

# In the Presence of Animals

By Sarah Burke in *Science and Society*



1 As far back as the 1790s, the owners of a senior citizens' home in York, England, **encouraged** patients to spend time with farm animals, believing that this would help their mental state<sup>1</sup> more than the sometimes **harsh** therapies<sup>2</sup> used on the mentally ill at the time. In recent years, scientists have finally begun to find **proof** that contact with animals can increase a sick person's chance of **survival** and has been shown to lower heart rate, **calm** upset children, and get people to start a conversation.

2 Scientists think that animal companionship<sup>3</sup> is **beneficial** because animals are accepting and attentive,<sup>4</sup> and they don't **criticize** or give orders. Animals also have a **unique** ability to

get people to be more social. Visitors to nursing homes, for example, get more social responses from patients when they come with animal companions, researchers have found.

3 Not only do people seem happier when animals are nearby, but they may also live longer. Studies show that a year after heart **surgery**, survival rates for heart patients were higher for those with pets in their homes than those without pets. **Elderly** people with pets make fewer trips to doctors than those who are without animal companions, possibly because animals lessen **loneliness**. A professor of public health at UCLA says that pet ownership might provide a new form of "low-cost health intervention."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **mental state**: emotional condition

<sup>2</sup> **therapies**: treatments

<sup>3</sup> **companionship**: friendship

<sup>4</sup> **accepting and attentive**: agreeable and caring

<sup>5</sup> **intervention**: the act of preventing something undesirable (unwanted)

## A Connotations

Some words have **feelings** connected to them depending on how they are used in a sentence. These feelings, or **connotations**, can be **positive** (good or useful) or **negative** (bad or harmful).

Look at each word. Find the word in the reading. Decide whether it has a **Positive** or **Negative** meaning. Check the appropriate box. Discuss your answers with a partner.

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
1. encouraged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. harsh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. survival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. calm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. beneficial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. criticize	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. unique	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## B Definitions

Find each word in the reading and match it with its meaning.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ___ 1. encouraged | a. unpleasant                               |
| ___ 2. harsh      | b. say what faults someone or something has |
| ___ 3. proof      | c. an operation by a doctor                 |
| ___ 4. survival   | d. old                                      |
| ___ 5. calm       | e. urged someone to do something            |
| ___ 6. beneficial | f. act of continuing to live                |
| ___ 7. unique     | g. unhappy feeling when by oneself          |
| ___ 8. elderly    | h. special, rare                            |
| ___ 9. loneliness | i. make relaxed                             |
| ___ 10. surgery   | j. facts                                    |
| ___ 11. criticize | k. positive                                 |