuously educating and preparing our sitters to be ready to help when things open back up."

Pets have felt the events of 2020 too

It seems the events of 2020 have been noticed by our pets, too. 43% of pet owners confirmed that they had spotted changes recently in their pet's behaviour. Some of these changes are for the better, such as 44% of pets appearing to be happier and 24% of pets settling easily into their new routine.

Unfortunately, not all changes have been positive. 46% of pet owners admit their pet is more attached to them and frets when they're home alone, and 18% admitting their pet had gained weight. At worst, destructive behaviours such as digging and chewing furniture were noticed by 9% of pet owners.

This begs the question of how pet owners can help their pet adapt to life's ups and downs with minimal stress. Australian dog behaviourist, trainer and published author, Lara Shannon, says 'It's important to be attuned to changes in your pet's behaviour - they are more sensitive than we give them credit for to events in the human world.

'You can help ease your pet into a new routine with time, patience and planning. Hiring a dog walking or pet sitter is a great way to make sure they

have company and exercise during the day and ease them back into normal life.'

Pawshake has had a significant uptick in new pet registrations on the website in 2020. It looks forward to supporting Aussie pet owners with plenty of flexible care options for their precious pets. With more than 20,000 Pawshake sitters in Australia, many available at a moment's notice, pet owners no longer need to worry about their pet feeling stressed when they aren't at home.

For more information, visit www.pawshake.com.au, Facebook www.facebook.com/pawshakeaustralia, Instagram www.instagram.com/pawshakeau.

Pawshake surveyed over 1,500 Australian pet owners from its website database.

About Pawshake

Pawshake is a trusted community of pet lovers. Pet owners can find vetted pet sitters, dog walkers, doggy daycare or home boarding solutions through the Pawshake website or app. Rates start at \$20/night and include veterinary coverage, customer support 7 days a week, and daily updates.

Pawshake was co-founded in 2013 by Tanguy Peers, a former eBay executive who is passionate about making a difference to the lives of people and their pets. Since launching in Australia in 2014, Pawshake has built a reputation for connecting pet owners with trusted and vetted pet sitters and now, more than 20,000 Australians are offering their services as pet sitters on Pawshake. Pawshake is backed by AirTree Ventures, the leading Australian venture capital fund.

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