



A brief note on animal health and human relation with pets

John Warner*

Department of Physiology, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

DESCRIPTION

It might seem that medical researchers have enough to of dealing with the ailment of people without considering animal illness. But our well-being is intertwined with the health of the world's creatures especially the dogs, cats and other companion animals that share our homes. Pet preference differs from country to country. In a poll of 22 nations, more than half of those surveyed reported owning at least one pet. Various illness strikes in a pet's life. Older dogs often have tumors, whereas older cats are treated for chronic kidney disease, based on a US data from 2.5 million dogs and 500,000 cats. Diabetes is almost three times more common in cats than in dogs. Over the past decade, the prevalence of diabetes in dogs has increased by 79.7% and in cats by 18%. Incidence of the capable fatal parasitic infection heartworm in dogs has fallen from the year 2011, owing to the use of preventative drugs. Most of the studies have filed many benefits of owning a pet, but allergies, bites and disease can mean that animals are not always good for humans.

Pets are dependent on people for their survival, but in return they bestow health benefits on their owners. Babies brought up in environment with dogs are, thanks to the contributions of microbes that live in pets' guts, less prone to asthma and obesity. Twenty years of research on animal health have made it clear that children who grow up with dogs have lower rates of asthma than those who do not. Many researchers attribute this finding to the hygiene hypothesis, the idea that exposure to small dirt early in life can ward off allergic diseases that can appear later. Without firm data to show a link between owning a dog and improved immune health, however, the idea remained unproven.

The researchers discovered that infants living with pets had a higher diversity of microbes in their guts than infants without pets. Past decade ago, one of the animal researcher findings would have been cause for alarm. Microbes mostly near at the time with germs were thought to be best kept at bay. A family history of allergies may even have prompted physicians to advise expectant parents to give up the family pet. In developed countries, the incidence of allergic and autoimmune diseases has been increasing for decades. In 1989, a researcher found that children who grew up with more siblings had lower rates of hay fever than those with fewer. Strachan, who introduced the hygiene hypothesis, proposed that the rise in allergic diseases was the result of cleaner environments brought about, in part, by higher standards of personal cleanliness.

Most of the researchers have confirmed that exposure to a little dirt through siblings, growing up on a farm or living in a developing country can be beneficial and even ward off disease. In 2015, capping decades of monitoring, researchers quantified the decrease in risk of asthma for children growing up with dogs. The scientists combed through the records of more than one million children born in Sweden between 2001 and 2010. Of the 275,000 or so school age children in the cohort, the researchers found that the children of dog-owning families had a 13% lower chance of developing asthma than their peers who grew up without a dog. The idea that pets can enhance the microbiome makes even more sense when viewed in light of the old friend's hypothesis, a refinement of the hygiene hypothesis. In this view, humans' co-evolution with livestock and animals has made us dependent on their microbes for human health and even survival. Losing contact with these 'old friends' might tip the delicate evolutionary balance.