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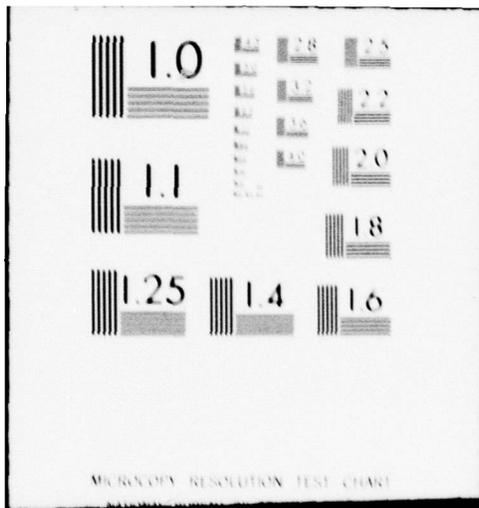
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BENEFITS OF ALLOWING PETS IN
SENIOR CITIZEN HI-RISES.

⑨

Master's thesis,

BY

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RUSSELL H. WILBER/VMD

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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PAST EXPERIENCES AND PRESENT ATTITUDES OF SENIOR
CITIZEN HI-RISE RESIDENTS TOWARD PETS: A SURVEY

Russell H. Wilcox

*The Feasibility & Potential
Benefits of Allowing Pets in
Senior Citizen Hi-Rises
University of Minnesota*

1 79-63T

Abstract

A survey of randomly selected residents of a senior citizen hi-rise was conducted by personal and telephone interviews. The purpose of the study was to determine the past experiences of senior citizens with pets and their present attitudes toward pet ownership. Using these data, the feasibility and potential benefits of having companion animals in senior citizen hi-rises was evaluated.

Thirty-four (85%) of the residents reported owning a pet at some time in their life. An association between stage of the life cycle and pet ownership was found. As parents with children at home, thirty-two (80%) of the residents had pets, while as adults without children at home, fifteen (37.5%) had pets. This difference was statistically significant at the .001 level. Six residents owned a pet prior to moving to the senior citizen complex, and ten (25%) residents reported that they would own a pet, if pets were allowed in the hi-rise.

Senior citizens perceived companionship, love, and affection as the major benefits of pet ownership. However twenty-three (57.5%) residents reported that pets would be of no benefit to them at this point in their life. Residents see the major disadvantage to pet ownership as being the added responsibility pet ownership entails. Individuals were concerned that pet ownership would prevent them from going and coming as they pleased.

An interesting finding was management's strong opposition to having pets in the senior citizen hi-rise. Management was very concerned about the damage and odor associated with allowing companion animals in apartments.

Introduction

It has been suggested by Boris Levinson in his writings that man has a strong need to maintain contact with nature, and that companion animals can fulfill this need. (4,5,6) Michael Fox and Levinson have written on the important roles that pets can play in the lives of the elderly. Pets can provide the close companionship an elderly person may need, pave the way for new friendships through the daily exercising of the pet, and give the owner a sense of identity or reason for being. (2,4) In England, Mugford and M'Comisky did a controlled study to evaluate the possible therapeutic role of animal companionship for elderly people. Their study, using pet budgerigars, determined that these birds had a "beneficial effect on the social and psychosocial conditions of the old people in the experiment". (7)

The well being of many residents in senior citizen housing complexes may be adversely affected by feelings of loneliness. These feelings may be intensified as a result of the separation from familiar surroundings and lifestyles, which occurs when moving into a housing complex. The forced separation from loved and loving companion animals, which is a prerequisite for moving into a senior citizen hi-rise, could have severe emotional consequences to the individual.

The purpose of this study was to gather data from residents of a senior citizen hi-rise, pertaining to their past experiences with pets and their present attitudes towards pets. Using this information to explore the feasibility and potential benefits, as perceived by those residents, of allowing pets in a senior citizen hi-rise apartment complex.

