



How Animals Affect Us: Examining the Influence of Human-Animal Interaction on Child Development and Human Health

Sandra McCune, Peggy McCardle, James A. Griffin

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From infancy through old age, many people's lives are enriched by the love of a pet. In addition, both volunteer and trained service animals are an increasingly common sight as they participate in hospital, school, and nursing home visitation and therapeutic programs. Yet, there has been little scientific research on the role that pets and therapeutic animals play in our health and development. While animal-assisted therapies appear promising, they often lack solid evidence of effectiveness. More research is therefore needed to understand the effects of human–animal interaction (HAI) and to optimize the value of this interaction.

The findings in this volume deepen our understanding of human and animal behavior, including the impact that pets can have on children's development and the efficacy of animal-assisted therapies. This volume first addresses HAI research methodology, including recommended research designs, terminology, and topics for further exploration. It then summarizes the progress of HAI research in child development and human health, including how young children think about animals, links between children's early abuse of animals and later conduct disorders, the association between pet ownership and better health, and whether such health improvements result in health cost savings. The volume ends with a detailed agenda for future research.

With its interdisciplinary approach, this book will appeal to a wide range of researchers and practitioners interested in what happens when people meet and engage with animals.

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