

Latham Letter

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Winter 1991/92

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIVING THINGS THROUGH EDUCATION

Conflicts of Interests: Kittens and Boa Constrictors, Pets and Research

Harold A. Herzog, Jr.

Psychological research with animals has come under fire from antivivisectionists for the past 100 years (Dewsbury, 1990). Although these attacks have increased dramatically over the past 15 years, many psychologists have been slow to recognize the implications of the animal rights movement for the conduct of behavioral and biomedical research (Johnson, 1990). Scientists sometimes dismiss the animal rights movement with the claim that it is fueled primarily by emotion, not logic. However, those who make the effort to become familiar with the arguments of philosophers such as Peter Singer (1975) and Tom Regan (1983) may be surprised at the rigor and power of some of their arguments (reviewed by Herzog, 1990a).

In a series of interviews with animal rights activists, I have found that the attempt to maintain consistency between ethical stance and lifestyle is a major force underlying the behavior changes that come with commitment to this movement (Herzog, 1990b). But many animal advocates do not rec-



ognize that even apparently benign relations with other species often produce conflicts of interest that ultimately result in some of the same ethical difficulties faced by those of us who use animals for research (see Gallup & Suarez, 1987). The incident described below illustrates the kind of paradox that can result when the peculiarities of human psychology confront the conflict of interests that seem to inevitably emerge when species interact.

Feeding Kittens to Boa Constrictors

Several years ago I received a call from a man who had awakened to find that his boa constrictor had given birth to 42 babies. He was understandably shocked as he had kept the seven-foot female caged in his living room

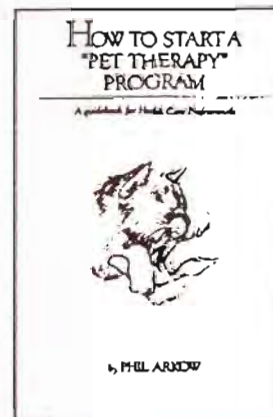
with her even larger mate for eight years with no sign of conjugal relations between the two. He contacted me for tips on raising baby snakes because he had heard that I studied the behavior of newborn reptiles. He wound up giving my son one of the babies, and the snake, Sam, is now a family pet.

Recently, a friend of mine who is an animal rights activist was contacted by a woman who complained that I was procuring kittens from a local animal shelter for snake food. Distressed, the informant insisted that the local animal rights group take action to prevent me from using cats to satisfy Sam's appetite. My initial response to the accusation was to laugh. I have had several pet cats and am as susceptible to the neotenic charms of kittens as the next person. As much as I like Sam,

I found the idea of his swallowing kittens appalling. In addition, Sam is about two feet long and it will be a long time before he is able to gulp down even a small kitty.

After a chuckle, however, I began to reflect on the ethics of Sam's diet. My accuser inadvertently forced me to consider a series of questions related to moral ambiguities inherent in keeping pets. Given his nutritional needs, is it moral to have a boa constrictor for a pet? Under what, if any, circumstances would it be moral to feed kittens to a snake? Finally, given that we live in an ethically complex world, is keeping a kitten any more or any

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Latham has a supply of the 32-page booklet *How to Start a "Pet Therapy" Program: A guidebook for Health Care Professionals* by Phil Arkow. It is available without charge to those who are interested in developing a pet therapy program. Please send three one-ounce first class postage stamps and a ten cent stamp, for the oversized envelope, with your request.

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**REMEMBER
TO
RECYCLE**



On Humane Education

It's interesting to note how many different approaches there are to humane education. Though most include specialized presentations in behalf of animals, they rarely include human welfare. And, those specifically directed to adults, seem to be formulated for presentation to and the approval of an audience of a like mind. Thoughtfully conveyed humane education, however, is a lasting and cost effective measure for the prevention of a host of man and animal problems, be they of a social nature, pet overpopulation or otherwise.

The Latham Foundation sees humane education as a challenging exercise in salesmanship, requiring all of the same thought and promotional effort needed in selling commercial goods, because both the humane educator and the commercial salesperson endeavor to sell an idea. Every successful sales presentation must include an accommodation for the fact that a natural and universal human response to any suggestion elicits one of two frequently unspoken questions, "What's in it for me?" or "How will this effect me?" We don't believe that the admonition "be kind to animals" adequately answers either of those questions. In its successful promotion of human - companion animal bond activity, Latham built in an answer to those questions by intentionally accenting the human benefits involved, rather than those of the companion animal. The program was sold on the basis of its great potential value for one's physically handicapped child, aged parents or other loved ones and not on the benefits accruing to the companion animal. Although it was assumed that the companion animal involved would have to be well

cared for in order for the relationship to prove satisfactory.

Because of the extensive acceptance of the human - companion animal bond principle evidenced by the many and various existing programs, Latham now plans to turn its main efforts elsewhere. The new endeavor which is in concert with the foundation's mandated concern for **all life**, calls for the production of film, video and print educational materials as well as the sponsorship of symposiums, all of which will focus the public's attention on the important truth: that because of cruelty's pervasive nature, child abuse and animal abuse are in fact one and the same problem. Further, that it is unrealistic for society to view cruelty to an animal with less concern than that of a child.

It is encouraging to note that the American Humane Association's two progressive divisions, "Child Protection" and "Animal Protection," recently sponsored a "Summit On Violence To Children And Animals," which acknowledged that effective prevention of child and animal abuse requires the unified action of both divisions. Reassuring proof of the value of such cooperation is found in San Francisco, where Dr. Lynn Lorr, of the San Francisco Child Abuse Council and Kenneth White, of San Francisco's Department of Animal Care and Control, have successfully coordinated the efforts of their agencies in the detection and abatement of child and animal abuse. There, as each instance of child or animal abuse is found, the determining agency shares its information with the cooperating agency. It having been determined that in most situations where a child and an animal are a part of a single household, and one is found to be abused, the other is similarly treated.

Hugh H. Tebault

Volunteer USA

Andrew Carroll
A Fawcett Columbine Book
Ballentine Books
New York, NY
397 pages, softbound, \$8.95,
U.S.

This book was reviewed in the Fall 1991 issue of *The Latham Letter*, however, because volunteering is a major topical focus in this issue, we felt it worthwhile to mention this valuable resource again.

Volunteer USA is a comprehensive guide to organizations, both local and national, that are concerned with issues ranging from health, homelessness, veterans' affairs, animals, the environment and much more. Not only has the author listed the causes alphabetically, with the organizations concerned with them alphabetically, he has provided a geographical index. Each section contains a segment entitled, "What You Can Do," thereby providing the much needed information for a potential volunteer.

In the words of Allan Luks, Executive Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of New York City, "every school, union, business, senior center, church and synagogue in this country should have this book."



Correction

The two photographs of wild horses, which appeared on page 8 of the Fall 1991 issue of *The Latham Letter*, were taken by Katey Barrett of Katey Barrett Photography, Hollywood, California.



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The Latham Foundation is a non-profit, operating foundation that makes grants in kind rather than monetary grants but welcomes partnership with other institutions and individuals who share its commitment to furthering humane education.

The Latham Letter welcomes manuscripts relevant to the Foundation's interests and concerns, but reserves the right to publish such manuscripts at its discretion.

The New Volunteers

Judy Johns

Although I have contributed considerable time and energy "without compensation" to causes such as rape crisis counseling, fund raising for a therapeutic horseback riding program, and management consulting for several humane organizations, I don't think of myself as a volunteer. Volunteers are either very old or very young. They wear candy stripes, or belong to ladies' auxiliaries, and they do their good work on a regular basis...or do they?

*"...like hot oatmeal,
'it simply feels like the
right thing to do.'"*

An amazing variety of people are "the new volunteers." Adults teach other adults to read in the literacy campaign; foster grandparents adopt grandchildren; humane society dog walkers get and give exercise; guardian angels patrol neighborhoods; celebrities perform at benefits to help save the Rain Forest; and, on and on. The more typical volunteer activities continue too. Envelopes still get stuffed, politicians get elected, meals on wheels get delivered, and yes, magazines still get circulated to patients in hospitals. It is unfair, if not impossible, to generalize about who we are and what motivates us.

A handsome actor in New York City sets aside one night a week and heads uptown to a hospital nursery where he holds and comforts babies born addicted to crack and abandoned by their mothers. Countless members of support groups, both organized and informal, already exist and more are being formed every day. Kids

think of ways to save the earth, or Humphrey the Whale, or the ozone layer. Busy professionals join boards of directors and lend their expertise. Some volunteers contribute products or services instead of time.

Volunteering is the ultimate "win/win" situation. Everybody benefits. Countless people's lives have undoubtedly been changed for the better because someone took the time to get involved. Even when volunteers such as parolees or others who have to complete public service are "forced" into action, an important end is served.

As for the volunteer, new studies show there a physical as well as psychological benefits if the good work is done on a regular basis, and if it puts the volunteer in contact with people. Add to this fact that getting involved is "politically correct" and it's a wonder everyone doesn't do it.

I know I get selfish pleasure from being able to "help." Whether my volunteering takes the form of contributing a bit of specialized knowledge, or of doing something totally "mindless," like hot oatmeal "it simply feels like the right thing to do."

Judy Johns is the Director of Development for the Latham Foundation. She volunteers as a fund raiser and a "side walker" at HORSES HELP, a therapeutic horseback riding program for physically and mentally handicapped people in Phoenix, Arizona. For more information about the benefits of therapeutic riding, we recommend the video "Ability, Not Disability," available from the Latham Foundation. For information about volunteering with a therapeutic riding program in your area, call 1-800-369-RIDE.



Just Do It!

Kathleen Henderson

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "volunteer" as one who performs or gives services of his own free will. I have been given the opportunity to discuss volunteerism in this issue of *The Latham Letter*. I suppose this occasion has come about in no small part because I am a volunteer.

A recent perusal of several different publications gives an indication of the significance of volunteerism. An article in an SPCA newsletter speaks volumes about the many opportunities for volunteer activity. An article appearing in an American Humane Association publication featured Rusty Pallas, a major volunteer for them. "Time I don't have. So, I donate my product," states Mr. Pallas, the owner of a photo lab. He donates his photo-finishing services for the production of brochures, literature and educational materials. Another article addresses the Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) program and the "opportunity for people in difficult circumstances to enjoy the healing presence of animals in a safe and therapeutic setting." It is through the many dedicated volunteers that the AAT programs trace their success. Of course, the recent firestorm in the Oakland, California hills generated a tremendous volunteer response to thousands of displaced citizens. Many organizations and individuals quickly responded to the people and pet needs with offers of housing, food, clothing and other disaster assistance.

What is it that makes an individual want to become involved in helping someone or some organization? I think

Continued page 4

it goes beyond a simple attitude of just wanting to help someone less fortunate. It is the human capacity for compassion and altruistic concern for others that motivates a volunteer to do something. This "do something" attitude may take many forms, from donating time, which seems to be the most needed commodity, to donating a product, as Rusty Pallas does, to simply donating money. The ability to volunteer is a gift, to be given freely, without recompense, without expectation. It is the salve of the altruistic soul. It makes you feel good to do good deeds. The beauty of volunteering is that there is no scale by which to measure your contributions except that of the smile on the face of an elderly wheelchair-confined patient whose day you just made with your pet visitation program or it might be the cheers of that Special Olympian who completed his athletic event. These are the rewards for volunteering; the sharing of a magical moment.

