

# 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