



Siberian Husky Rescue of Florida, Inc.

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THIRD QUARTER NEWSLETTER — SEPTEMBER 2007

In this issue:

FROM THE SHRF BOARD

FROM THE SHRF Board of Directors

So far 2007 has been quite an active year for the SHRF Board of Directors (BOD)! A lot of 'firsts' and interesting issues have been put in front of us and some of them have been quite challenging. Luckily, the five volunteers who make up the SHRF BOD work very well together and share the same passion to save as many Sibes as we possibly can! We also feel blessed to have such a wonderful volunteer team working with us and supporting us.

RESCUE CONTACT INFORMATION

Our Foster home volunteers are especially dear to us as without them we could never be able to afford to take in all the dogs that we do. Since we have no shelter facilities, we rely on these brave souls to take strange, scared and sometimes abused furballs into their homes and love them like their own. We have a strong Foster base now with excellent leadership and experience, but we can always use more of you to join that team! The more foster homes we have the more dogs we can save. Many of you may not know that the number one reason that SHRF would have to turn down saving a Siberian is because we have no foster home for him or her to go to. WE NEED MORE FOSTER HOMES! If you can help, PLEASE let us know by filling out a foster application (<http://www.siberrescue.com/fosterol.htm>) or call us at 727-391-8934. Without our Fosters, we have no Rescue. Our Foster Director will be there with you every step of the way from beginning to end.

FROM THE EDITORS

SHRF VOLUNTEER of the QUARTER!

RESCUE EVENTS and FUNDRAISERS

The SHRF BOD would also like to thank our newest team that we created this year, the "FurFactors!" This past quarter, the FurFactor Team (consisting of Vols Janet C, Chris R, Carol R, Sally W, Dana M and AJ C) has been hard at work and very productive too. The purpose of this team is to call, email or write to all of the past SHRF adopters, update their contact information and check on the status of their furball. Since Rescuers thrive on the heartwarming stories of past adoptees, the SHRF BOD and the FurFactor Team want to thank all of you adopters out there who have responded and/or sent in wonderful pictures and stories about your lives with our SHRF kids. Some of these are included in this newsletter edition or are planned for future newsletters. If you have been contacted but haven't replied yet, please do, as we would love to be able to include you, too. For those furballs whom we learned have passed on over the Rainbow Bridge, we are saddened, but at the same time thankful that they had a second chance in life because of SHRF Volunteers and those of you who ultimately gave them safe haven and a good home.

OUR RESCUE VETS

THE DOGHOUSE

HAPPY ENDINGS

Lastly, another big thanks to all of our Volunteers who help us find the right homes for the right dogs by working together doing the time consuming reference and vet checks and home inspections. Also a big thank you to you adopters for working with our Volunteers and allowing them to 'do their job' - making it as painless as possible to process your application(s) in such a timely manner.

NOTICE: For the record, it is hereby noted that the current income tax documents regarding SHRF, Inc have been filed for 2006 and are available for public viewing upon request.

We hope everyone has a great remainder of 2007 and keep those pictures and updates coming!!!!

SHRF Board of Directors, Peggy W, Ginger K, Carolyn D, Joann K, Melanie B

**"Whoever said you can't buy happiness forgot about puppies."
Gene Hill**

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www.siberrescue.com

RESCUE PARTICIPATION

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or sponsor of the Siberian Husky Rescue of Florida, Inc., please visit the website at www.siberrescue.com

and fill out the appropriate application OR call or fax us anytime.

NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING

Business card size \$20 per year
1/4 page \$5 per issue
1/2 page \$10 per issue
Full page \$15 per issue

SUBMISSIONS

SEP 2007 PAGE 2

**From the Editors
Bob & Lorraine**

I have been wracking my brain trying to find something to write about for my editorial this quarter and was drawing a complete blank.

Then, while gathering fodder for the newsletter, I came across a little morality play titled "The Water Bowl" (which appears on page three of this publication). When I read the last sentence – **Oh, go ahead to page three and read the whole thing now so you'll know what I'm talking about.**

OK, if you're back I will presume you read the entire story and didn't just skip to the last sentence. Anyway, the last sentence started a conversation between Lorraine and me about how neither of us could comprehend why so many pets, especially dogs, were left behind and just abandoned by people in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina struck.