There are many organizations that directly benefit from their volunteer participants. Whether it is the lone individual who helps out a small non-profit organization by reviewing film edits and providing newsletter photographs, or a volunteer network that promotes the youth projects of a county 4H program or handles the myriad details to successfully stage a 10 kilometer race to raise funds to fight debilitating diseases, all volunteers make a difference. The volunteer is the backbone of every non-profit and community minded organization.

Since opportunities to volunteer are virtually unlimited, it is important to match your time and talent to an organization that best suits your individual interests. It will do no good to volunteer

your time with a group or subject matter which does not interest you: it may benefit the organization in the short run, but, in the long run, your dissatisfaction or disillusionment will undoubtedly lead to "burnout" and a reluctance to volunteer again. This is what every non-profit and community group fears and wants to avoid. Do yourself and the organization a favor, match their needs with your interests.

Most people discover volunteer needs in their own community in very ordinary ways. If you have children in schools, invariably classroom assistance is much appreciated by teachers. If you have an interest in helping the elderly with their shopping needs, or visiting housebound and disabled people, contact your local churches regarding any outreach programs they sponsor. If you love animals and want your efforts channeled toward helping them, contact your local SPCA/humane society, or your veterinarian for suggestions. You may want to combine your interests in animals with the elderly; contact your SPCA and/or convalescent homes in the area for information on Animal Assisted Therapy programs. Whatever the special interest and your individual time and talents allow, utilize your network of friends and co-workers and zero in on that unique organization that will benefit from your involvement.

To borrow a major advertiser's admonition: "Just do it!" You'll be glad you did.

Kathleen Henderson serves on the Board of Directors of the Latham Foundation, a volunteer position, she is also active in pet visitation programs utilizing her obedience-trained Siberian Husky, Meshika. 🐾

Helper's High

Volunteering makes people feel good, physically and emotionally. And like "runners calm," it's probably good for your health

Allan Luks

People who exercise vigorously often describe feeling high during a workout—and a sense of calmness and freedom from stress afterward. New evidence reveals that these same emotional and physical changes can be produced with activity requiring much less exertion—helping others.

"The increased strength and highs may come from the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain reducing chemicals."

An analysis of the experiences of more than 1,700 women who were involved regularly in helping others highlights these surprising effects. In many cases, this "helper's calm" was linked to relief from stress-related disorders such as headaches, voice loss and even pain accompanying lupus and multiple sclerosis.

The study began last February, when *Better Homes and Gardens* did a brief report on helping others and asked readers to write the Institute for the Advancement of Health about their own experiences—how often they helped and their feelings, if any, when helping. They were also asked about their current health. We received 246 lengthy responses from throughout the country. We

later got 1,500 questionnaire responses from members of a large women's volunteer group—women who, importantly, had not seen the magazine article.

The results of the two studies were so surprising that we asked researchers to help us analyze the data as a first step toward systematic experiments. For example, 68 percent of the *Better Homes and Gardens* readers and 88 percent of the club members reported feeling an identifiable physical sensation—best described as stimulation—during the actual helping. Highs, warmth and increased energy were mentioned in half the letters and a quarter of the surveys. One woman called it a "gentle tightness in my chest and neck, like an increased blood flow."

The increased strength and highs may result from the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain-reducing chemicals. Psychologist Jack Panksepp of Bowling Green University has been studying social and emotional processes in laboratory animals with a special emphasis on altruism. From his and other experiments, he concludes: "It is just about proven that it is our own natural opiates, the endorphins, that produce the good feelings that arise during social contact with others."

Frequent helpers who also exercise recognized the similarity of the effects. A woman who counsels abusive parents, for example, compared her "sense of fitness and well-being" to what she feels while swimming. Another, a nursing home volunteer, noted that although the work leaves her tired, it is the kind of fatigue one experiences after a good game of tennis.

Following the helping, many of the women reported

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experiencing a greater calmness and enhanced self-worth. One elderly woman wrote that doing something nice for someone actually snapped her out of periods of depression. Another reported more self-esteem after volunteer work.

What explains this greater calmness and sense of self-worth? "For millennia, people have been describing techniques on how to forget oneself, to experience decreased metabolic rates and blood pressure, heart rate and other health benefits," says Harvard cardiologist Herbert Benson, known for his work on the relaxation response, the body's ability to shift into a deep state of rest. "Altruism works this way, just as do yoga, spirituality and meditation."

"Interestingly, altruism's pleasure does not appear to arise from donating money, no matter how important the cause, nor from volunteering without close personal contact."

The helper's pleasurable physical sense and calmness is the opposite of the body's agitated condition under stress, in which the heart pumps harder, breathing is faster, organ functions are interfered with, and the body is more sensitive to pain. It is not usually physical stress, such as that involved in exercise, but emotional stress that causes the adrenal gland to release its stress chemicals, the corticosteroids. These increase cholesterol levels, play a role in heart disease, raise blood sugar and depress immune function. Such evidence begins to suggest why

men involved in community organizations tend to have less disease and longer lives than those who do not serve.

Helper's calm appears to be related to reduced emotional stress. One woman wrote that she treated her stress-related headaches by shopping for clothing for poor children. Another actually uses her volunteer work at a nursing home to keep her blood pressure under control. Thirteen percent of those surveyed noted a decrease in aches and pain.

Altruism has several advantages over exercise. Although the feel-good sensation is most intense when actually touching or listening to someone, it can apparently be recalled. Seventy percent of the magazine readers and 82 percent of the club members said their helper's highs would reoccur, though with less intensity, when they remembered helping.

Interestingly, altruism's pleasure does not appear to arise from donating money, no matter how important the cause, nor from volunteering without close personal contact. As one volunteer who makes recordings for the blind said, "They're important. But I only feel good when I'm with others, like assisting the free-lunch program."

Being in control is crucial to the health benefits of giving. If forced to help, for whatever reason, you may not benefit. People who have long-term duties caring for the elderly often report more, not less stress and health problems. And a part-time student reported that when



her volunteer activities interfere with her studying, they are no longer rewarding.

The responses in our two studies came from women, but they match the national volunteer profile for both sexes: primarily married, broadly representative in age and region. Close to nine out of ten committed volunteers say they are as healthy or healthier than others their age, matching nationwide surveys.

These are just a small start, of course, but they contribute to a growing body of literature on the health benefits of giving. Recently, a group of biobehavioral scientists led by biofeedback pioneer Neal Miller met to review the research, and they concluded that there is considerable evidence of various kinds to suggest that doing good may indeed be good for you. The probability that this is true is great enough, they agreed, to justify research specifically aimed at determining the conditions that will maximize such an effect.

Taking time to help, then, may be a basic step to protect health. Stress assaults us: Seventy percent of Ameri-

cans say there is a lot or some stress in their lives, and 40 percent believe stress has made them sick. Yet only 25 percent volunteer regularly. Those who don't say they are too busy and don't want to neglect important responsibilities. The health benefits they're passing up may turn out to be only a part of their loss. At this early stage of altruism research, all those selfless people seem to have found ways into a wonderful glow.

Allan Luks is the Executive Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Inc. of New York City.

The above article appeared in the October 1988 issue of Psychology Today and is reprinted here with the permission of the magazine and author.

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I believe...that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another.

Thomas Jefferson

That Magical Effect

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Texas (formerly the Dallas SPCA), like many humane organizations around the country, was formed in 1938 to protect and ensure the fair treatment of animals. And though many gracious leaders have given the organization direction during the past 53 years, it has been the tireless work of volunteers that has allowed it to impact the homeless and helpless animals of Dallas and the surrounding area.

Whether it is simply a labor of love or a desire to protect those who cannot speak for themselves, the fuel behind the fire that motivates the volunteer is as curious as each individual volunteer.

Volunteers from all backgrounds are constantly sought out, cultivated and then offered a variety of interesting and useful programs. The unexplainable pleasure derived from giving selflessly has a magical effect on many volunteers—an infectious feeling that keeps them coming back again and again.

Michelle Mew, Director of Volunteers, says that the average volunteer is female, between the ages of 25 and 30 and is interested in working directly with the animals. But of the 500 active volunteers currently registered in the volunteer base, many are far from "average," all are very special.

Volunteers include housewives, career people, people in-between jobs and even children. They are recruited at fund raising events, at public

relations events, as adopters passing through the shelter, by word of mouth, through public education presentations and through advertising.

"The unexplainable pleasure derived from giving selflessly has a magical effect on many volunteers—an infectious feeling that keeps them coming back again and again."

Volunteers can make as much or as little commitment as they choose. Some prefer a "flexible" commitment, which is really no commitment at all. They may come in any hour, any of the 365 days of the year. Others commit to six month programs or longer. The latter are generally as committed as staff and eventually become team leaders and program coordinators.

The Texas SPCA offers two basic categories for its volunteers: programs that work "for" the animals and programs that work "with" the animals. For animal lovers with allergies or those who feel it too painful to come to the shelter, there are the "for" the animals programs away from the shelter. These include humane legislation, fund raising, exhibit sales and special events. The "with" the animals programs include hands-on work such as TLC, adoption counseling, grooming, kennel assistance and fostering.

To get started as a volunteer, each individual is required to go through volunteer orientation. The orientation involves an evening at the shelter with Michelle Mew. The shelter's historical background is explained as well as its organi-

zation. The various volunteer programs are described and a tour is given. After the orientation, those still willing to become involved are asked to complete paperwork and to participate in an interview to assess each volunteer's specific interests. Additional training is required for certain activities such as adoption counseling, pet therapy, grooming, and special events. Then the work begins.

Volunteers currently account for 24,000 hours of "time giving" per year. It would be difficult to estimate the dollars it would cost to hire this help. Often, volunteer hours come in the form of professional services by experts in their given field. These professionals not only offer their knowledge and time, but also their connections with other professionals. This frequently results in associations that ultimately produce gifts and donations to support the SPCA in other ways. Volunteerism and giving becomes contagious.

The areas that volunteers assist the shelter are never ending. Many are sought as their expertise is needed. Sometimes, they are new to the SPCA, sometimes old friends. They assist in administrative support, kennel upkeep, grooming, artwork and graphics and numerous outreach and publicity programs and much, much more. Though the staff is committed to finding more and better ways to help the animals, the volunteers are the underlying current that make it happen.



He gives nothing who does not give himself.

French Proverb

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A Texas SPCA volunteer. Photograph courtesy of Texas SPCA



Fooling with Mother Nature

Amy Shapiro

Lucy, the bulldog, with her waddling gait and comical expression, draws delighted comments wherever she goes. Such a response is pleasant, but Lucy pays a high price for it. Her unnaturally short muzzle causes her to have trouble breathing, which increases her susceptibility to heatstroke. The combination of her large head and her mother's narrow hips required caesarian delivery when she was born.