Methods

A senior citizen hi-rise located in northwest Hennepin County, Minnesota, was chosen for study because this hi-rise was already involved in several other University of Minnesota School of Public Health projects designed to identify areas of need in the community, where medical expertise could benefit local residents. In addition a medical student from the University of Minnesota was living at the senior citizen complex and could serve as a liason between the author and management, and also provide contact with senior citizen residents.

A questionnaire on past experiences with pets and present attitudes toward pet ownership, and a consent form explaining the purpose of the study, were developed. Many of the questions on past experiences were written based on the questions used by Selby in his study of pet ownership patterns.⁽⁸⁾ These forms were reviewed and approved by the University of Minnesota Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research.

The management of the senior citizen hi-rise agreed to allow personal interviews with the residents, providing the resident volunteered to be interviewed beforehand. A letter explaining the purpose and scope of the study, along with a stamped, addressed post card for replies, was sent to fifty senior citizens residing in the senior citizen hi-rise chosen at random from all 107 residents.

Five (10%) of the fifty residents returned the addressed post card, with two (4%) volunteering to be interviewed in person. These two residents were interviewed in person at their apartments. The telephone was used to interview an additional thirty-eight residents, who either did not want to be interviewed in person, or did not return the post card.

Forty-three residents were contacted with only two refusing to participate in the study. One resident contacted did not speak english and was not interviewed. Of the seven residents not contacted: six had unlisted telephone numbers, and one could not be reached despite repeated phone calls.

Interviews were obtained from forty (80%) of the fifty randomly selected senior citizens. For purposes of this study, the rates of response for each question were determined based on the forty residents interviewed, independent of whether or not all interviewees responded to each question.

Results

The senior citizen hi-rise surveyed, opened about 2½ years ago. Thirty-seven (92.5%) of the residents interviewed had lived in the hi-rise more than two years. Of the forty senior citizens interviewed: thirty-two (80%) were women living alone, three (7.5%) were men living alone, and five (12.5%) were couples.

When questioned about prior pet ownership, thirty-four (85%) of the residents reported owning a pet at some time in their life. Eleven (27.5%) reported being raised on a farm. Additionally three seniors, who had responded negatively when initially asked about prior pet ownership, on further questioning responded that other members of the family, either husband or children, did have a pet. Based on interviews, of the thirty-seven residents that had past experiences with pets, ten were low involvement pet owners.⁽⁹⁾ These individuals reported that they had pets primarily for their children, that pets were strictly outdoor animals, or that they had had a pet for a very short period of time.

The reasons given for not having owned a pet were: did not like pets; parental and housing restrictions on keeping pets; and "too much trouble raising six children, without having a pet around".

When pet ownership was evaluated by stage in the life cycle⁽⁸⁾; twenty-four (60%) had pets as children, thirty-two (80%) had pets as parents with children at home, and fifteen (37.5%) had pets as adults without children at home. Of the forty residents, eleven (27.5%) had owned a pet within the past five years, and six (15%) seniors owned a pet prior to moving to this senior citizen hi-rise.

A breakdown into the types of pets owned, indicated a preference for dogs, cats, and birds as companion animals, with rabbits, rodents, and horses less frequently owned. Twenty-nine (72.5%) of the residents interviewed reported owning a dog at some time in their life. (Table 1)

Based on prior experience, or observation, residents felt that the major benefits of pet ownership were: companionship, love and affection, pleasure, protection, and educating children. (Table 2) The major disadvantages to pet ownership reported were: responsibility - having to make arrangements for a pet when they wanted to travel, and the noise, odor, and feces disposal problems associated with pets. (Table 3)

Residents were questioned on their present attitudes towards pets. In response to the question, "If you could have found a place like this senior citizen hi-rise, that allowed pets, would you have chosen to live there?", nine (22.5%) answered yes, two answered that they were not sure, and twenty-nine (72.5%) responded no. If allowed to own a pet now at this senior citizen hi-rise, nine said they would have a dog, and one resident would keep a cat. Only five (12.5%) of the residents said they would object to other residents keeping pets in the complex. Most residents did not object to pets as long as the pets were properly cared for by their owners.