Now bear in mind that I have lived through a couple of these types of disasters when I lived in the Republic of China, including two earthquakes (6.0+ on the Richter scale), and a couple of Typhoons. In fact, my number two son was born during a Typhoon and I had to ride out to the hospital for the event on my motorcycle in 90+ mph winds. Don't worry; my wife wasn't on the back of the bike. Late term pregnant women were brought to the US Navy hospital early when a Typhoon was imminent because the low pressure may cause early labor. Needless to say it was an experience. Through none of these events did I abandon my three-legged dog, Lao Tzu.

We have evacuated three times since living in Florida. We live on a small island in Apollo Beach and it's not the place where you want to be if a storm is coming. The lucky thing about living here is there are no earthquakes and hurricanes you get to see coming days off. That's the key that has Lorraine

and me wondering how people can abandon their animals. They have days to prepare.

I know there are some who, for very particular reasons, just have nowhere to go except a shelter and no way to take their pets. I feel certain, though, that this is a very small number of people – not nearly the number that abandoned their pets during Katrina.

It's not rocket science to have some kind of plan if you are living in a place that may require you to evacuate at some point. Lorraine and I have all our important papers in a waterproof case. We have predetermined places to go depending on the direction from which the storm is approaching. We have a vehicle that will hold our six furballs and us.

When it's time to go we throw in some food, water, the papers, the CPU parts of my PC's, hit the ATM for some cash and off we go. We can be out of here in less than an hour and we don't wait 'til the last minute when the roads crowd up.

A couple of evacuation destinations may take us to a relative or friend but even if those are not feasible for some reason we are prepared to drive possibly hundreds of miles, sleep in the van, use rest stop or gas station restroom facilities, eat fast food and otherwise rough it for as long as we need. The one thing that will not happen is leaving any of the dogs behind.

Bob

"If you don't own a dog, at least one, there is not necessarily anything wrong with you, but there may be something wrong with your life."

Roger Caras, A Celebration of Dogs

SHRF RESCUE VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER!!!!....

SHRF is very proud to announce our Volunteer Of The 3rd Quarter, our one and only **LYNNE D!**

LYNNE became the Rescue's Volunteer Coordinator in April of this year and has been going like gangbusters ever since. She has an uncanny knack for organizing her time to multi task with her family, her dogs, running a very busy household, working a full time job and completing her Volunteer Coordinator duties.

In case you don't already know, LYNNE is the editor of our volunteer newsletter, The Volunteer Voice. She does an outstanding job with this bi monthly publication keeping all of

our volunteers informed of everything from Rescue events to homemade dog treats to fun places to go with your pooches. The Volunteer Voice is enjoyed immensely and is such a great tool for keeping our volunteers in sync. Thank you LYNNE for all your hard work to keep us informed!

LYNNE is the proud Mom of 2 SHRF adopted Sibes and was so impressed by her experiences with our special group of volunteers that she just had to get involved. How lucky for US! She spends endless hours on the phone and email welcoming new volunteers, helping to coordinate volunteer events and fundraisers, networking with her community and problem solving. Constantly brainstorming, LYNNE frequently sends in sugges-

tions and ideas to benefit SHRF. Working info booths at local pet stores and pet expos, doing dog transports, helping Good Sam's and doing dog evaluations at shelters are also on her list of activities. It seems that LYNNE is always working a project. The most wonderful asset of this special lady is her sincerely friendly persona, which makes it very easy for our SHRF volunteers to communicate and work with her. LYNNE is a true animal lover and one of the most caring and loyal individuals you'll ever know. We are certainly honored to have LYNNE involved in our "Rescue Family" and we all say THANK YOU and CONGRATULATIONS!

Peggy W., SHRF President

DNA key to man's best friend

Monday, 21 May 2007

If the make-up of your family mutt is a mystery, the answer to its origins could be just around the corner.

National Geographic reports US scientists have completed the first genetic comparison of domesticated dog breeds and have found distinct differences between each.

"Since the formation of breed clubs and official breed standards only happened in the 1800s, it's really surprising that we've found such a high degree of distinction between different breeds," said geneticist Leonid Kruglyak of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Centre.

The distinction between breeds is much higher than any distinction between humans from different continents.