Would Lucy be any less lovable if she were not burdened with these genetic problems? Of course not! People have gotten carried away in their efforts to change the animal world to better fit human "needs."

Big Dogs, Little Dogs and Just-Right Dogs

Humans have fooled extensively with Mother Nature's Basic Dog Design. Few of the changes have been improvements. The natural dog weighs about 40-50 pounds. She has a long tail, long legs, and erect or semi-erect ears. Her body and limbs are proportioned. Her coat is short.

Purebred dogs, especially the more popular breeds, suffer from more than 170 kinds of genetic defects."

Enter the human. Within a few generations the unnatural dog appears. He is a Yorkshire terrier, weighing 3 pounds. He is highly susceptible to cold and hypoglycemia, and has a tendency toward hyperactivity. She is

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a cocker spaniel, prone to such genetically linked problems as skin disease, ear infections, retinal dysplasia, glaucoma, cataracts, hemophilia, skull fissures, intervertebral disk degeneration, congenital heart disease, cleft lip and palate, hernias, and much more. He is a basset hound, who suffers from lameness and arthritis. (*The Natural Dog*, Michael W. Fox, Harrowsmith, July/August 1988).

Purebred dogs, especially the more popular breeds, suffer from more than 170 kinds of genetic defects. Their unnatural shapes and sizes appeal to human fancy, but the animals suffer. We laugh at the huge shambling St. Bernard or the wrinkled coat of the Shar-pei. I don't think many Shar-pei would choose to wear that wrinkly coat as it causes eye problems that must be treated surgically.

Ears and Tails: Who Needs Them?

Humans also alter dogs' appearances through ear-cropping and tail-docking. Because dogs communicate through body language, cutting off the ears and tail deprives the dog of a large chunk of her vocabulary. In fact, ear-cropping not only takes away from her ability to communicate, it also sends a specific message to other dogs. Ears pricked forward can be an expression of dominance or aggression. A mild-mannered doberman's cropped ears say, "I'm tough, and I can prove it." If she had a tail, she could wag it and keep it low to show her good intentions, but the total picture is a mixed message that may frighten or confuse an-



other dog. Imagine how you would feel if you met someone wearing an AK-47 slung over his shoulder, a horrible grimace on his face, and a t-shirt that read, "I love everyone. Give me a hug."

So Jane the dobie meets Jake the setter-cross. Reading her body language, Jake thinks Jane is looking for a fight, so he becomes tense and alert. Jane senses his uneasiness and becomes tense, too. A fight ensues, all because of a human whim of fashion.

Ear-cropping was started by people who used their dogs for fighting, to keep the ears from being torn. It is ironic that people today who are repelled by the barbarism of dog-fighting have no hesitation about continuing the tradition of ear-cropping.

Tail-docking has two probable origins. Some puppies are born without tails, so tail-docking was done for consistency within a litter. Other people felt that a tail was a hindrance to a hunting dog and therefore cut it off.

These practices do not benefit the individual dog, the breed, or the species.

They are mutilation entrenched as tradition.

Debarking and Declawing

Why do dogs bark? Why do cats scratch trees, furniture, carpets, and stereo speakers? Barking and scratching are natural behaviors. You don't have to accept non-stop barking or indiscriminate scratching, but if you want an animal who never barks or scratches, go to your friendly neighborhood toy store.

Debarking and declawing are unnatural and unethical. Debarking addresses the symptom only. A dog who barks because he's bored and under-exercised will find some other equally annoying outlet for his energy, such as digging, chewing, or jumping the fence.

Excessive barking can be controlled through behavior-modifying exercises. The behavioral approach requires time and effort but is more humane and more effective in the long run. If your child steals cookies from the cookie jar, do you chop off his hands? Of course

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not! You take the time to teach him to be honest and to respect the rules of the household.

Declawing is a painful and difficult operation, equivalent to removing the first joint on all your fingers. It impairs balance and causes weakness from muscular disuse. Declawed cats feel defenseless and often resort to biting.

A cat who scratches your favorite sofa instead of her kitty-condo needs training, not surgery. Scratching is her way of stretching her shoulder and back muscles (a kitty version of yoga) as well as leaving a visual and olfactory announcement of her presence. Scratching is also fun. Wouldn't you rather provide a non-destructive way to indulge her than to stop her completely from expressing her cat-ness?

Declawing and debarking appeal to our desire for a quick-fix solution, but like most easy answers they are superficial and short-lived. I have received calls from distraught people whose declawed cat is still wreaking havoc on the furniture. The need to stretch and to mark territory remain, and the cat is wearing holes in the upholstery with her paw-pads. In dogs, vocal cords may grow back, requiring a second stressful, expensive operation. Debarked dogs make pathetic rasping noises as they attempt to speak their piece.

What is Natural?

The answer is: nothing. Companion animals live in a totally human-created world. We may want to provide them with as many elements of a natural life as possible; but that is just another of the many decisions we make for them.

Some people object to neutering because it is not natural. Their argument is that it deprives the animal of a basic aspect of life. However, this simplistic view doesn't tell the whole story. The death of 15 million cats and dogs every year at shelters in the U.S. is also not natural. In allowing a cat to have kittens, you are not choosing natural over unnatural. You are deciding between two unnatural, human-created situations.

Our companion animals are remarkably adept at adjusting to life in a human world. I wonder how well we would fare if the situation was reversed. With a little effort, we can respect their essential nature and needs, take responsibility for their dependence on us, and enjoy the delights and rewards of living with them.

The above article appeared in the Summer 1990 issue of Pawprint, the newsletter of the Peninsula Humane Society, of which Amy Shapiro is a copy editor.



Manhandling Nature

In their relentless drive to learn more about wildlife, researchers may be turning the great outdoors into one vast zoo

Jane Kay

The rocky silhouette of the Farallon Islands, jutting up from the waters off the Golden Gate, seems a mysterious and wild place, a haven for elephant seals and rare birds. Vessels steer clear of the rookeries and breeding beaches so the animals can keep to themselves, thrive and survive. These unspoiled islands seem to send a message that untrammelled nature can prevail, even on the edge of a hectic city.

On closer look, however, it becomes apparent that although the animals may be safe, they're not wild. "Wild" means uncontrolled by humans. And the Farallones have become a laboratory for animal studies, ruled for nearly 20 years by scientists who pierce every newborn seal's hind flipper with a cattle ear tag. They bleach the tar-black pups with a Clairol-blond number or name so big and bold it can be seen many yards away by researchers without binoculars. Every year when the animals return to breed, they get stamped again, this time Clairol-black on their now light pelage, just like envelopes in the post office. The "wild" seals have come to look like license plates.

At one time all this scientific intrusion seemed amply justified. In the 1800s, elephant seals were hunted to near extinction on the Pacific Coast. So when the seals started to recolonize the Farallones in the 1970s, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory began

keeping track of every individual seal, its behavior, its mating, and the fate of its pups. But now the adult seal population is up to 600 on the islands and 50,000 on the coast, and the intensive tracking still goes on, almost by routine.

"When you've chased the dolphin to exhaustion, dragged it up with a net and yanked out a tooth, it's wrong, absolutely wrong."

The widely respected Point Reyes Bird Observatory is not the only scientific organization that has established its dominion over nature. Throughout the United States, remote islands, deserts and forests have been invaded by researchers eager to learn more about the creatures that inhabit these wilderness areas. High-tech monitoring equipment is now accessible to those with even modest budgets, and it proliferates among researchers, says Stephen Leatherwood of the World Conservation Union. This scientific inquisitiveness has sparked a fierce debate about whether the manhandling of nature fundamentally changes it. As more researchers capture, tag, collar, pull teeth and take blood and sperm samples from these animals, environmentalists warn that nature could become a mammoth zoo, a place where human food, scent and power taints the remaining wildest of the wild.

Troubling ethical questions have been raised about these multiplying studies: Do they actually aid the animals, or are they simply tickets to doctoral degrees, grant money and jobs? Some comment wryly that nature is suffering from an overpopulation

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of scientists. There is a compulsion among some researchers to invade habitats with the latest high-tech gadgetry, says David Phillips of Earth Island Institute, "when the same information could be obtained with far less impact by an observer with a pair of field glasses." Phillips calls it "a macho-biologist thing, sort of a 'We have to kill a species in order to save it.' It's a dangerous trend."

The controversy has been fueled by a number of particularly aggressive wildlife studies in recent years. Perhaps the most notorious was a study approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that gave American and Soviet scientists permission to kill 200 walrus and 200 bearded seals this summer in the Bering and Chukchi seas. The researchers will dissect the animals, studying ovaries and pregnancy scars to determine whether the mammals are mating or having reproductive problems.

Meanwhile, grizzly bears in the northern Continental Divide of Montana are being hunted, trapped, doped, tagged in the ear like cattle and tracked by aircraft as part of a census. Some say Montana is energetically pursuing the population count because it wants to remove the grizzlies from the threatened species list. And in the hills outside San Jose, 30 mountain lions—or one fourth of the area's adult population—have been placed under similar surveillance, chased down by dogs, tranquilized and collared with tin boxes carrying radio transmitters. Many will wear them until they die. There have been instances where hunters have used radio telemetry to zero in on collared bears; some mountain-lion experts fear these beasts could meet a similar fate.

For many years, terns and boobies on the Hawaiian Is-

lands were captured and held upside down until they vomited, as part of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study of stomach content. Called "bird barfing," the practice was finally stopped after researchers objected that the data were piling up, unanalyzed, while the trauma to the birds continued.

Rare right whales—only 300 exist off the Atlantic Coast—are chased down, shot with arrows containing tiny radio transmitters and followed for years by Oregon State University researchers.

It is not uncommon for animals to die in the interest of science. At least one California mountain lion died after it was tranquilized; it suffocated while wedged in the crook of a tree. Ten polar bears died in Alaska, most from tranquilizers, after being drugged and collared for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife study. Elk in Olympic National Park in Washington state have also died from sedative overdoses.

Less clear is how the tagging of animals alters their place in nature. Don Crowell of the National Marine Mammal Laboratory in Seattle says his work on penguins has shown that birds with radio transmitters glued to their backs didn't raise as many chicks as those that were simply dyed. Crowell suspects this is either because the devices disorient the birds or because it takes more effort for the birds with transmitters to swim, dive and feed. One reason researchers don't study the effects of their monitoring equipment very often, he concedes, is "because they don't want to know the answers."

Of 11 grizzly bears trapped and fitted with bulky radio transmitters three years ago in Canada's Yoho and Kootenay national parks, six have turned up dead—none from natural

causes. Four were shot by hunters or poachers, one was killed as a nuisance, and one was hit by a bus. The park managers say this demonstrates the difficulty of protecting wildlife amid competing land uses, tourism and the market for wild animal parts. But did the capture and collaring have adverse effects on the grizzlies? Did it affect their judgment, throw them off balance, make them more vulnerable to the human predator? Studies show that merely changing the shade of an animal's coloration can affect its place in the hierarchy and its mating success. So what about saddling them with a bulky collar or stapling them with a big ear tag?