Senior citizens, when asked about their present perceptions as to the benefits of pet ownership to them, reported that companionship, love and affection would be the major benefits. Twenty-three (57.5%) stated that pets would be of no benefit to them at this stage of life. (Table 4) The residents perceived the major disadvantage of pet ownership as that of responsibility. Twenty-three (52.5%) seniors commented that owning pets would interfere with their coming and going when they pleased. (Table 5)

In response to the question, "If one were provided, would you be interested in caring for a pet bird?", thirty-eight (95%) of the residents replied no.

When asked, "Do you feel that a pet would add to, detract from, or not change, the quality of life for you in this complex?", five (12.5%) of the residents felt pets would add to, twelve (30%) felt it would not change, and twenty-three (57.5%) felt that pets would detract from the quality of life for them at this complex.

During the interviews nine (22.5%) of the residents reported seeing pet animals fairly regularly, either by visiting with their children in the area or by house sitting for people with pets. Additionally, some senior citizens feed corn to the ducks which are found on the pond behind the hi-rise. These individuals have an opportunity throughout the warm months to maintain their ties with nature, as Levinson would say.

Discussion

Levinson and others have written that pets can play important roles in the lives of the elderly. (1,2,4) However most of the literature supporting this contention is anecdotal in nature, suggesting a psychosocial benefit to animal companionship. Mugford and M'Comisky, in a small controlled study using budgerigars, determined that these pet birds had a beneficial effect on the social attitudes and the mental and physical health of their owners. (7) Senior citizen housing complexes are being built in the Minneapolis area to help house the elderly. It is questionable whether such housing will meet the needs of pet owning senior citizens living in the Minneapolis area.

Initially when the idea of doing a study of the past experiences and present attitudes of senior citizens toward pets was proposed, the property manager of the senior citizen hi-rise, where the study was to be done, was opposed to the study. His feelings were that pets adversely affect maintenance and upkeep, and that allowing pets would cause many problems. The property manager was especially concerned about potential damage to apartment units and carpeting, and the odor associated with pets. These perceptions of pets were consistent with data obtained in an unpublished survey of Minneapolis area apartment managers. (Wilber 1978) This survey indicated that most managers of apartments were concerned about damage to apartment units, and dogs defecating on the grounds of the apartment. An additional finding was that only twenty-seven (22%) of the 119 apartments surveyed allowed companion animals, dogs and/or cats, and there appeared to be a trend toward eliminating pets from apartment complexes in the Minneapolis area.

The building social services director was initially opposed to the study,

but after discussing the purpose of the study and the manner in which it would be conducted, he agreed to allow the study, contingent on getting permission from each resident to be interviewed, prior to the interview. Management had reservations on allowing the study because they felt that the residents would be disturbed by strangers in the building; that this study would have no direct benefits for the residents, and in fact might bring back painful memories; and that some residents might think that a policy change, concerning the keeping of pets, was being considered by management, when in fact, it was not. After agreeing to the study, management sent letters to all residents reiterating the pet policy and stating that no change in the policy was being contemplated by management. This letter may have affected some of the responses made by residents to questions concerning present attitude toward pets, however the extent of the effect is indeterminable.

The property manager also indicated that financing for a senior citizen hi-rise, through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) would be unavailable if pets were allowed in a complex. When contacted, an official of the MHFA stated that the agency has no restrictions on developers allowing pets. He did say that the MHFA would be concerned if pets were to be permitted, and would carefully check to insure that the developer could properly manage the property with pets. The Minnesota and Minneapolis health departments were contacted to determine what restrictions on pets their regulations might impose. Neither agency had any restrictions on the keeping of companion animals in apartment complexes.