The researchers also discovered remarkable clues about how dog breeds are related, and how they may have descended from ancestral dogs in different parts of the world.

Those clues, in turn, could increase understanding about early human migration — dog evolution patterns suggest they originated in Asia and emigrated with man around the world.

This explains why the Siberian husky, the Afghan hound, Africa's basenji, China's chow chow, Japan's akita, and Egypt's saluki are most like dog's ancient wolflike ancestors.

"Dogs from these breeds may be the best living representatives of the an-

cestral dog gene pool," the researchers wrote.

But the initial motivation for the study was to use dogs as genetic models to study the bases of human diseases.

The majority of known inherited illnesses in dogs are shared by humans and most of these illnesses are particular to some breeds: German shepherds are plagued by kidney cancer and border collies tend to suffer eye problems.

Disease researchers tend to focus on small groups of people known to share a common ancestry, whereas focusing on each of 400-plus breeds of dogs will help researchers find disease genes far more easily — ultimately benefiting humans as well as dogs.

Source: National Nine News

Don't accept your dog's admiration as conclusive evidence that you are wonderful. *Ann Landers* (1918 - 2002)

**Please recognize and support these great professionals who help
Siberian Husky Rescue of Florida, Inc.**

Animal Home Health Care

Dr Deb Buckner
1050 E. State Rd Suite A
St Augustine, FL 32086

The Day and Evening Pet Clinic

3206 Alt 19 Hwy
Palm Harbor, FL 34683
727-785-7200
www.dayandeveningpetclinic.com

Florida Veterinary Specialists

3000 Busch Lake Blvd
Tampa, FL 33614
813-933-8944

Happy Tails Grooming and Boarding

Joanne Gibbons
11996 Seminole Blvd
Largo, FL
727-397-3581

**Millhopper Veterinary Medical
Center, Inc.**

4209 Northwest 37th Place
Gainesville, Florida 32606
352-373-8055

Noah's Place

2050 62nd Ave N
St Pete, FL 33714
727-522-6640

North Bay Animal and Bird Hospital

9801 W Hillsborough Ave
Tampa, FL 33615
813-885-4477

Pet Luv Spay/Neuter Clinic

7348 Broad Street
Brooksville, FL 34601
352-799-9990

Pet Paradise Resort

125 Ponce Harbor Dr
St Augustine, FL 32086
904-797-9770

San Jose-Beauclerc Animal Clinic

9319 San Jose Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32257
407-277-0927

Shores Animal Hospital

Dr Shores and Assoc
3811 N.W. 13th Street
Gainesville, FL 32609
352-372-8387

Steele Animal Hospital

Rita Manarino, DVM, PA
5305 Seminole Blvd
Seminole, FL 33708
727-398-7601

Tampa Bay Veterinary Specialists

Thomas R. Miller, DVM, MS
1501-A Belcher Road S
Largo, FL 33771
727-535-3500

Temple Terrace Animal and Bird Hospital

Link V. Welborn, DVM
5023 Busch Blvd
Tampa, FL 33617
813-988-1189

Underhill Animal Hospital

Dr. Kelly Cole
4900 Lake Underhill Rd
Orlando, FL 32807



WEB SITES THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

Want to make sure your dog is a purebred? Order a DNA Breed Analysis on your dog:
<http://www.metamorphixinc.com/products2adetails.html>

PetsCell, a waterproof phone speaker that attaches to your dog's collar allowing you to talk to your pet. Includes temperature sensors that indicate if the dog is too hot or cold and a GPS system that facilitates tracking him.

SHRF, INC. EVENTS AND FUND RAISERS

November 2 & 3	SHRF Garage Sale	5547 Bates Street, Seminole, FL 7AM—3PM
December 1 & 2	Pictures with Santa	PETsMART on Tyrone Blvd 3993 Tyrone Blvd., St. Pete 10AM - 5PM

Don't forget to come out to one of our several PetSmart and PetCo booths set up every month. If you'd like to attend any of these events, just email us at events@siberrescue.com or call 727-391-8934

CHECK OUR WEBSITE REGULARLY FOR EVENTS UPDATES!

