

# New study highlights the impact companion animals have on owners

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A new study, published in *BMC Psychiatry*, conducted by researchers from the universities of Liverpool, Manchester and Southampton, suggests that pets provide benefits to those with mental health

conditions.

There is increasing recognition of the therapeutic function pets can play in relation to mental health. However, there has been no systematic review of the evidence related to the comprehensive role of [companion animals](#) and how pets might contribute to the work associated with managing a long-term mental health condition.

The study, led by Dr Helen Brooks from the University of Liverpool's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, aimed to explore the extent, nature and quality of the evidence implicating the role and utility of pet ownership for people living with a mental health condition.

## **Positive, negative and neutral impacts**

The study team systematically reviewed 17 international research papers, to identify the positive, negative and neutral impacts of pet ownership.

The research highlighted the 'intensiveness' of connectivity people with companion animals reported, and the multi-faceted ways in which pets contributed to the work associated with managing a mental health condition, particularly in times of crisis.

The negative aspects of pet ownership were also highlighted, including the practical and emotional burden of [pet ownership](#) and the psychological impact that losing a pet has.

## **Support**

Dr Brooks, said: "Our review suggests that pets provide benefits to those with [mental health conditions](#). Further research is required to test the nature and extent of this relationship, incorporating outcomes that cover

the range of roles and types of support pets confer in relation to mental health and the means by which these can be incorporated into the mainstay of support for people experiencing a [mental health](#) problem."

**More information:** The power of support from companion animals for people living with mental health problems: a systematic review and narrative synthesis of the evidence, [DOI: 10.1186/s12888-018-1613-28-018-1613-2](#) , [link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12888-018-1613-2](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12888-018-1613-2)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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