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Register of Deeds

Dog Days of Summer

While any pet owner can certainly attest to the many benefits of living with a furry friend, research confirming the health benefits of senior pet ownership have appeared in many well-respected publications and medical journals. Studies have shown that the bond between people and their pets can increase fitness, lower stress, and bring happiness to their owners. Let's face it. Getting older can be very lonely. Loved ones and friends move or pass away, and it becomes increasingly difficult to leave the house and participate in once-loved activities. But there is one source of comfort and companionship that benefits seniors in countless ways: pets.



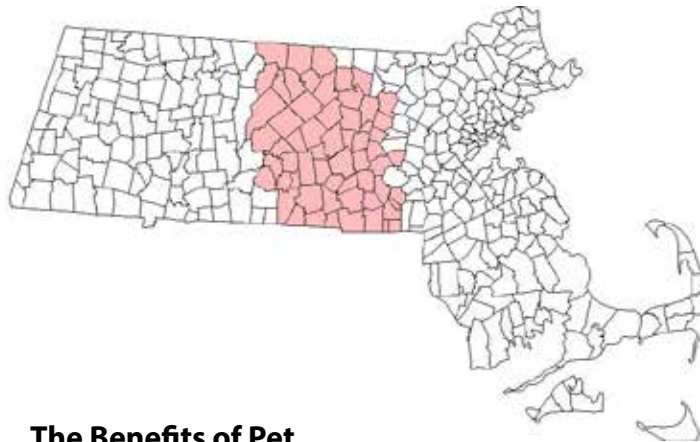
Worcester Registry of Deeds

Newsletter

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The Benefits of Pet Ownership for The Elderly

Animals can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and increase social interaction and physical activity. Pets provide other intangibles, too. "Dogs and cats live very much in the present" says Dr. Jay P. Granat, a New Jersey-based psychotherapist. "They don't worry about tomorrow, which can be a very scary concept for an older

person. An animal embodies that sense of here and now, and it tends to rub off on people." Pets can also have an astounding effect on symptoms of depression and feelings of loneliness. Psychologist Penny B. Donnenfeld, who brings her own golden retriever mix, Sandee, to her New York City office, has even witnessed animals' ability to prompt better memory recall in their elderly owners. "I've seen

Pet Ownership continues on page 2

Community Statistics

Worcester South District

Number of Recordings in May 2024

9866

Median Home Value

\$470k

Homes Owned vs. Rented

70%

Total Housing Units

351,764

Density (Houses per Square Mile)

233



Pet Ownership continued from page 1

those with memory loss interact with an animal and regain access to memories from long ago," she explains. "Having a pet helps the senior focus on something other than their physical problems and negative preoccupations about loss or aging." Animals benefit from adoption, too, particularly when seniors adopt older pets. "These lucky animals go from the pound to paradise". Retired adopters tend to have lots of time to devote to a previously unwanted pet, "forming a lasting bond," says Chicago veterinarian Dr. Tony Kremer, who operates Help Save Pets, a nonprofit rescue organization, with his wife Meg.

While the advantages of pet ownership are undeniable, there are some drawbacks and consequences to

be aware of before going out to adopt a furry friend for an aging loved one. Dr. Donnenfeld encourages seniors and caregivers to have a thorough conversation about pet ownership before welcoming a pet into the family.

10 Questions to Ask When Considering a Pet for a Senior

- 1. Is the senior set in their ways?** "If change isn't your loved one's cup of tea, then they may not be a good candidate," adopting an animal usually affects a person's whole daily routine.
- 2. Have they had a pet before?** Some have the opinion that it's best if the elderly person is an experienced owner. However, if they are open to a new and rewarding commitment, then first-tim-

Spotlight

How to Find the Right Pet for a Senior

ers can still make great owners.

- 3. Does the senior have any disabilities or functional limitations?** Dogs can be wonderful companions who encourage a senior to exercise. But dogs can be a challenge for individuals with limited mobility. If taking a dog outside and walking it is too trying, lower maintenance animals like cats and birds may be preferable
- 4. Would a therapeutic or emotional support animal be beneficial?** If a person is very infirm or impaired, they may be a candidate for a specially trained therapy dog to help them function both at home and while on outings.
- 5. What age pet would be best?** A puppy or kitten may not be ideal for elderly owners because of the intensive care and training they require. Furthermore, young pets may outlive their owners. It's important to consider

that other animals like birds, have especially long life spans. On the other hand, a senior pet may have its own physical limitations and illnesses, but they are usually well-trained already.

- 6. What temperament would be a good fit for the senior?** It is very important to research different breeds' characteristics and interact with prospective adoptees to get a feel for their energy levels and personality. Many older people might think they'd do better with a Jack Russell Terrier because it's a small breed, but they are very high energy and require a great deal of effort and commitment. While there are some general truths about specific breeds, every animal is unique.
- 7. Is the pet healthy?** It's important that any pet be examined by a professional prior to adoption. You don't want to compromise an older person's immune system since

some pets carry diseases. Unhealthy pets can be difficult for seniors to handle both emotionally and financially.

8. One pet or two? While multiple pets can keep each other company, that may not be a good idea for an older person. Two animals may bond with each other rather than with their owner.

9. Are finances an issue? Pets are a significant long-term financial commitment. A small puppy can rack up more than \$810 for food, medical care, toys and grooming just in its first year. A low-maintenance animal like a fish is less expensive, coming in at about \$235, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Be sure to carefully consider a senior's current budget before taking home any animal

10. Is there a backup plan in place for the pet? It isn't pleasant to think about, but owners must plan for the unexpected for their pets, too. If a senior had to go to the hospital, spend time in a short-term rehabilitation facility, or move to a long-term care community, what would happen to their animal(s)? What would happen if they

passed away? Our golden years can be very unpredictable, so it's important to have a contingency plan in place for our furry and feathered friends before an emergency strikes. Without one, beloved animals may wind up back in a shelter.

Where to Find a Pet for a Senior

While breeders are a good source, adopting from shelters is usually much less expensive and comes with the added benefits of giving an unwanted animal a home and possibly saving it from euthanasia. Some shelters even offer reduced adoption fees for older pets and adopters. Shelter employees often know each animal's personality well and can assist in making a good match. Online pet shopping is also possible, thanks to sites like Petfinder.com, which allows potential owners to search a massive database of adoptable animals from nearly 11,000 animal and rescue groups nationwide. However, it's still recommended to meet a potential pet in person to more accurately gauge the fit.



Registry of Deeds Pets



Bailey



Charles & Thor



Layla



DejaVu & Layla



Ida & Rose

More ROD Pets



Max



Memphis



Milo



Pacha



Pretty Girl



Princess



Stitch



Tank

Local Animal Shelters

Worcester Animal Rescue League

Worcester, Ma 01606
(508) 853-0030
worcestearl.org

Pawfect Life Rescue

Uxbridge, Ma
(508) 526-3118
pawfectliferescue.org

Sterling Animal Shelter, Inc.

Sterling, Ma
(978) 422-8585
sterlingshelter.org

Second Chance Animal Services

Operates high quality veterinary hospitals in
Southbridge, Springfield, Worcester and North
Brookfield secondchanceanimals.org

Gardner Animal Shelter

Gardner, Ma
(978) 630-4950
gardner-ma.gov/819/Available-for-Adoption