SHRF volunteer April M has recently offered her professional services to help raise much needed funds for the Rescue. She is a financial planner for Ameriprise Financial Services and will donate \$25 to SHRF for anyone who holds an initial consultation with her. There is no obligation to sign up with April's services, but if you do, an additional \$75 will be donated to the Rescue in your name.

Please see April's advertisement below and call her today to benefit SHRF's future and yours!



The script behind your financial future.

As a proud sponsor of Siberian Husky Rescue of Florida, I realize that while improvisation can be great for the stage, it's not necessarily the best route to take with your financial future.

As an Ameriprise financial advisor, I offer a comprehensive approach to financial planning. My first step? Getting to know you-what your goals are, what your dreams are, and what you value most in life. Once we talk about where you want to go, we can then map out a path to help you get there, with a financial plan specifically tailored to meet your individual needs. Whether you are planning for your retirement, starting a small business, or sending your child to college, I can provide the solutions to help you get to what's ahead in life.

Call (813) 868-8785 today.

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LUCKY ADOPTERS

Comments from some people lucky enough to have adopted one of our SHRF dogs.



Maxx (formerly Neo II) has been a wonderful addition to our family. He loves being the center of attention. He runs 2 1/2 miles every morning with me and pulls my husband on the bike every evening. He has a female husky friend that comes over to play and visit. She is 10 and sometimes has to put him in his place. Maxx likes car rides, especially if it's to the doggy park or PETCO. He is really into nature as he has been introduced to deer, wild turkey, sand hill cranes, armadillos and of course squirrels which are all around us! In his leisure time, he likes to sunbathe by the pool and watch the golfers go by. He has gained 5 pounds of muscle since we adopted him. All in all, I think he is a pretty happy pup and I believe he now knows he is HOME!



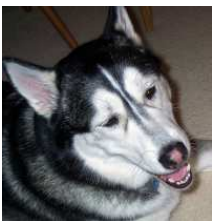
We want to thank SHRF for helping bring into our home **Kassidy**, formerly **Chloe**. She is a joy to have and a very welcome addition to our "family". Her two "brothers" Bailey, an 8 year old Border collie, and Lobo, a 6 year old Sibe/Shiba Inu mix simply adore her. After the passing of our Chance, also a Sibe, Bailey and Lobo were very depressed. Kassidy brought new life to both of them. We adore her. Thanks again. The Polyak Family, Mike, Mary, Lyle, Bailey And Lobo



Kayla weighed 35 lbs. and was in need of dental work when she first came to me. She is now 42 lbs. and doing very well. For the first several months after bringing her home, whenever the door bell would ring, she would hide in the hallway or behind the sofa. Now, when the door bell rings, she's there in a flash to greet all visitors. Kayla loves everyone and everyone loves her. My friends come to the house just to visit with her and even buy her presents for Christmas. I've taken her to several "doggie" events held here in Naples and people fuss over how pretty and friendly she is. She's a great ambassador for the breed.



Theo (I shortened his name) is doing great We have a yard for him to play in and a huge porch that he loves to hang out on and people watch. He is in great health, people always comment on how beautiful he is and how young he looks...I mean ALWAYS!! I can't take him anywhere where people aren't interested in him, plus he loves the attention. He has been the most wonderful dog I have ever had and is my best friend. He is an excellent listener and is so obedient that people ask me what I did to get him that way. The only thing I can attribute it to is trust and love. He knows me and I know him Theo is my baby and I love him so much! I would say to anyone who is thinking of adopting a Husky that if you want a best friend and loyal partner this is the dog!



Misha is doing very well in his forever home! We will be moving to Maine next year. He LOVES it there! The cooler weather suits him, of course, and the yard there has huge Maple trees loaded with Squirrels ... his arch enemies! He loves to try and "chase" them up the trees ...spends a lot of time creating strategies in his Husky brain to catch the elusive rodents (it is hilarious ... like watching a Roadrunner/Wile E. Coyote cartoon). Misha loves his tennis balls, sleeping with his head under my bed (?) and doing his tricks for biscuits. We have a nightly howl together to exercise his remarkable vocal prowess, and he is very healthy.

Beware of Dog!

Upon entering the little country store, the stranger noticed a sign saying DANGER! BEWARE OF DOG! posted on the glass door. Inside he noticed a harmless old hound dog asleep on the floor beside the cash register.

He asked the store manager, "Is THAT the dog folks are supposed to beware of?"