"It doesn't do them any goddam good. That we can be sure of." That's how grizzly bear expert Doug Peacock sees it. He's hung out with grizzlies from Chihuahua, Mexico, to the Arctic Sea since 1968, when he barely made it out of Vietnam with his mind and body intact. Peacock served as the model for one of the characters in his friend Edward Abbey's novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, a book that has inspired a generation of "eco-warriors." He takes a hard line against government interference with this imposing creature, one of the wild's last symbols of fierce independence. Ten years ago, Peacock helped track a young male grizzly wearing a steel collar, but it got away. "It's dead by now. The collar strangled it. Male grizzlies grow every year of life.

"The more you handle these animals, bait them into traps with human food, with human scent, the more you endanger them. What they need to do is to avoid humans at all cost.

"In the last analysis, the research is nothing but paucity of imagination."

Now Peacock and a party including write-naturalist Peter Matthiessen are out looking for evidence of the last wild grizzly in Colorado's South San Juan Mountains on the New Mexico border. "This is a delicate operation. We don't even want to see a bear," Peacock says. "I just want to see scat, find a hair. We don't want to make the animals less wild by our presence. Maybe we'll sit downwind of it for three days waiting for it to walk by. We just need to know they exist."

He's doing it to change Colorado's image as John Denver's back yard. "I want to see the southern San Juans treated as a biological treasure. The presence of a grizzly bear would alter the entire perception. If you know a grizzly's down there, you would walk differently down the trail. It's not just a place to go cross-county skiing. It's a place of myth and legend."

The scientists who track wildlife with high-tech gadgetry insist they do it for the animals' own good. It is impossible to monitor the distant wanderings of a whale or cougar, they say, without picking up electronic signals from the animals themselves. And if we don't know where they are, they can't be protected, the scientists say.

Ecologist Rick Hopkins argues that his study of mountain lions in the Diablo Range outside San Jose, which gained him a doctorate from UC-Berkeley, would have been impossible without collaring about 30 lions. "It's the only substantial way to do research. You don't just observe lions. They're secretive and elusive. Think about looking for 10 in 100 square miles."

The lions that Hopkins hunted with dogs, treed and

Continued page 10

shot with tranquilizers did not exhibit any short-term behavior anomalies, in his opinion. Yet no study was done to compare behavior of tagged pumas with untagged pumas. "We know enough about different species to know if there'll be problem," he says. "Mountain lions have a very forgiving skeletal structure."

After Hopkins knocked out the animals, they were lowered from the trees and laid out on the ground. He fitted them with 1-1/2 pound collars and took blood samples. He did not extract seminal fluid or teeth as do some other mountain lion researchers. In warmer months, he packed them with ice and

soaked them in water to cool them down after the exhausting chase. In cold weather, he wrapped them in "space blankets."

Early on, one of the cats he was chasing died when it got wedged in a tree and suffocated. But, since he lost only one animal out of 30, he says he'd do it again. "We think the questions we're trying to answer (about the animals' population density and movement patterns) are worth the low level of mortality; however, the questions must be even more profound when it's an endangered species."

One of the most controversial catch-them-and-test-them studies is being conducted on 100 bottlenose dolphins in the Gulf of Mex-

ico near Sarasota, Fla. The dolphins are periodically hunted down, hauled in with nets and held for 45 minutes while they are jabbed for blood, weighed and recorded for whistle-sound communication. A tooth is often pulled to determine the dolphin's age.

"We have to kill a species to save it. It's a dangerous trend".

The dolphin study has become a much-publicized endeavor for researcher Randall Wells of Chicago's Brookfield Zoo. Wells accepts payment for the research project from people who want to take part in the capture experience. In June, 18 people paid \$2,250 each to join an expedition organized under the auspices of Earthwatch, a nonprofit group based in Watertown, Mass., that organized environmental research vacations. Wells is adding a second annual capture trip for Earthwatch in December.

Wells defends the capture study by saying it doesn't harm the animals or affect their behavior. He claims that he knows most of the animals by sight and can see that they haven't moved out of their ranges or deteriorated in their social interaction with other dolphins. According to Wells, the study has helped him learn about the creatures' genetic links, mating habits between groups and kinds and amounts of pollutants in their bodies. Through tooth-pulling, says the researcher, he was able to find out that the oldest dolphin is 50 years old, 20 years older than what was once believed.

"So what?" says Stan Minasian, who started the San Francisco-based Marine Mammal Fund 21 years ago to save dolphins from being captured in tuna nets. "How

does this benefit the dolphin population? You're causing them pain and disturbing them when better results are available through longer observational studies."

Marine mammal research brings out a weird mentality in some researchers, Minasian says. "It's like a cowboy and rodeo show. When you've chased the dolphin to exhaustion, dragged it up with a net and yanked out a tooth, it's wrong, absolutely wrong." He's seen some researchers run their boats up the backs of humpback whales.

"What's the purpose of the research? If they're trying to find out the population, they can go out and count." Researchers can discover pollutant loads in dolphins by analyzing the carcasses of those that die of natural causes, says Minasian. Furthermore, the "slice-and-dice research" conducted by Wells on a small bottlenose group can't be extrapolated to other populations, he says.

Minasian says there are less disruptive ways of studying dolphins, pointing to long-term studies in the Bahamas where scientists respectfully observe spotted dolphins over years by swimming with them.

Most wildlife researchers try to minimize the havoc they create and carefully consider the ethics of their work. Biologist Peter Pyle, who works for the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, says, "I want to make sure that the amount of disturbance is paid back by the amount we learn. The individuals we study are making small sacrifices for the species as a whole."

But scientists are reluctant to concede that their studies can cause harm. "We're observing, but tampering is not the right word," says Point Reyes research director William Sydeman. According to mountain lion researcher



Hopkins, those who say mountain lions don't like collars and transmitters hanging around their necks are being anthropomorphic, or giving the animal human qualities.

Jim Nollman, who founded Interspecies Communication in the San Juan Islands to communicate with marine mammals, gets impatient with that point of view. "You're told you can't have compassion or you're being anthropomorphic. It's just a way for those people to justify their meanness of spirit and failure to relate to the animals as peers. Scientists never want to think of the animals as individuals.

The aptly named Priscilla Feral of Friends of Animals in Norwalk, Conn., agrees that there's nothing wrong with attributing feelings to animals. "Nothing disturbs me more than to see some polar bear walking around with some huge monstrosity of a radio collar or a Day-Glo number sprayed on its backside. I've imagined being another polar bear seeing this polar bear. How are they supposed to mate? Imagine warming up to one of these polar bears. At the least it would stir fear. It's a disturbance to a sentient being. It's not really a complicated issue. An animal considers it a foreign object."

And what of the researcher's long-term obligation to the tracked animal? asks Feral. "When a battery wears down, is the researcher committed to tracking down the animal and removing the nuisance collar? If he's not, you know what? He's a son of a bitch, and you can quote me."

What we see here is a clash of philosophies, two conflicting themes about the natural world. Is the wilderness already so dominated by humans that its future depends on a scientific cataloging and inspection of its inhabitants?

Or should we declare certain rough and beautiful expanses of the great outdoors off-limits to pushy human curiosity? Most environmentalists advance the second view, and it is a compelling one. If the wilderness is reduced to charts and figures, they argue, our lives too will be immeasurably diminished. For we are all born of nature, and sustained by it.

"When a battery wears down, is the researcher committed to tracking down the animal and removing the nuisance collar?"

Ben White of Sea Shepherd, the feisty Florida-based environmental group, says, "Our task right now is to draw the line and say 'Enough is enough,' whether it's invasive research or capture for entertainment or killing for science. They're all facets of our continuing war against nature.

"We think we're independent, but we must plow under our arrogance and embrace these creatures as kin. These animals aren't just stuff for supporting our starring role on this planet. The only studies I'm in favor of are to protect animals from people, and not the other way around."

Many scientists are unwilling to deal with animals as peers. It's that failure to make a community within nature that is at the crux of our environmental crises, says Nollman, "All ecology is a sense of interspecies community. Humans have lost that touch. We have no sense of community. We've forgotten how to perceive nature. All we have left is the study of it."

One of the Farallon Islands volunteers who's

tagged dozens of seal pups admits that she feels a deep sense of conflict about her work: "It's important that people know we're torn over this. If you don't have numbers, you don't have anything, scientists tell us. But when do you cross the line? There are places that seem like they should just belong to the animals."

These wild places, though, are fast disappearing. As the state's birds and beasts get pushed into sanctuaries and preserves. California is turning into a "glorified theme park," warns Sam LeBudde, the man whose videotapes of dolphins dying in tuna nets shocked the American people into protecting them. "Wildlife managers aren't willing to draw hard and fast lines and say if you want to stack yourself on top of each other in L.A., that's fine, but don't expect species in wilderness areas to thrive or even survive under the same conditions. They've got to say there's not going to be development here. This is a bioserve. This is where nature is allowed to be natural. We'll observe it, in a non-invasive way, but we can study it without disturbing its natural functions."

If we as a nation are not willing to draw these "hard and fast lines," then the American wilderness may well be in danger of losing its power to astound. Science may have the best of intentions, but under its insistent gaze, the wild could cease to be, in Doug Peacock's words, "a place of myth and legend."

Jane Kay is the San Francisco Examiner's environmental writer.

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Conflicts *continued*

less moral than maintaining a pet snake? The following discussion is the result of my musings on these questions. (Note that I am concerned here solely with moral issues related to what pets eat, not with other aspects of pet-keeping, such as their subservient role to humans.)

First, a couple of assumptions and an irrefutable fact. The first assumption is that some immoral acts are more immoral than others. Murder is immoral. But, other considerations being equal (e.g., the degree of suffering involved) it is more immoral to kill 10 innocent people than 1 innocent person. Similarly, whereas it is immoral to exceed the speed limit while driving through a school zone, it is more immoral to go 70 miles per hour in front of a school than 33 miles per hour. This concept is recognized by the judicial system, which metes out different punishments depending on the severity of the crime. My second assumption is borrowed from animal rights philosophers themselves. Human likes and dislikes about an animal species are often based on emotional criteria such as how cute they are and how we define their social roles (Burghardt & Herzog, 1980), and I will go along with Singer (1975) and Regan (1983) in assuming that anthropocentric human aesthetic preferences, which invariably result in a scale on which kittens rank higher than snakes, are not particularly relevant to the ethics of how an animal or species should be treated. Logically, the ability to suffer and feel pain seems a more relevant criteria for making decisions about the use of a species than the fact that it has big eyes. The irrefutable biological fact on which any argument is based is that some

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creatures can only survive by eating other creatures.

Ethics of Pet Food

Consider the ethics of feeding pets. The person who accused me of offering live kittens to Sam is a cat lover. She keeps several at home, and they have free range of both her house and the surrounding woods. Cats are obligate carnivores and, unlike humans and dogs, they must consume other animals in order to meet their nutritional requirements. Each day, the majority of cats in this country are given the canned flesh of a wide variety of vertebrates. I recently surveyed the cat food shelves of my local supermarket and found tinned pig, cow, turkey, chicken, horse, and even the morally suspect tuna fish and veal. Even dried cat food was advertised as containing "fresh meat."

