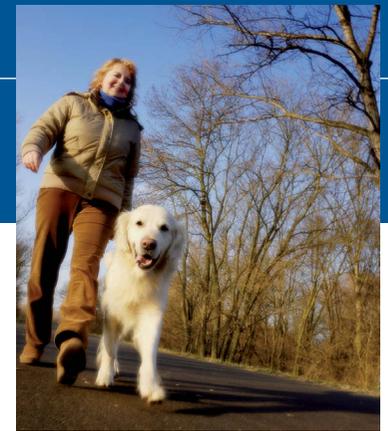


# THE WALTHAM CENTRE FOR PET CARE AND NUTRITION – LEADING HIGH-QUALITY INNOVATIVE SCIENCE, CONDUCTED IN A CARING WAY

FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS WALTHAM HAS BEEN A LEADING AUTHORITY WITHIN THE FIELD OF PET NUTRITION AND CARE



**ANIMALS ARE POWERFUL CATALYSTS FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION.**

**CREATING A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS and THEIR PEOPLE**

Throughout history, the relationship between humans and pets has been one of the world’s most special and enduring bonds. This unique relationship benefits both humans and pets, and goes beyond mere companionship. People see their pets as important members of their families – they are friends, playmates and protectors – providing love, security and joy to humans.

In turn, it is our responsibility to make a better world for pets by taking care of them and providing them with loving, safe and happy homes, good healthcare and nutrition, and proper training and socialisation. ●



WALTHAM is an acknowledged leader in the field of human-animal interaction research. We believe the bond between humans and pets is special and we are dedicated to celebrating pets and highlighting how positive the experience of owning a pet can be.



Research into the community benefits of pet ownership has focused on the concept of social capital.

Social capital has been referred to as the glue that binds people to their communities and is created when people interact with one another. Pets help people meet neighbours and, therefore, help build healthier communities that are better connected and more pleasant to live in.

**PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES**

Dogs play a particularly important role in promoting healthy, active lifestyles for humans through their need for daily exercise and desire to play.

Studies have reported higher levels of physical activity in children from families that live with a dog, and pregnant mothers who own dogs are more likely to meet national guidelines for physical activity through walking with their dog.

**ALLERGIES and IMMUNITY**

There is evidence to suggest that childhood exposure to dogs and cats may decrease the likelihood of developing certain kinds of allergic reactions to them later in life.

Having pets in the home has also been linked to enhanced immune function in children, as evidenced by better school attendance rates due to fewer illness-related absences.

The benefit to school attendance is thought to result from children in pet-owning households having their immune systems ‘primed’ by exposure to microbes from pets. The effect was particularly strong for younger children aged between five and eight years old.

**PROMOTING PHYSICAL and MENTAL WELL-BEING**

Sharing the ups and downs of life with a pet can help people stay happier and healthier. Those who share their homes with pets have healthier physiological responses to stress, including lower baseline heart rate and blood pressure.

WALTHAM science and publications have been instrumental in helping define the nutrient requirements of companion species and understanding the special relationship between pets and people.

**PETS and HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT – SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL and HEALTH BENEFITS:**

Contact with pets is emerging as a significant source of support and well-being for people of all ages. Pets may have a special role in healthy child development because they are thought to teach responsibility, build empathy, and promote concern for animals and the natural world.

**CHILDREN FORM SPECIAL BONDS WITH PETS AND MANY TURN TO THEM FOR SUPPORT AND COMFORT.**



Studies show that animals can act as ‘stress buffers’. For example, they may ease the distress associated with anxiety-provoking experiences, decrease the perception of physical and emotional pain, and dog ownership may promote healthier, more active lifestyles.

**PETS AS FAMILY MEMBERS**

When asked, both children and parents describe pets as ‘members of the family’, and children will often refer to them as their ‘best friends’. Children form special bonds with pets and many turn to their pets for support and comfort.

Studies have shown that children often rank pets higher than certain human relationships and that children often view dogs and cats as confidantes.

**REDUCING STRESS**

It has been shown the presence of animals has a role to play in decreasing stress, which can have immediate, positive effects on heart rate and blood pressure for both children and adults at all stages of life and in a variety of contexts.

**PETS IN SOCIETY – BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY**

Dog walkers will recognise that pets get people talking to one another. Animals are powerful catalysts for positive social interaction; they have the ability to create connections that transcend racial, cultural, physical and socio-economic differences.