"Yep, that's him," he replied.

The stranger couldn't help but be amused. "That certainly doesn't look

like a dangerous dog to me. Why in the world would you post that sign?"

"Because", the owner replied, "before I posted that sign, people kept tripping over him."

FOOD GRADE DIATOMACEOUS EARTH

By Linda P.

A Natural Approach to Flea and Parasite Control for animals and plants (and even humans).

WHAT IS IT?

Diatomaceous Earth (DE) is an organic and natural product, which is mined in the American West. It was formed from trillions of microscopic one-celled algae called *diatoms*, which weave tiny shells for themselves out of the silica they extract from water.

As the diatoms die, the shells settle in deposits at the bottom of ancient lakes and lagoons and when the lakes dry up and the waters recede, the deposits fossilize and compress into soft, chalk rock called diatomaceous earth. It is then quarried, milled, finely ground and passed through a screen and looks almost like flour, becoming a mineral-based pesticide. It is approximately 3% magnesium, 33% silicon, 19% calcium, 5% sodium, 2% iron and has many other trace minerals such as titanium, boron, manganese, copper and zirconium. DE is a natural compound.

It can be safely fed to animals and humans, or used as a dust or spray to apply topically. **CAUTION: THIS IS NOT THE SAME STUFF THAT GOES IN YOUR SWIMMING POOL FILTERS. YOU MUST USE FOOD GRADE DE!!!**

What is Codex or "Food Grade" Diatomaceous Earth?

For D.E. to be called "Codex," it must meet the following requirements:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Requirement</u>
Arsenic (ppm)	not more than 10 ppm
Lead (ppm)	not more than 10 ppm
Non-Siliceous Substance %	not more than 25% on dried basis
PH	passes test
Loss on Drying %	natural powders not more than 10%
Powders	not more than 7% on the dried basis

PARASITE CONTROL IN ANIMALS

DE's action against insects is strictly mechanical. The microscopically razor sharp edges of the ground up product contacts the offending organisms and pierces their protective coatings becoming lethal to these pests. The parasites dry out in a few hours and die, passing harmlessly through your animal's digestive system and into the stool. For dogs (over 55 lbs), about 1 tablespoon added to food daily, or 1 teaspoon for puppies and smaller dogs up to 50 lbs, is the recommended daily dose.

Topically, you can dust your bedding and work into the fur. This is particularly great for puppies, which are too young for harsh chemical flea and tick control products. DE can also be dusted into carpets, cabinets and throughout the yard for flea and pest control.

CAUTION MUST BE TAKEN NOT TO INHALE THIS FINE DUST INTO THE LUNGS, SO IF YOU ARE BROADCASTING THIS PRODUCT, IT IS BEST TO WEAR A PROTECTIVE MASK.

DE will NOT harm warm-blooded animals or earthworms, which are structurally different from insects. Earthworms, so beneficial to our gardens, can actually digest particles of DE and eliminate them in their castings.

WHERE CAN I BUY FOOD GRADE DIATOMACEOUS EARTH?

Here is St. Petersburg; DE is available in 50 lb. bags from Park Feed Store on Park Blvd., for about \$44. If you wish to experiment with smaller quantities, you can purchase online or through eBay and have it shipped directly to your door. Just use your **GOOD-SEARCH LINK** at www.goodsearch.com (which benefits SHRF) and type in Food Grade Diatomaceous Earth. Follow your nose. I used Golden Harvest Organics, but there are others selling varying quantities.

The dog has seldom been successful in pulling man up to its level of sagacity, but man has frequently dragged a dog down to his.

- - - James Thurber

SPECIAL HUSKY EVENTS

Dog Days with the Devil Rays
Saturday, September 22, 2007

Once again SHRF had an excellent turnout at the Devil Rays Baseball Fundraiser.

Furballs Cheyenne, Liam, Minka and Zabol worked the crowd of Tampa Bay and Boston Red Sox fans at the last Saturday night home game of the regular season on September 22nd.

Volunteers Celeste M, Ginger and Gerry K, Peggy W and George C were there to supervise, but the dogs got all of the attention as usual! It was a very successful outing as we collected a lot of donations and handed out hundreds of our SHRF brochures, educated the public and hopefully met some potential new adopters. Thank you to everyone who helped pre sell tickets to the game, for coming out to the game , work the booth that night and supporting SHRF!