Feline food habits create an ecological problem of considerable magnitude. There are approximately 54 million cats in the United States, each of which consume the equivalent of three ounces of vertebrate meat per day. Needless to say, large numbers of animals are slaughtered annually ultimately to satisfy the needs of cat fanciers for affection. Furthermore, most cats spend at least part of their day out of doors. Anyone who has lived with cats soon develops respect, perhaps even grudging admiration, for their predatory proclivities and effective hunting techniques, and even cats that are well fed by their owners have a strong urge to hunt natural prey (Turner & Meister, 1988).

It has recently been shown that pet cats can wreak havoc on populations of small mammals and birds in suburban neighborhoods. Churcher

and Lawton (1989) in a study of the feeding ecology of cats in England, estimated that the 5 million domestic cats in Britain kill at least 70 million small animals per year, 20 million of which are birds. It is ironic that many cat lovers also enjoy birds and maintain feeders in their back yards, inadvertently luring these hapless creatures to their deaths at the claws of the family pet. All of this is simply to suggest that there are significant ethical problems raised by the diet of pet cats. In fact, if each of the pet cats in the United States killed only two mice, chipmunks, or baby birds each year, the number of animals slaughtered by pets would greatly exceed the number of animals used for research.

"Any use of an animal, be it for research or companionship, poses conflicts of interest..."

What about the morality of keeping boa constrictors as pets? Like cats, snakes are carnivorous. Unlike cats, boas have a very low metabolism, which means that they do not eat very much; they can go for months without eating at all and with no apparent discomfort or adverse health effects. Indeed, a recent field study found that the typical seven-foot boa constrictor living in the jungles of Central America ingests the equivalent of about six rats per year (H. Greene, personal communication, August, 1987). A pet snake consumes a very small fraction of the vertebrate flesh eaten by the typical house cat. Hence, under the first assumption, it would seem to follow that the dietary habits of boa constrictors pose a moral problem of somewhat lesser magnitude than the

diet of cats because of the difference on the numbers of animals that die in order to feed the pet population.

However, given that boa constrictors need to eat, what should we feed them? Right now, Sam eats mice that I purchase from a pet shop for about one dollar each. To minimize the suffering of these creatures, I kill them before I give them to the snake. I am the first to admit that I am troubled by this aspect of snake-keeping and would prefer the option typically chosen by cat owners. They have someone else do their killing for them by purchasing cans of animal flesh at the supermarket. My local store does not stock canned mice, and Sam would probably not like it even if it were available. Furthermore, I do not particularly like the idea that mice are being raised simply to become snake food. (Neither do I like the idea that some dogs are raised just to be research subjects when "pound" animals are available; more animals ultimately die.) However, I do not see an easy way out of this dilemma. Sam was an accident. He was not born so that my son could have a pet snake. But, like it or not, he is here, and if I do not feed him, he will starve to death. If I gave Sam away, the moral burden of his diet would simply be shifted to his new owner.

Finally, Sam is growing. In a couple of years he will need something larger than mice to eat. What am I going to feed him? If I give him rats, or chickens, I will be faced with the same problem posed by feeding him mice: The animals are raised simply to be eaten. Given the moral ambiguities of pet keeping, I would feel a lot better if Sam could subsist on animals that were going to be killed anyway. Which brings me back to kittens.

Each year in the United States at least 6 million un-

wanted cats are "put to sleep," a euphemism for euthanasia, itself a euphemism for being killed. Some of them are killed by injection, some are gassed, some are left by roadsides where they are hit by cars. You can probably see where this is going.

The question is the one raised by my accuser: Is it immoral to feed kittens to big snakes? I think the answer is yes. However, I suspect that it is also immoral to feed pieces of calves, horses, pigs, fish, and song birds to cats. Remember the first assumption. Given that each snake eats a lot fewer vertebrates than each kitty, keeping a pet snake would seem less immoral than keeping a pet cat.

To take the argument further, let me rephrase the question slightly and ask, is it more immoral to feed kittens to snakes than rats to snakes? I suggest that it depends on the source of the animal. If the rats and kittens were born and raised for the purposes of becoming snake food, then the act of feeding either to snakes is equally immoral. However, what about the choice between feeding the snake a rat raised to be snake food or a kitten who will be "put to sleep" because it is unwanted? Are we not forced to conclude that feeding the kitten to the snake is a less immoral choice than feeding the rat to it? Could it be that it is immoral *not* to feed unwanted kittens awaiting euthanasia to the population of captive snakes in homes and zoos that are currently scarfing up the thousands of small furry mammals that are raised solely as snake food? In the long run, fewer creatures would be killed to satisfy a powerful human motive—the urge to keep pets (Serpell, 1986).

Human Psychology and Moral Decisions

I admit to being troubled by my own line of argument.

It violates my moral intuition that, illogically, places cute kittens higher on the proverbial scale than beady-eyed rats. I do not intend to pick up a cat for Sam each month at my local animal "shelter," and I expect that most readers share my aversion to feeding even about to be euthanized kittens to snakes. The fact that we find the specter of feeding cats to snakes repugnant tells us something about how we make moral decisions as they pertain to animals. Kittens are adorable. Adult cats are generally not as cute, but still, we would not want to feed them to snakes. Why? I suspect that the reason has to do with their social definition as "companions," not "pet food," a topic addressed more fully elsewhere (Herzog, 1988).

Furthermore, it seems to me that feeding kittens to boa constrictors (or cat food to cats) is a metaphor for all of our relations with other species, including animal research. Any use of an animal, be it for research or companionship, poses conflicts of interests—between researcher and lab animal, pet owner and pet, predator and prey. Many animal rights advocates are reluctant to acknowledge that using animals for any human purpose, even to satisfy our needs to nurture other species, is fraught with ethical ambiguities. The owners of both kittens and snakes place the interests of their pet ahead of the unfortunate animals that the pet must eat. Is this really so different from researchers who place the interests of sick animals or humans ahead of those animals that are "subjects" of research designed to find ways of alleviating suffering?

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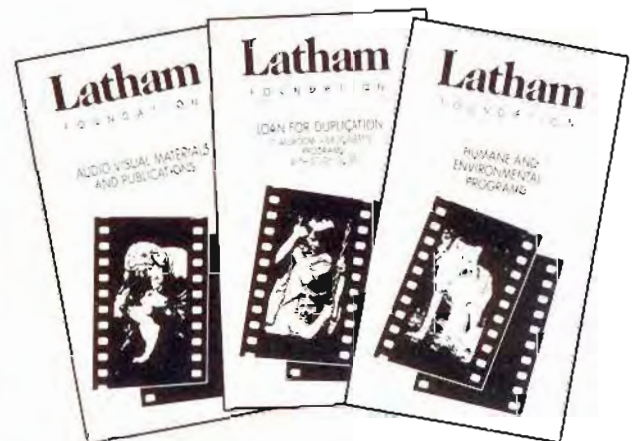
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Physiological Effects of the Use of a Companion Animal Dog as a Cue to Relaxation in Diagnosed Hypertensives

Sue Todd Schuelke, RN, MSN, Brenda Trask, RN, MSN, Connie Wallace, RN, MSN, Mara M. Baun, DNSc., Nancy Bergstrom, Ph.D., RN, Barbara McCabe, Ph.D., RN

The purpose of this study was to determine if petting a companion dog to whom an attachment bond had been formed could serve as a cue for relaxation in diagnosed hypertensives. "Cue" in this study is defined as a stimulus that serves as a subconscious guide to an organism's response.

One non-traditional relaxation method is petting or stroking a companion animal. It differs from other more widely accepted methods, such as biofeedback and progressive relaxation exercises, in that the attachment bond formed with the pet elicits the physiological responses indicative of relaxation rather than the extensive positive-negative feedback training involved in other therapies.

The human and pet are significant attachment figures for one another (Ryneerson, 1978). Animals who are selected as pets are generally chosen because of an innate ability to display and respond to attachment. As a source of contact comfort, a pet can reduce its owner's anxiety and decrease sympathetic nervous system arousal. Pets can also provide a feeling of safety and a relaxing center of attention.

Some empirical evidence exists for the relaxation response to companion animals and the actual or potential health benefits for their human companions. Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch, and Thomas (1980) documented that 58% of the survivors surveyed 1 year post-myocardial infarction/angina pectoris had one or more pets. Of the patients who did not own pets, 23% died whereas only 6% of the pet owners died within the first year. The authors speculated that the contact comfort provided by the pets may affect the owner's physiological responses. Statistically significant decreases in both systolic and diastolic blood pressures have been reported in normotensive subjects (Baun, Bergstrom, Langston, & Thoma, 1984; Grossberg & Alf, 1985; Katcher, 1981).

In the only previous reported study using a small sample of hypertensives (10 subjects), there were statistically significant decreases over time in systolic and diastolic pressures when petting the subject's companion dog and statistically significant increases in finger temperature, perhaps an even better indicator of relaxation than blood pressure (Baun, Thoma, Langston, & Bergstrom, 1987). These results, while promising, represented findings from only a small sample. The question was asked if similar results would be obtained from a larger sample. Thus, it was hypothesized that petting a companion dog could serve as a cue for short-term relaxation of hypertensive individuals resulting in lower blood pressure and heart rate and increased finger temperature.

Method

Design. A within-subject design was used to study the effects of petting a companion or control dog on the dependent variables of systolic and diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, and finger temperature.

Sample. Unpaid volunteer subjects were recruited from a midwestern metropolitan area by contacts with kennel clubs, hypertensive clinics, veterinarians, and acquaintances. Crite-

ria for inclusion in the study were (a) diagnosis of hypertension by a physician, (b) 19 years of age or older, (c) ability to give informed consent, (d) owner of a companion dog to whom s/he was attached, (e) willingness to come to the Behavioral Research Laboratory, and (f) ability to speak and understand the English language. The criterion for hypertension was the World Health Organization guidelines of systolic pressure 160 and diastolic pressure 90 mmHg. Pet attachment was confirmed by the Pet Attitude Scale. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Animal Review Committee (ARC) of the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Instruments

Pet Attitude Scale. The Pet Attitude Scale was utilized to measure favorableness toward pets (Templer, Salter, Baldwin, & Veleber, 1981). The Pet Attitude Scale is an 18-item Likert format scale that has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .93 ($p < .001$) and test-retest reliability of .92 ($p < .001$). Construct validity was established by principal-component factor analysis. Range of possible scores is 38 to 266 with higher scores indicating more favorable attitudes.

Kendall blood pressure monitor. A Kendall blood pressure monitor model 8200 was used to measure systolic and diastolic blood pressure in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) and heart rate in beats per minute (bpm). The blood pressure monitor was fully automatic and noninvasive with reading displayed on digital readout windows. The blood pressure monitor was calibrated using a mercury manometer immediately prior to the study. The monitor contains a microcomputer that automatically calibrates a pressure transducer zero reference before measurement. Drift over time was negligible. Specifications indicated the heart rate range of the monitor was 30 to 300 bpm.