The potential public health consequences of allowing pets in a senior citizen

hi-rise are unknown, but probably minimal. Jordan in an article on pets and population, states that the hazards to the pet owner from zoonoses are small. Unfortunately he provides no data to support this conclusion. (3) When considering senior citizens, some of whom may be immunologically compromised by disease, old age, or medications, salmonellosis, pasteurellosis, and psitticosis should be considered as potential public health hazards associated with the keeping of companion animals, and emphasizes the need for preventive veterinary medical services to insure that animals maintained in senior citizen hi-rises are healthy.

The poor response to the letters requesting individuals to participate in the study may reflect several factors: a lack of interest in the subject of the study (pets), an avoidance of mailed solicitations addressed to resident, or an unwillingness of many seniors to allow strangers into their apartments. Management's letter on the subject of pets, may have deterred some of the residents from responding. When contacted by telephone, most of the residents seemed very willing to be interviewed.

Eight-five percent of the senior citizens interviewed reported having owned a pet at some time in their life. Pet ownership was associated with having children at home. The difference in rates of pet ownership, between parents with children at home and adults with no children at home, was statistically significant at the .001 level. ($\chi^2 = 14.9$, d.f. = 1) Many seniors viewed the functions of pets in relation to their usefulness to their children: as friends, as educators, and as teachers of responsibility. The differing rates of pet ownership associated with the phase of the life cycle may in part be due to the view that a pet is functionally important as a child grows up. This finding supports the findings of Selby in his study of pets and family life

cycle. (8)

The residents interviewed enjoyed living in the senior citizen hi-rise, and felt that it offered many benefits when compared to living in a single family house. The seniors felt that major benefits were: security, planned activities for those so inclined, the companionship of other senior citizens, lack of maintenance associated with private home ownership, and the freedom to travel without worrying about the security of your home.

Twenty-three (57%) of the residents interviewed thought that pets would be of no benefit to them and that pet ownership would be a problem because of the commitment required to care for a pet on a regular basis. Most of the seniors cherished their freedom, the ability to come and go when they wanted, and did not want the responsibility of caring for a pet. Even pet birds were seen as too much responsibility, ninety-seven percent of the residents would not want a bird given to them. This problem of responsibility could be solved by having communally owned pets. Groups of residents could help maintain several pets per building or per floor, and thus enjoy the benefits of animal companionship, as discussed by Levinson and Fox ^(2,4,5,6), without having total responsibility for the animals care.

Six of the residents interviewed owned pets prior to moving into the senior citizen hi-rise, and ten (25%) residents stated that, if pets were allowed, they would keep a companion animal. One woman said she had been told that she could bring her cat when she moved to the hi-rise, however management changed prior to the opening of the complex, and the new management did not allow pets. The woman had to find a home for her cat, and reports that she still, two years later, misses the companionship that the cat provided her. Thus some of the residents expressed a desire to have companion animals, and

would be willing to accept the responsibility of caring for a pet.

Fox and Levinson feel that many elderly individuals have a need for companionship that pets can fulfill. (2,4) This need may be especially prevalent in situations where senior citizens live alone in private homes or duplexes. In contrast, senior citizen hi-rises may, by making other senior citizens readily available to socialize with and having planned group activities, provide an environment in which the individuals needs for companionship can be fulfilled by human companions as opposed to companion animals.

The results of this study indicate that a minority of the residents perceive a need for the benefits of pet ownership, ie.: companionship, love, and affection. In addition, management's opposition to pets poses a major obstacle to allowing companion animals into senior citizen hi-rises. Further studies need to be done to determine the rate of pet ownership, the social and psychological benefits of companion animals to senior citizens living in private, single family homes, and to determine what proportion of this population of seniors may be excluded from senior citizen housing complexes because of their desire to keep their pet. A study on the cost of allowing pets in apartment complexes, in relation to excluding pets or as compared to the cost of allowing children, needs to be done to give management sound data on which to base the decision as to whether or not to allow companion animals in a hi-rise.

The role of pets in society is complex and dynamic. Efforts need to be made to accomodate different lifestyles when planning housing complexes for the elderly. For the elderly pet owner living in a single family home, alternative housing, including senior citizen complexes that allow pets, should be available.

