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ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS



DOG GUARDIANSHIP AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

The impact of dogs
during COVID-19

Media stories often report the positive impacts of dogs on human well-being, but research suggests that these effects are not always simple or consistent especially during times of stress and crisis.

A diary study conducted by PhD student Lori Hoy, Dr Brigitte Stangl, and Prof Nigel Morgan explored the impacts of dog guardianship on peoples' subjective well-being during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

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DOG GUARDIANS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING DURING TIMES OF STRESS AND CRISIS: A DIARY STUDY OF AFFECT DURING COVID-19

Lori Hoy, Brigitte Stangl & Nigel Morgan

The impact of companion animals on human well-being has been receiving increased media and research attention, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, research on the impacts of animals on people's well-being has produced mixed and inconsistent results. This may be related to which components of well-being are being studied and the research designs used. Therefore, this study focused specifically on the component of affect to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how being a dog guardian can contribute to the overall assessment of subjective well-being. Using a seven-day diary, this mixed methods research followed 31 dog guardians' day-to-day feelings and thoughts during the UK's first COVID-19 lockdown—a time of considerable stress and crisis.

Findings indicate that dogs' behaviour, feelings toward dogs, and participation in dog-related activities impacted the overall day-to-day subjective well-being of guardians. Additionally, six themes emerged related to positive and negative affect: amusement, joy, calm, frustration, worry, and guilt. These findings confirm that dogs can impact subjective well-being. However, the effect is not always positive or consistent, and may be transient. During times of stress and crisis, companion animal guardians face unique circumstances and could benefit from preparation, guidance, and clear communication about caring for their animals.

Dog guardianship during the pandemic was associated with amusement, joy, and providing a sense of calm, but also frustration, worry, and guilt - emphasising that dogs can impact their guardians' well-being, particularly affect, during times of stress and crisis

Hoy, L. S., Stangl, B., & Morgan, N. (2023). Dog Guardians' Subjective Well-Being During Times of Stress and Crisis: A Diary Study of Affect During COVID-19. *People and Animals: The International Journal of Research and Practice*

Link: bit.ly/3NNjLtK