

Evidence Mounts That Seniors Should Own Pets

Provider of pet-friendly alternative to aged care facilities on Gold Coast reveals studies showing that pet owners live longer and happier lives.

Australia, 30 June 2014 - Pet owners have probably known that having pets is beneficial since the dawn of history. But recent studies are indicating across the board that pet owners live longer, healthier, happier lives.

One of the more recent studies on the benefits of pet ownership was conducted in the US by their National Institute of Health. It monitored those who lived through heart attacks. The study found that those who owned dogs were more likely to be alive one year later than those who didn't. The same group has also found that pet owners have lower blood pressure and also lower cholesterol than those who don't own pets.

A website called "Pets for the Elderly" has links to numerous studies demonstrating the benefits of pet ownership. Most of the studies say the same thing: if you own a pet, you will be happier and healthier. This is usually conducive to living longer.

Hidden Benefits: Psychological and Physical

According to the RSPCA, pet ownership has numerous benefits, especially when the pet is a dog, both psychological and physical. Dog ownership benefits the owner socially because the owner has numerous opportunities for social interaction when walking their dog.

The psychological benefits start in childhood. A child who owns a dog tends to be more self-confident. This usually results in a higher "standing" with their classmates and a generally more well-adjusted child, teenager and adult. In addition, elderly people who have pets derive great companionship from them.

Into adulthood, pet owners statistically appear to tolerate grief and stress better, while suffering far less from depression.

Physically, dog ownership provides benefits because most dog owners get out and walk their dogs. Also, pet owners tend to have more beneficial neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, and less of the "stress hormones" norepinephrine and cortisol. The net result is more happiness and less stress.

Besides the cardiovascular benefits derived from walking a dog, pet owners also see doctors less than those who don't own pets. In addition, children who have pets tend to have stronger immune systems, less sensitivity to allergens and less absences from school than their petless counterparts.

Pets and Aged Care: How do they Fit In?

Phil Usher, co-founder of Tall Trees Care Communities, is a staunch advocate of pet ownership for the elderly. According to Mr Usher, "At Tall Trees, our residents own their homes. We not only allow but encourage any resident who wants a pet to have one. I have personally made it my mission to be on top of most research into ageing and I have been aware of the benefits of pet ownership for a long time."

Mr Usher concluded, "When we created Tall Trees, we wanted an environment that our Mums would love. We wanted to allow our residents to maintain their independence as long as possible. We also wanted to provide an environment where people could still enjoy life. We think pet ownership helps enhance our residents' lives. Our Mums and Dads might be old, but we want to make sure they have a lot of years left in their lives and a lot of life left in their years."

Tall Trees Care Communities provide an alternative to private aged care facilities on the Gold Coast. Residents own their homes and are allowed to own pets if they wish. Call (07) 3442 9378 to arrange a trial stay or visit their website: <http://www.talltrees.net.au/>.

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