TABLE 1
TYPES OF PETS OWNED DURING LIFETIME
AS STATED BY 40 RESIDENTS

Type of Pet	# of residents	% of residents
Dog	29	72.5%
Cat	15	37.5%
Bird (parakeet, canary, etc.)	10	25%
Rabbit	3	7.5%
Tropical Fish	2	5%
Reptiles or Amphibians	2	5%
Rodents (mice)	1	2.5%
horse	1	2.5%

TABLE 2
THE BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP: BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE
AS STATED BY 35 OF 40 RESIDENTS

Benefit	#	% of Residents interviewed
Companionship	30	75%
Love and Affection	23	57.5%
Pleasure	21	52.5%
Protection	16	40%
Educational	9	22.5%
For the Children	8	20%
Other (working animal, sports use, temperment & habits, physical beauty, challenge)	10	25%

TABLE 3
 THE DISADVANTAGES OF PET OWNERSHIP: BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE
 AS STATED BY 35 OF 40 RESIDENTS

Disadvantage	#	% of Residents interviewed
Responsibility	15	37.5%
Noise, odor, or feces disposal	4	10%
Having pet die or put to sleep when old	2	5%
Taking care of pet belonging to children	2	5%
Not being able to take pet on trips	2	5%
Other (economics, diseases of pet, poor temperment, shedding, cleanliness, scratching things.)	1 ea	2.5%
No disadvantage to pet ownership	13	32.5%

TABLE 4
THE BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP: PRESENT PERCEPTIONS
AS STATED BY 39 OF 40 RESIDENTS

Benefit	#	% of Residents interviewed
Companionship	16	40%
Love and Affection	12	30%
Pleasure	6	15%
Protection	2	5%
Social Outlet	2	5%
No Benefits to Pet Ownership	23	57.5%

TABLE 5
THE DISADVANTAGES OF PET OWNERSHIP: PRESENT PERCEPTIONS
AS STATED BY 35 OF 40 RESIDENTS

Disadvantage	#	% of Residents interviewed
Responsibility	23	57.5%
Taking Dog in Elevator or Walking Outside	6	15%
Noise, odor, or Feces Disposal	5	12.5%
Could not take care of properly	5	12.5%
Dogs and Cats don't belong in Apartments	5	12.5%
Economics	3	7.5%
Cleanliness, Messy	2	5%
No Disadvantages to pet ownership	3	7.5%

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1. Number of individuals in household. _____
2. How long have you lived in your present residence? _____
3. Have you ever owned a pet? _____
4. If you have never owned a pet, could you explain why?
 - a. Do not like pets. _____
 - b. Housing limitations (space, pets not allowed, etc) _____
 - c. Moved too often. _____
 - d. Destructive habits of pets. _____
 - e. Allergy. _____
 - f. Could not provide adequate care for pet. _____
 - g. Inconvenience _____
 - h. Other _____
5. If you have owned a pet, what type of pet did you own? How many?
 - a. Dog _____
 - b. Cat _____
 - c. Horse _____
 - d. Other _____
 - e. Bird _____
 - f. Snake, turtle, lizard _____
 - g. Rabbit _____
 - h. Hamster, Guinea Pig, mice _____
6. How long were pets a member of your households? _____
7. In what periods of your life did you own pets?
 - a. Childhood. _____
 - b. As a parent with children. _____
 - c. As an adult without children in the home. _____
 - d. Other. _____
8. How long has it been (yrs.) since you owned a pet? _____
9. What would you describe as the main advantages of pet ownership?
 - a. Companionship. _____
 - b. Love and affection. _____
 - c. Working animal. _____
 - d. Sports use. _____
 - e. Pets temperament and habits. _____
 - f. Pleasure. _____
 - h. Challenge to care for or train. _____
 - i. Protection. _____
 - j. Pets physical beauty. _____
 - k. Educational. _____
 - l. Other. _____
10. What would you describe as the main disadvantages or inconveniences of pet ownership?
 - a. Economic. (cost of pet, food, licences, vet. bills, etc.) _____
 - b. Physical requirement, restraint. _____
 - c. Responsibility (care while away, etc). _____
 - d. Noise, odor, housetraining, feces disposal. _____
 - e. Reproduction and associated problems. _____
 - f. Diseases of pets. _____
 - g. Fear or bad temperament or habits of pet. _____
 - h. Other. _____
11. Did you have a pet before moving to these apartments? _____