YSI telethermometer. Peripheral skin temperature was measured by the YSI telethermometer. The telethermometer was calibrated by the Biomedical Instrumentation Department immediately prior to the study by comparing the thermistor probe to a National Bureau of Standards' (NBS) calibrated Fahrenheit mercury thermometer.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study was attachment to a companion dog. Since it had been found in an earlier study (Baun et al., 1984) that petting one's own dog to whom one was attached produced favorable effects on blood pressure, each subject's companion dog was used in this study. Because the active movement of petting could, of itself, increase blood pressure and heart rate in order to meet the metabolic demands of the muscles involved, the control protocol involved petting an unknown dog. In this way, the experimental and control protocols were identical in every way except for the element of attachment during the experimental treatment. Thus, it could be determined if petting one's dog could be therapeutic for hypertensives, or if some other factor was involved.

Procedures

The subjects came with their dogs to the Behavioral Research Laboratory reception area. Prior to the study, informed consent was signed. In order to make each study session for each subject as similar as possible, the preliminary steps of gathering background information, presentation of instruc-

tions, and obtaining baseline and experimental conditions were presented in the same order and by the same investigator. Approximately 15-minutes were allowed for subjects to draw for random treatment order (own pet versus control) and complete the Pet Attitude Scale and a demographic data form so that blood pressure and heart rate had a chance to stabilize at a baseline level prior to the study. The subject was seated on a low, upholstered bench with a back so s/he was upright with feet flat on the floor. The monitoring equipment was attached to the subject's non-dominant arm which was positioned on a pillow on a low table.

The Behavioral Laboratory was equipped with a one-way mirror of which the subject was made aware and which facilitated observation of the subject's interaction with the dog. The blood pressure monitoring device and the finger temperature were fitted with long electrical cords and were located behind the one-way mirror to eliminate noise and distraction during the study. A laboratory setting was selected to control for extraneous variables which were previously found in the subject's home (e.g., door slamming, phone ringing, children playing) (Oetting, Baun, Bergstrom, & Langston, 1985).

The first random-ordered treatment began after obtaining 5-minutes of a baseline recording of blood pressure, heart rate, and peripheral skin temperature at 1-minute intervals. A period of 3 minutes of sitting quietly between treatments was allowed. The alternate animal was then brought into the room, positioned next to the subject, and the 12-minute measurement session was repeated. The control dog was a beagle who had been used in previous studies and was trained to sit or lie quietly next to each subject. Blood pressure, heart rate, and peripheral skin temperature were measured every 3 minutes during each treatment. Both subjects and dogs were under direct visual observation of the investigators at all times.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, repeated measures ANOVA, and *t*-tests. Univariate repeated measures ANOVA was used on subjects' mean difference scores. The mean difference scores were calculated in order to eliminate individual differences between subjects and were determined by subtracting the subject's baseline value from each observed value. Baseline was defined as the mean of the five pretreatment recorded values. A significance level of *p* .05 was chosen for this study.

Results

The sample consisted of 31 volunteer adult subjects; seventeen subjects were female and 14 were male. The ages ranged from 21 to 85 years ($M = 50.01$, $SD = 13.2$). Subjects had been diagnosed as hypertensive for a mean of 8 years ($SD = 6.7$) and had established a companion bond with their dogs as evidenced by a possible score of 257 on the Pet Attitude Scale (PAS) ($M = 197.9$, $SD = 26.2$). Subjects were being treated for hypertension as follows: (a) eight were being treated with diet; (b) one used exercise alone; (c) one used diet, exercise, and behavior modification; (d) three were treated with diet and dialysis; and (e) all but two were being treated with medication. Seventy-one percent of the subjects were treated with diuretics and/or adrenergic beta blockers. Nine of the subjects smoked.

There were no statistically or clinically significant differences for heart rate. The time effect was statistically significant for mean differences in systolic ($F = 2.67$, $p = .049$) and diastolic ($F = 633.57$, $p = .0001$) pressures. Protocol effects, i.e., companion dog versus control dog, however, were not statistically significantly different either for systolic or diastolic pressures.

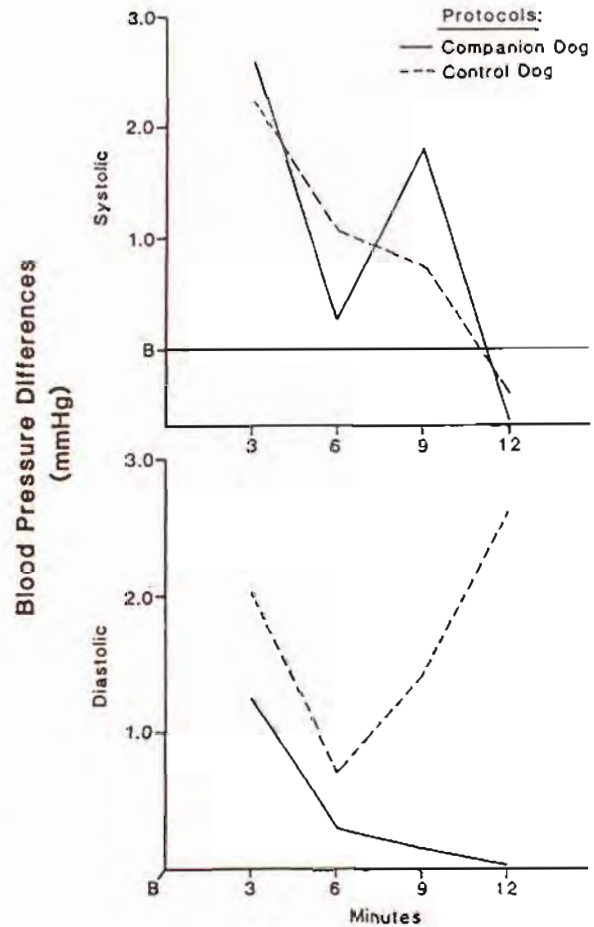


Figure 1. Mean differences in systolic and diastolic blood pressure during petting a companion dog versus a control dog (B - average of five baseline measures; mean differences were calculated by subtracting baseline from each measure at each time point).

There was a statistically significant time effect for peripheral skin temperature ($F = 4.29$, $p = .02$). In addition, there was a statistically significant protocol effect ($F = 3.78$, $p = .03$) with a larger mean increase seen in the subjects during the experimental protocol (See Figure 2).

Continued page 16

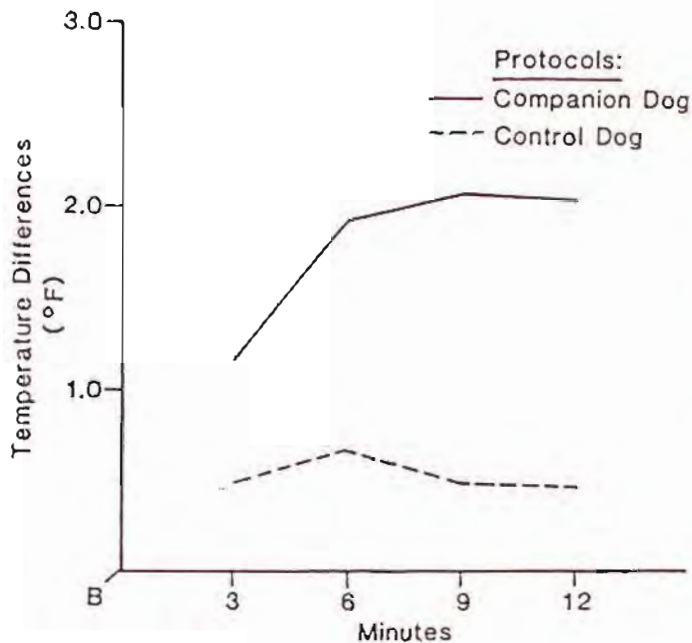


Figure 2. Mean differences in peripheral temperature during petting a companion dog versus a control dog.

Discussion

Relaxation occurred in this study during petting subjects' companion animals as evidenced by increased peripheral skin temperature but not by decreased blood pressure as demonstrated in earlier studies. Since finger temperature has been used as an indicator of relaxation in a number of previous studies, it may be a more sensitive indicator of relaxation during petting of a companion dog than is blood pressure which can be affected by altered physiological pressures in hypertensives, i.e., renal failure, elevated renin-angiotensin levels, atherosclerosis, and the use of beta blockers.

A number of well-known relaxation techniques have been used to either decrease blood pressure or increase finger temperature or both. These techniques accomplish their effect by training the individual to exert control over the autonomic nervous system, a major modulator of blood pressure. Relaxation techniques, such as autogenic relaxation, biofeedback, progressive muscle relaxation, medication, self-hypnosis, and visualization, have been used to treat migraines, tension headaches, insomnia, hypertension, and Reynaud's disease (McEntee & Petticord, 1987; Rice, Caldwell, Butler, & Robinson, 1986). Using biofeedback with individuals exhibiting Reynaud's syndrome, a mean decrease of 50% in symptom activity has been associated with increases in hand temperature of 3 to 4 C (Carney, 1983). Muscle relaxation training has been reported to increase digital finger temperature by 4 F (Pender, 1984).

Thus, the mean increase in digital finger temperature of 2 F in this study during petting a companion dog is somewhat lower than those increases reported with other techniques

but is still indicative of the effectiveness of dog petting. The increase of 2 F is similar to the increase of 2.6 F found in an earlier study of hypertensives (Baun et al., 1987).

The findings for blood pressure, on the other hand, were not entirely similar to those of earlier studies. In this study, there were no protocol differences between petting companion dogs with whom the subjects had formed a companion bond and petting an unknown dog as were found in an earlier study of normotensives (Baun et al., 1984). In the earlier study of hypertensives (Baun et al., 1987) and in two studies of normotensives (Grossberg & Alf, 1985; Katcher, 1981), decreases of 7.8, 4.55, and 7.2 mmHg were found for systolic and 4.3, 3.3, and 8.1 mmHg for diastolic blood pressures. Protocol differences in these studies may be responsible to some extent for the lack of congruence of findings with the present study. A more likely explanation is, however, that blood pressure is not a good indicator of relaxation in all groups of subjects. In the case of an altered physiological state such as hypertension, another variable like finger temperature may be a more reliable indicator. Since other studies of relaxation techniques by hypertensives (Pender, 1984, 1985) also have reported significant decreases in blood pressure, it may be that the one-time measurement session in a new and somewhat artificial setting was not adequate to detect differences. It should be noted that these other studies reported findings after a number of weeks of training in the technique used.

In addition, it was observed that blood pressure decreased in this study until the 6-minute observation point and then began to increase. Similarly, finger tem-

perature increased until the 9-minute observation and then began to decrease. It may be that the study session was too long for the subjects to sustain the initial relaxation effect of dog petting. These same time-limited effects were observed in the earlier study of hypertensives where blood pressure decreased for 14-minutes and then began to increase while finger temperature increased for 12-minutes and then began to decrease (Baun et al., 1987).

Recommendations for further research include developing training sessions using the companion animal as a cue to relaxation and measuring the physiological effects over a period of weeks. Such extended training might result in a more sustained blood pressure decrease than the one-time, untrained sessions used in this study.