Dog Myths

Forget what you *think* you know about canine health & behavior.
by Marry Sorensen

Dogs eat grass because they are sick or have worms.

Spring has sprung, and up pop the year's first few tendrils of fresh grass. On a walk, your Labrador Retriever, Spunky, busily gobbles up as many tender spikes as he can get his lips around. Then, just as you walk in the back door of the house, Spunky's lips twitch, his stomach cramps and you hear that all too familiar heaving sound that puts you a few months closer to needing a new carpet. Uh, oh. Time to call the veterinarian...right? Not necessarily.

"It is normal for dogs to eat grass in very small amounts," the Veterinarian said. "Their ancestors ate [grass]. It's roughage. We tend to see a problem with consumption of grass when dogs don't have access to it all year long. When they're exposed to fresh grass, they tend to eat too much and can't digest. Because large quantities act as an irritant, the dog throws up. The owner then thinks the dog ate the grass to induce vomiting [because it is sick]."

**"Puppies are nature's remedy for feeling unloved ... plus numerous other ailments of life."
Richard Allan Palm**

Puppy love -- it's better than you think

Pets trigger our 'feel good' hormones, research suggests

*By Jane Weaver
MSNBC.COM*

Updated: 3:06 p.m. ET April 8, 2004

Those big brown eyes gazing at you with complete adoration. The cool, wet nose nudging bare feet in the early morning. That tireless wagging tail that symbolizes pure joy in your presence.

We know that dogs are dedicated companions that offer unquestioning attachment and acceptance. In the past several years, mounting scientific evidence suggests that they benefit us even beyond eager devotion. Numerous studies have shown that dogs -- one of the earliest domesticated animals -- can help lower blood pressure, ease the loneliness of the elderly in nursing homes, and help children overcome allergies.

Now there's new research from the University of Missouri-Columbia suggesting the hormonal changes that occur when humans and dogs interact could help people cope with depression and certain stress-related disorders. Preliminary results from a study show that a few minutes of stroking our pet dog prompts a release of a number of "feel good" hormones in humans, including serotonin, prolactin and oxytocin.

In addition, petting our pooches results in decreased levels of the primary stress hormone cortisol, the adrenal chemical responsible for regulating appetite and cravings for carbohydrates.

"The notion that serotonin increased with their own dog is a very powerful thing. Could a dog help mediate serotonin levels in order to help de-

pressed patients?" asks Dr. Rebecca Johnson, a nursing professor and associate director at the Center for Animal Wellness, Missouri University College of Veterinary Medicine, who is heading the study with collaborator Richard Meadows.

Why does Spot make us feel better?

Dog owners may not be surprised to hear about the emotional benefits of stroking a beloved pet, but for researchers like Johnson, it's important to understand why Spot makes us feel better.

Therapy dogs have been used to visit nursing homes, calm traumatized children and help ease pain in people undergoing physical rehabilitation, but the field of animal-assisted therapy is still in its infancy, Johnson says. Researchers are trying to determine which types of people would best benefit from being with pet animals and how often they need to interact with them to get results.

"By showing how interacting with pets actually works in the body to help people, we can help animal-assisted therapy become a mainstream medically-accepted intervention that would be prescribed to patients and, in the long run, be reimbursed by insurance companies," says Johnson. The University of Missouri-Columbia study was funded by The Skeeter Foundation, a group headed by Dr. Jack Stephens, founder of Veterinary Pet Insurance, a nationwide insurer of pet medical coverage.

Johnson's study expanded on research conducted in 1999 by South African scientists who found that 15 minutes of quietly stroking a dog caused hormonal changes that were beneficial to both the dog and the human.

But the South African study was

small, involving only 18 people and a few friendly dogs, and didn't test for serotonin, the brain chemical strongly linked with depression. Increased levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin make us more mentally alert, improve sleep and can make us less sensitive to pain.

Comparable to eating chocolate

In the larger Missouri study, 50 dog owners and 50 non-dog owners over the age of 18 sat in a quiet room for 15 to 39 minutes with their own dog, a friendly but strange dog, and a robotic dog. The robotic dog was included because electronic pooches, such as Sony's AIBO, are being studied as a possible resource for the elderly who can't look after a live animal.