1. If a housing complex that allowed pets had been available, would you have chosen to live there? _____
2. If you could own a pet, what type would it be? _____
3. Would you object to others in the complex owning pets? _____
4. What do you see as possible benefits to you of pet ownership?
 - a. None. _____
 - b. Companionship. _____
 - c. Love and affection. _____
 - d. Challenge, training, caring for, etc. _____
 - e. Pleasure. _____
 - f. Physical exercise, walks. _____
 - g. Protection. _____
 - h. Social outlet, meeting others on walks, etc. _____
 - i. Other. _____
5. What do you see as possible problems to you of pet ownership?
 - a. Economics, (damage deposit, food, vet. bills) _____
 - b. Physical requirements. _____
 - c. Responsibility. _____
 - d. Noise, odors, cleanliness, feces disposal. _____
 - e. Diseases of pets. _____
 - f. Poor temperament or bad habits of pets. _____
 - g. Reproductive problems. _____
 - h. Other. _____

6. If one were provided, would you be interested in caring for a pet bird? _____
7. Do you feel that a pet would add to, detract from, or not change the "quality of life" for you in this complex? _____
8. Comments:

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You are invited to participate in a study of the attitudes of senior citizens toward pet ownership. We hope to learn how the residents of Dover Hills Senior Citizen High Rise feel about pet ownership, their past experiences with pet ownership, and the feasibility of allowing pets in senior citizen complexes. You were selected at random as a possible participant in this study because of your residence at Dover Hills.

If you decide to participate in this study, Dr. Wilber will interview you and ask a series of questions that are designed to get information on past pet ownership, attitudes toward that ownership, and present feelings about pet ownership. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire and any information given by you will remain anonymous. Results of this project may be published, but you will not be identified in any such publication.

If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, Dr. Wilber (373-8032) will be happy to answer them.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

Division of Epidemiology
School of Public Health
1360 Mayo Memorial Building
420 Delaware Street S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

22

April 7, 1978

Dover Hill Resident
2400 Rhode Island Avenue North
Golden Valley, Minnesota 55427

Dear Resident:

I am a veterinarian studying for a Masters degree in Veterinary Public Health at the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota. As part of my program, I am doing a project to study the attitudes of senior citizens towards pets.

You were selected at random as a possible participant in this study because of your residence at Dover Hills. If you decide to participate in this study I will set up a time that is convenient for you so that we may talk about your past pet ownership and your present feelings about pets. I am interested in talking with both past pet owners and non-pet owners. I would anticipate that the interview would last from 15 to 30 minutes. Any information which you give will remain confidential. I have spoken with the resident manager, Mr. Ward, and he has given me permission to talk with residents that volunteer to participate in this study.

If you would be willing to participate in this study please call me at 487-1052 between 5-9 p.m., or fill out and return the pre-addressed, stamped postcard.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest.

Sincerely,


Russell H. Wilber, D.V.M.

RHW/lmg

Enclosure

PETS AND APARTMENT COMPLEXS:
A SURVEY OF MINNEAPOLIS AREA APARTMENTS

Abstract

A survey of 119 Minneapolis area apartment complexes was conducted by telephone between January and March 1978. The purpose was to gather information concerning apartment policies towards pet dogs and cats, recent changes in their pet policies, and to determine what problems management associated with allowing pet owning tenants. Seventeen (14.3%) apartments allowed dogs and cats, and an additional ten (8.4%) allowed cats only. All but three of the apartments allowing pets required a damage deposit. Most of the apartments had size limitations on dogs and several apartments required neutering of pets and/or declawing of cats. Twenty-seven (22.7%) of the apartment complexes had changed their pet policies, to exclude, pets within the past two years. The major problems that management associated with pets were: damage to apartments, dogs defecating on apartment grounds, and owners not following apartment rules. It appears as if most apartment managers in the Minneapolis area view pets as problems, to be avoided if possible. As a result of these perceptions, pet owners may have difficulty finding apartment accommodations for themselves and their pets in the Minneapolis area.