In a time when preventive and nonmedical treatment is receiving substantial attention, a method as simple as petting one's dog has obvious appeal. It is not suggested that petting one's dog replaces other proven treatments for hypertension, but that petting a dog to whom one is attached also can promote relaxation with minimal side effects and maximum enjoyment.

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Marin Humane Society's Adoption Process

Quiet orange tabby with serious interest in sofas seeks literate home in wooded setting. "Let's curl up around a good book and see what happens." No dogs, mice O.K. Contact Peaches, Marin Humane Society.

If shelter animals could write personals, have a cup of kibble and interview prospects, adoptions would be a matter of getting the ads in on time. The adoption process is instead a job delegated to people. What is our job description?

Although marketing is a legitimate strategy for promoting adoptions, humane societies are not pet shops. We are not in the business of selling used pets. We are instead selling the humane ethic. If we handle pets like produce, we perpetuate the idea that they are "things" instead of living beings with rights and needs.

We know that the road to the animal shelter is paved with good intentions. Good people who mean well sometimes make not-so-good decisions about cats and dogs and other animals. These decisions can lead to inconvenience, expense, distress, suffering and death.

In addition, we must remember that every animal at the shelter was wanted once and is unwanted now. Thus, it is not enough that they are simply wanted again. If we are to end the cycle, they must be wanted in the context of reasoned commitment.

Finally, the overpopulation of companion animals doesn't happen simply because cats and dogs have reproductive capabilities. It happens because people permit them to breed. It is not enough to educate people about the problem and make

low-cost sterilization available. Until cats and dogs are perceived as beings to whom we have an abiding responsibility, people can blithely ignore the educational message and not find time to make an appointment for the low-cost surgery.

It may sound like the right politic but doesn't adoption screening put people off and isn't it easier to just give people what they want? Let's walk an applicant through an adoption and see what happens.

A prospect walks in and is greeted by a volunteer who welcomes him and answers questions. Visitors are encouraged to walk through the kennels and cattery. If they are interested in a particular animal, they are invited to return to the lobby and complete a one-page application and meet with a counselor.

Well-trained and personable counselors are the key to a well-received program. The counselor reviews the application quickly and chats with the applicant about their interest in and expectations of a companion animal. Counselors should try to match people and pets and help adopters think through the realities of sharing their home with a creature that sheds, barks, chews, drools, scratches, and wakes up early. Health, history and temperament profiles on each animal provide insight into problems and potential so that counselors can look for a home with lots of children or no children, another cat or no other cats, a work at home caretaker or a jogger.

It makes no sense to place a dog that was surrendered because it barked all day and the neighbors complained with an adopter who lives in a residential neighborhood and is gone 10 hours a day. Similarly, it is incomprehensible that one would place a cat hit by a car and rehabilitated in a foster home for 6 weeks with an adopter who lives near a busy street and will permit his cat to "come

and go." Adopters need guidance in deciding—a Cocker Spaniel rather than a Siberian Husky, a cat rather than a dog, an older housebroken dog rather than a puppy, or perhaps no pet at all until family members agree.

Assuming that there is a perceived alignment of human interest and commitment with satisfaction of the animal's known needs, a meeting is arranged. Adopters should be able to spend time in an exercise area or quiet room with the animal. Whenever possible, spouses, children, roommates and resident dogs are encouraged to come and meet the prospect as well. Once a final decision is made, a counselor reviews vaccinations, identification, parasite control, the transition to a new home and available veterinary and behavioral support services. Adoption and sterilization contracts are signed and the new family goes home loaded down with carriers, collars, sample foods and mounds of pamphlets, brochures, videocassettes, books and good advice.

An adoption can take as little as 45 minutes and as long as three hours depending on the need for a landlord check, a family consultation or whether it is a slow Tuesday morning or a busy Saturday afternoon.

Three hours and three visits to the store is a lot of time to spend picking out a pair of tennis shoes but it is not much time to choose a friend for life.

Humane shelters must remember that the challenge is not only to adopt 100% of the available animals but also a bit of the humane ethic with each placement so that one day the classifieds will have a "Seeking Pets" section.

Active family of four seeks athletic dog who enjoys water-sports and is patient with aging cats. Any size and shape; some fleas O.K. References from veterinarian. Long walks and summer camping trips guaranteed. Please call "Waiting."

Muttmatchers

This newspaper helps bring pets and owners together.

Diane Calkins

Furry faces peer out from the pages of this newspaper. Next to each photo is an apt description and an often heart-breaking story.

"Poor Painter still hasn't found a home," reads one story. "He's a very small shepherd and seems to get passed over for the bigger guys. He's put in a special request for Santa to find him a loving family who would like a cheerful guy, about 40 pounds, with a rollicking sense of humor."

Another story reads, "Bear is a gentle 7-year-old Newfoundland/Samoyed mix whose owners both died within two weeks of each other. He's totally housebroken; a good watchdog, too." Also advertised are Lady, an old arthritic Aussie mix who is partially blind, and Miss Licorice, "a sweet, bouncy black Labrador mix."

On the surface these classified advertisements read more like lost causes — older dogs, dime-a-dozen Lab mixes and equally common shepherds. But through the

effort and will of the mastermind behind *Muttmatchers Messenger*, a free newspaper with a circulation of 15,000 in six Southern California counties, these dogs (as well as countless cats) have found new homes.

Lifetime Of Rescues

The mastermind behind the tabloid is Suzanne Kane who has been rescuing animals since childhood. Her "very apparent passion" surfaced when she was just 2 years old.

"My mother took me to pick out a Beagle puppy," recalls Kane. "But when I found out the family was going to get rid of the mother dog, I decided I wanted her instead. We had her for 14 years."

At the age of 9, Kane talked friends into forming a group that raised money for the local humane society. One of these friends went on to found Exotics Unlimited, which rescues lions, tigers and bears. In the meantime, Kane continued rescuing not-so-exotic dogs and cats.

Eight years ago, Kane's passion led her to found an organization called the Humane Animal Rescue Team [HART], out of which *Muttmatchers Messenger* evolved. HART's purpose is to protect the pets of the terminally ill,

disabled and homeless in several California counties by helping with pet food, veterinary bills or even finding new homes when necessary. As HART has grown, volunteers have dealt with problems they had never foreseen, such as murder, rape, suicide, AIDS and battered families.

Foster Home Network

A natural outgrowth of the group's work has been the development of a network of foster homes for pets whose owners have died suddenly or are otherwise unable to keep the animals. At any one time, as many as 90 animals are cared for in these foster homes.

For example, Kane has recruited six volunteers in Southern California to rescue Collies. One of Kane's Collie rescuers, Rick Dunkerly of Whittier, first met Kane when he decided his rambunctious Sheltie needed a companion. Kane told Dunkerly about Willie, a weak, thin, dull-coated Collie that was scheduled to be euthanized at a local shelter.

Willie was at least 20 pounds underweight and had difficulty eating because his mouth was full of lesions — he had been driven to chew on rocks to ease his hunger. "Few creatures have had more reasons to hate man," says Dunkerly. "Yet Willie has loved us without reserve from the moment we lifted his weakened frame into the family car."

Willie has been joined by another Collie and a Miniature Dachshund, as well as the seemingly endless stream of Collies Dunkerly's family rescues from shelters and fosters until suitable homes are found.

"I got involved after learning that many breed rescuers will take only young animals, those that are 1 or 2 years old," says Dunkerly. "I have discovered that for the price of a \$14-a-week advertise-

ment in an Orange County newspaper, I can reach more than 1 million people. It usually takes me only about two weeks to find a home for a dog, regardless of its age."

Kane also occasionally takes animals into her own home, a home that now looks far more like an office. She specializes in what she kindly calls "difficult-to-place pets," such as Goldie, whose former owners were homeless and could afford to feed her only alfalfa pellets, which changed her metabolism and left her almost hairless, and Brandy, who is 12 years old and has a slight limp because three of her legs were broken (one twice) by her previous owner's ex-wife.

But Kane and her volunteers realize breed rescue alone is not the answer to the problem of homeless pets, especially since rescuers often burn out after three or four years. Instead, Kane's vision has been to unify hundreds of small humane and rescue groups, most of which tend to go off in different directions, continually reinventing the wheel along the way.

Circle Of Rescue

Since the first issue appeared in October 1988, *Muttmatchers Messenger* has acted as a powerful unifying force. When people see the animals and read their stories, the typical result is that those who get the paper either want to adopt a dog, get involved in rescuing dogs themselves or do both, says Dunkerly.

In one week, two people offered to build kennels on their acreage and become rescuers. Just a few days later, a woman agreed to take in abused dogs, and a man whose wife reads him the *Messenger* because he is blind also volunteered to foster at least one dog at a time.

"With each issue, more people are drawn into the cir-



cle of rescue, placement and caring," Dunkerly says. "And it's not just people on the streets but veterinarians, pet supply retailers, groomers and shelter workers who get involved. This is the exact opposite of the helplessness felt by a majority of isolated animal welfare groups."

The idea for the tabloid occurred to Kane after a friend visited Oxford, England, and reported that the local newspaper featured photos of pets available in shelters.

"Kane emphasizes that you'll never find a sad picture in Muttmatchers Messenger."

"If we sell cars and houses through photos, why not pets?" reasoned Kane. She had no doubt that alternatives are needed to the present system in which the only recourse for people who can no longer keep their pets is to give them up to public or private shelters, with no assurances that the animals will be adopted, or to abandon them.

"These people are desperate," says Kane. "They don't want to give up their pets, but they're forced to. The reality is that two out of three dogs do not spend their lives with their original owners, and 67 percent of all cats are abandoned within the first year of life."

Scattered among the classifieds placed by pet owners are ads for animals that have been bailed out of animal shelters, found abandoned or otherwise discovered by HART/Muttmatchers volunteers.

Kane writes the *Messenger* copy, and her husband, Phil, a college professor, puts it all together using \$20,000 worth of the latest desktop publishing technology. Local printers reduce their rates substantially to help get the *Messenger* out.

People trying to find homes for their own pets are charged \$15 per edition (\$50



maximum). Owners of pets 8 years and older are charged a flat \$15 to advertise on the "Seniors Page" until their dogs or cats are placed.

Besides providing a forum to let people know about pets needing homes, Kane and other HART volunteers educate the original owners about screening prospective adopters. They provide a fact sheet called "Information for the 'Free to a Good Home' Pet Owner," which emphasizes that it is the owner's responsibility to do the best he or she can for the animals. As Kane says, "They're going to give their dogs away anyway, so we need to help them do it in the best possible way."

In addition, sample contracts for both previous and new owners are included. The new owner, for instance, agrees to treat the dog or cat as a family pet and to provide regular veterinary care.

The fact sheet and sample contracts are provided to anyone who contacts Muttmatchers whether they decide to advertise in the newspaper or not. After all, as Kane emphasizes, their

aim is to make a difference to the animals in any way possible.