Each session involved calm stroking or petting. Researchers checked blood samples of both the humans and dogs at the beginning of each session and monitored their blood pressure every five minutes. The dogs' blood pressure dropped as soon as they were petted. The humans' blood pressure dropped by approximately 10 percent about 15 to 30 minutes after they began petting the animal, at which point blood was again drawn.

Johnson's study found that serotonin levels increased when interacting with the human's own dog, but not with the unfamiliar animal. And serotonin actually decreased when interacting with the robotic dog.

Dr. Alan Beck, director of the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University, says the serotonin changes reveal the "mechanism" of how pets influence our health.

"It shows that there is a physiological mechanism [to relaxing with a pet],

(Continued on page 11)

that it really is comparable to other things we know cause relaxation, like eating chocolate," says Beck.

Not just learned behavior

In other words, the warm feeling we get from our dogs and other pets isn't just a learned behavior, Beck says, but something that's hard-wired into humans so that the presence of animals can help us stay well and even recover from illnesses.

It's a theory that's been gaining notable scientific support for some time:

- In 1995, Erika Friedman at the University of Maryland Hospital conducted a study involving 392 people, which found that heart attack patients with dogs were eight times more likely to be alive a year later than people without dogs.
- In 1999, the State University of New York at Buffalo conducted a study involving 24 stock brokers taking medication for high blood pressure. The researchers found that adding a dog or cat to the stock brokers' lives helped stabilize and reduce their stress levels.
- In 1999, Swedish researchers

reported that children exposed to pets during the first year of life had fewer allergies and less asthma.

- Recently, separate studies reported that walking a dog contributed to a person's weight loss and that dog walking can be a catalyst for social interaction with other people, a benefit that can help improve our sense of well-being -- or even help us meet a future spouse.

Studies involving other pets

While Johnson doesn't advise patients to throw away their antidepressants and instead get a dog, she says animal therapy could be used as an adjunct to depression treatment.

"It gives us answers about who would be the most likely to benefit from owning a dog or how often someone would need to visit with a dog to get the beneficial effect," she says.

And it's not just dogs that are being studied for their therapeutic power. Currently Beck and other researchers at the Center for the Human-Animal Bond, in conjunction with the National Science Foundation and the University of Washington, are ex-

ploring how the "inborn attraction to nature" can help patients with dementia. For instance, people with Alzheimer's disease often suffer from weight-loss problems because they're unable to focus long enough to eat. But when they sit in front of aquariums with brightly colored fish, the elderly patients are able to pay attention long enough to get their meals down.

As scientific research continues to validate the importance of animals to human health, Beck expects to see more community funding for public dog runs, for example, as well as more widespread acceptance of animal care as a legitimate healthcare expense. He also hopes more insurance policies will begin offering coverage for services such as veterinary care for pets of the elderly, and that eventually pet owners will receive insurance discounts similar to the deals given to non-smokers.

Just as we recognize that exercise is important to our health, it's becoming clearer that animals can also improve the quality of our lives, Beck says.

"We still haven't realized that [owning a pet] isn't just some kind of hobby."

Taking a Pulse

There are several areas on the dog's body where you may be able to feel the pulse. A pulse occurs with every heart beat. Sometimes, you can just place your hands low on your dog's chest, near the elbow joint, and feel the heart beats. You can count how many beats you feel in 15 seconds and then multiply it by 4. That will give you the pulse.

A second place to find the pulse is high on the inner side of the thigh. You will be feeling for the femoral

artery. Place two fingers on the middle of the thigh near where the leg joins the body. What you feel is the 'femoral pulse.' The femoral pulse can be very difficult to feel in cats.

It is always best to use your fingers to feel the pulse. If you use your thumb, and press too hard, what you feel will actually be your own pulse.

The normal pulse for a dog ranges from 70 to 180 beats per minute. In general, the larger the dog, the slower the pulse. Puppies generally have a fast pulse, up to 220 beats per minute. Cats usually have a pulse of

120-240 beats per minute.

The pulse of a dog is not always steady. Sometimes, the rate changes as the dog breathes in and out. The pulse will be faster on inspiration and slower on expiration. This is normal and is called sinus arrhythmia.



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