

**Pets are an essential part of the social,
cultural and economic fabric of the UK**



in the majority of their homes pets are regarded as members of the family and are given names



**ALMOST HALF THE VOTERS YOU MEET
WHILE CANVASSING WILL LIVE IN A
PET OWNING HOUSEHOLD**

13 million (46%) households in the UK own pets

More than 100 million pets share our homes and lives

A very wide variety of pets, as many as 5,000 species, have been kept successfully for decades – or even centuries in some cases



Owners spend almost £6 billion a year on their pets including foods, accessories and veterinary care



This generates taxes of more than £2.2 billion annually



And leads to the employment of over 50,000 people



Pets are good for our health and are estimated to save the NHS at least £1.6 billion every year, which could be a conservative estimate

THE BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP, IN TERMS OF TAX GENERATED AND NHS SPENDING SPARED, IS ABOUT £3.8 BILLION A YEAR. WITHOUT THESE BENEFITS THE BASIC RATE OF INCOME TAX WOULD HAVE TO GO UP BY A PENNY IN THE POUND



Pets are good for us, contributing to our well-being and health throughout our lives



Pets help children develop and learn – pets may motivate children to learn and use words associated with them, develop higher autonomy, self esteem, motivation, focus and perseverance skills. The presence of a pet in the classroom may lead to more positive attitudes to school and learning



Children with pets have better health and school attendance – exposure to a dog or cat during the first years of infancy leads to a measurable strengthening of the immune system and reduction in allergies linked to asthma. In later life, children from pet owning households attend school an extra 18 half days a year



Pet owners make fewer visits to the doctors (for example, in Germany pet owners are healthier and pay 15% fewer visits to doctors) – researchers estimate this saves costs of €5.9 billion pa. Pensioners that own a dog visit their doctors 21% less than non-dog owners



Pets help reduce blood pressure, heart rate and stress – just stroking pets or watching fish swim in an aquarium leads to reduced blood pressure and lower anxiety. The presence of a pet can reduce the heart rate even in stressful situations



Pets help increase owners' activity levels – among its many benefits, dog walking helps reduce obesity, a £5 billion pa burden on the NHS. Increased physical activity of obese children has been noted in the presence of a therapy dog



Pets increase social engagement and cohesion – dogs in social settings encourage more social interactions. Other research has found an effect with rabbits or turtles. Pets may also reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation



As we get older – pets in care homes can ameliorate loneliness. Aquariums have been found to improve behaviour and staff satisfaction in dementia units. An aquarium in the dining room improved appetite among residents



And the pets benefit, too – just as stroking a pet reduces blood pressure and heart rate in humans, when they are stroked the same is true for our pets



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT PET OWNERSHIP

Everyone should be able to enjoy the benefits of keeping any legally acquired and owned pet they choose, as long as they can care for it properly

UPDATE LEGISLATION



Bring outdated pieces of animal welfare law in line with the most recent legislation and ensure consistent application

Ensure consistent inspection regimes, based on good husbandry practice, for all suppliers of pets including shops, breeders and re-homing centres

Ensure enforcement officers across the country are trained to a good consistent standard to undertake their duties

Ensure all animal welfare and cruelty prosecutions are approved by the relevant state Prosecution Service





REDUCE RESTRICTIONS ON PET OWNERSHIP



Make sure that National Planning Practice Guidance provides open spaces and areas of parks that pets and their owners can enjoy responsibly



Make public buildings like libraries more welcoming to owners and their pets



Encourage pet positive policies in rented accommodation



Encourage sheltered accommodation and homes to have a positive policy towards older people having access to pets. It's good for their sociability and health



Reduce barriers to children learning about pets in school

Children and young people should be taught about caring for animals and the importance of providing for animals' five welfare needs



Encourage schools to allow pets into classrooms





ProPets

www.propetsgroup.org.uk

POSITIVE ABOUT PETS

ProPets is formed by key pet membership organisations to provide a strong united voice to promote responsible pet ownership



www.propetsgroup.org.uk

A referenced version of this publication is available from this website