Dynamic Newspaper

With each issue, *Muttmatchers Messenger* changes a bit. A section for kids, written by a teenager, has been added, and the front page now features a handsome animal face next to an appropriate quote, such as Jeremy Bentham's: The question is not can they reason, not can they talk, but can they suffer?"

In the year since its inception, the newspaper has already paid for itself, partly through sales of advertising space to businesses. Although most of these businesses are not animal-related, each ad is illustrated with a photo of a pet. In one issue, an advertisement for an investment counselor's services featured a \$1 bill with a kitten's face in place of George Washington's.

Another source of revenue is published memorials to treasured pets that have died. Also, local business people and animal lovers agree to sponsor particular

animals and pay all advertising costs. One of Kane's many goals is to reach the point where each animal has a sponsor.

To save distribution costs, volunteers place hundreds of issues of the tabloid in places where they will have the greatest impact, such as veterinarians' offices, grooming shops, and feed and pet stores.

No Sad Faces

Kane emphasizes that you'll never find a sad picture in *Muttmatchers Messenger*. Although the tabloid does deal indirectly with the emotional and controversial subjects of pound seizure and animal research (through warnings about inadvertently giving away to dealers who masquerade as potential adopters but actually sell to researchers, and because many of the advertised animals were destined for research), each issue leaves the reader with an upbeat feeling.

"People don't respond if they're beaten over the head," Kane says. "With *Muttmatchers Messenger* they pick up something that's fun. People love the pictures, and they wait for the *Messenger* to come out now. They're even starting to call if it's a little late."

The tabloid has been especially successful in letting people know about the incredible number of adoptable animals, many purebred, that are available for a nominal fee to cover such expenses as spaying/neutering or vaccinations. One woman from San Luis Obispo found a gorgeous white shepherd through Shepherd Rescue, a group she hadn't known existed until she read *Muttmatchers Messenger*. She arrived to pick up the dog with the newspaper clutched in her hand.

And hers is just one of many success stories. Although the little shepherd Painter waited an entire year, he's now in the home of a

Continued page 20

man who has pronounced him "perfect." The bouncy Lab Miss Licorice helped ease the sorrow a family felt over losing their own Lab in a tragic accident.

Most important of all, HART/Muttmatcher volunteers share a commitment to carefully match people with pets.

Happy Endings

"Suzanne and the other volunteers were very honest and didn't try to foist any pet on us," says Amy Latherow, a recent adopter. "It was obvious that they would just as soon keep a dog. They do right not only by people but also by dogs."

The Latherows adopted their new dog, a 10-month-old Queensland Heeler named Aardvark (later renamed Sparky by their oldest daughter) soon after their third child was born. Amy Latherow discovered the *Messenger* at the grocery store and, attracted by the photos,

says she would have liked to adopt a dozen. She looked at two or three dogs before finally settling on Sparky with Kane's help.

As a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Latherow says she was especially pleased to adopt a dog that was scheduled to be sold for research purposes before being rescued.

"We got a wonderful dog in perfect condition, but we also stood up for something we believe in," says Latherow. "I will make sure to tell Sparky's story to other people. Seeing a dog that could have ended up as a research animal makes the issue real for people."

Lady also found a new home through Muttmatchers. Her 79-year-old owner had been attacked, stabbed and left to die as she got into her car one Sunday morning to drive to church.

The executor of her will called HART, which managed to place all her dogs and cats except Lady right away.

After an ad for the dog appeared in the newspaper, an interested family called, and volunteers took Lady to meet them.

"They thought Lady was darling," says Kane. "They didn't care that her vision could be better and that she had a limp. She now sleeps in the bedroom and is loved by them all."

Dogs such as Sparky, Painter, Bear, Miss Licorice and Lady, and their feline counterparts, aren't the only creatures HART/Muttmatchers tries to place. People ask for help with all sorts of animals, from macaws to chickens. Recently Kane was contacted about a woman who died and left three peacocks, 100 pigeons and three dogs.

In the first year of its existence, *Muttmatchers Messenger* has matched at least 500 pets with people. In the future, she hopes to see the 12-page newspaper grow, possibly doubling in size, and dreams

of starting regional publications in every part of the country.

Kane, a regular idea factory, brims with other plans and goals, especially that of networking the myriad animal groups and animal lovers together.

"After all, we have the power: More than 50 percent of the population has pets," stresses Kane. "But we have to meet each other and we have to organize because we're all fighting over the same dollar."

In the meantime, Kane calls the 20-hour days more than worth it.

"We owe them," she says. "I feel like they're all mine, every dog and every kitty."

Diane Calkins is a free-lance writer and photographer based in San Diego, California. The above article appeared in the October 1989 issue of Dog Fancy and is reprinted here with the permission of the author and the publication.



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The Adoption Policies of the San Francisco SPCA

Mike Rowell

A fundamental goal of The San Francisco SPCA is finding a loving, permanent home for every pet that comes into its care, and its adoption policies are designed to establish those lifelong relationships by matching the right animal with the right person.

To best match pet to owner, The SPCA has designed a comprehensive screening process which takes both adopter and animal into consideration when evaluating the adoption's success potential, and helps Shelter staff and volunteers decide whether an adoption is the best thing for both animal and adopter. In addition, The Society tries to ensure each potential adopter is responsible, capable, committed, and understands what pet ownership requires.

The adoption screening process takes maximum advantage of what has been learned from the Hearing Dog Program about establishing lifetime relationships between people and pets. For 14 years, the Hearing Dog Program has carefully screened applicants, matched them with the trained, formerly abandoned dogs they are best suited for, and provided recipients with a week of instruction with their canines. Once a Hearing Dog is placed with a deaf or hearing-impaired person, the relationship between canine and human is monitored over the lifetime of the dog. This thorough study of human/pet relationships has given the Society the ability to better understand the ingredients of a lifelong match, and the criteria to effectively screen for it.

Adoption statistics prove the screening process is an effective one. When someone adopts a pet, they are told they can return the animal anytime during its lifetime and we will find it a home.

Only 209 animals were returned last year—4 percent of last year's number of adoptions—and those animals were soon placed in new loving homes.

All potential adopters are required to fill out an adoption questionnaire, go through a screening interview, and be able to prove they can have a pet where they live, either by demonstrating home ownership or allowing Shelter Representatives to call their landlord.

When someone is looking for a pet, a Volunteer Adoption Counselor shows them the animal available and helps them get acquainted with the pets they express an interest in. The Adoption Counselor discusses the particular needs of each dog or cat with the potential adopter, and helps the pet-seeker decide which match-up would best suit both adopter and adoptee.

The adoption questionnaire asks why the person wants to adopt an animal, the number and fate of past pets, the number of current pets, specifics of the environ-

ment the animal will be living in, who will be primarily responsible for the animal's care, how many hours per day the animal will be left alone, and other questions pertinent to pet ownership.

When Client Service Representatives further screen adopters, they use the questionnaire as a basis for posing questions regarding the person's reasons for getting a pet and notions regarding pet care. The Representatives also discuss the responsibilities of pet ownership with the adopter to ensure that they're up to the task.

The interview process is comprehensive, but meant to be educational, not intimidating. Our Shelter staff never forget they are dealing with human beings, and when they have to say no to a would-be adopter, they try to assure the person that The SPCA simply wants what's best for the animal. And if someone seems a good candidate for pet ownership but has selected an animal inappropriate to their situation, a Shelter Representative may decline to adopt that specific animal to them and suggest a different one.

The Society works cooperatively with other Bay Area shelters to give a fresh

chance at life to dogs and cats who would otherwise be euthanized, and specializes in finding homes for difficult-to-place, abandoned and injured animals from other shelters.

Finding a suitable home for some of these animals takes extra time, resources and effort. Three-legged dogs, one-eyed cats, epileptic canines, diabetic felines: these are the kind of special animals The SPCA often takes in and cares for until someone gives them a second chance. While some of our animals require extra assistance, every animal in the Shelter has been screened for adoptability. They've all had thorough health exams, have tested negative for life-threatening illness (i.e., FeLV and FIV) and none of them have severe aggression problems.

One of the most successful programs is Adoption Outreach. By taking the Shelter's animals out to 34 different public sites, Adoption Outreach dramatically increases the adoption rate.

Although dogs are taken out occasionally, Adoption Outreach benefits cats almost exclusively, and is a boon to older cats, one-eyed cats, cats with special needs and cats who simply might get overlooked in the Shelter setting. By putting these special cats in the spotlight, Outreach Volunteers have a golden opportunity to showcase the virtues of these unique creatures for potential adopters.

In recent years, The San Francisco SPCA has made great strides in successfully placing all its adoptable animals in permanent, loving homes. Through vigorous expansion and reinforcement of every aspect of its Adoption Program, and with the continued support of its 50,644 contributing members, The SF/SPCA intends to find even more homes for the abandoned pets of the Bay Area in the years to come.

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Photograph © San Francisco SPCA



We appreciate Bill Garrett's letter in response to questions we had posed at the end of the article "Alley Cat Allies: Dealing Humanely With Feral Cats," which appeared in the Fall 1991 issue of The Latham Letter. The questions were concerning the reliability of food sources, the prevention and/or treatment of traffic injuries as well as those inflicted by other animals and an unresolved sanitation problem.

atlanta humane society

The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Inc.

offices and shelter
981 howell mill road northwest
atlanta, georgia 30318
phone 404 875-5331

November 12, 1991

Dear Mr. Tebault:

I am writing in response to your comments at the end of the article by Becky Robinson and Louise Holton. (Alley Cat Allies, Latham Letter Vol XIII, No. 4, Fall 1991).

I think perhaps I can answer some of your questions and pose a few more having contended with such a program (albeit on a small scale) in our area.

1. Food sources disappear, most people involved are older and pass away or are young and very mobile and move or lose interest. Food sources invariable "dry up".
2. Injuries are dealt with by the local humane societies or animal control who far too often pick up the dead and dying and seldom have the luxury to even give these cats a "peaceful death", much less often treat their wounds, far too often death is to near.
3. These cats are often the victims of other feral cats who seem to be more aggressive and tenacious than those altered. I believe it is the syndrome of the "weak" being driven out, usually injured and carrying debilitating abscess wounds.
4. Additional questions may also be who deals with those who are poisoned (intentionally as well as accidentally). Those who are shot, beaten, clubbed etc. etc. by people who are experiencing property and sanitation damage. The local Society or animal control, because it now has become a "messy" problem no one else wants to deal with.

I wish I had the answers but I don't and I am disturbed by those who seem to always have an answer even though it is only a partial one.

Sincerely,



Bill Garrett
Executive Director

New Release

“Dog Bite Prevention”

15 Minutes — VHS



Prevention through understanding is the focus of this new video produced by the Latham Foundation which explains how to recognize and handle dangerous dogs and how not to become a statistic. Highly skilled dog trainers demonstrate what to do if threatened by an aggressive dog. “Dog Bite Prevention” is recommended viewing for postal workers, delivery people, utility employees, sales people, and anyone who has occasion to make home visits. The video is also important for dog owners, since most unreported dog bites occur within the home — to dog owners and their families.

Purchase Price \$50

Call Latham for preview information



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