Introduction

Pets, and especially dogs and cats, are an integral part of many families in our western culture. ⁽¹⁾ With the cost of single family homes escalating and changing life styles, more of our urban and suburban population are living in apartment complexes. It was the purpose of this study to determine the policies of Minneapolis area apartment house complexes concerning pets, to see if these policies appear to be changing, and also to determine what managers perceive as being the major problems associated with allowing tenants who own dogs or cats. This information is necessary to evaluate the potential man-animal interrelationships in a community. If the majority of apartments do not allow pets, then a segment of the population, apartment dwellers, will be deprived of the animal relationships many of us find rewarding.

Methods

The author conducted a survey by telephone interview, between January and March of 1978. All 119 apartment complexes within Hennepin county and listed in The Apartment Guide Of the Twin Cities ⁽⁶⁾ were contacted. Managers were asked the following questions:

1. Do you allow dogs and/or cats?
2. If not, did you allow pets in the past? If so, when did you change?
3. How old is your apartment complex?
4. What restrictions do you place on pets?
5. Do you require a deposit for pets? If so, how much?
6. Why did management choose not to allow pets?
7. What problems have pets caused in your apartment complex?

One manager could not be reached, however information contained in The Apartment Guide advertisement for this apartment was sufficient to answer all questions with the exceptions of, did you ever allow pets in the past and why did management choose not to allow pets. This apartment was treated as an apartment that had always excluded pets, and non respondents to the question on problems associated with pets were not included when calculating frequencies of complaints.

Problems managers associated with allowing dogs and cats in apartments were arranged into three categories: apartments never having allowed pets, apartments which had changed their policies to eliminate pets, and apartment currently allowing pets. Managers of apartments not responding to the questions on problems associated with pets were not included in the denominator when calculating the frequencies of complaints in each category.

Results

Twenty-seven (22.7%) of the 119 apartments surveyed allowed dogs and/or cats. Ten (37%), of these twenty-seven apartments, allowed cats only. When apartments in Minneapolis were compared with apartments in Hennepin County excluding Minneapolis, the difference in rates between apartments allowing pets and those not allowing pets was not significant at the .05 level. (Table 1)

Managers were asked if their apartment's policy toward dogs and cats had changed in the past. Twenty-seven (29.3), of the ninety-two apartments not allowing dogs and cats, had changed their policies, from allowing pets to excluding pets, within the past two years.

The age of the apartment complex did not appear to be a factor in determining whether or not pets were allowed. The difference in the rate of

acceptance of pets in apartments five years old or younger was not significantly different from those apartments older than five years, at the .05 level.

Twenty-four (90%) of twenty-seven apartments allowing pets required damage deposits for pets. Deposits for pets ranged from \$50 to \$250, with sixteen (59%) requiring a deposit of \$100. Two apartments had an additional monthly charge of \$10, in addition to the \$100 damage deposit, and in two other apartments \$50 of the \$100 damage deposit was nonrefundable. One apartment charged cat owners \$25 for steam cleaning the carpeting when tenants vacate.

Managers reported the following restrictions on pets allowed in their apartment complexes. Of the ten apartments allowing cats only, four required and two requested that cats be declawed and neutered. Of the seventeen apartments allowing both dogs and cats: twelve had weight limitations ranging from fifteen to forty pounds, two allowed no "large" dogs, one limited pet ownership to "small" pets, one required neutering of pets, two required that cats be declawed, and two required that cats be declawed and neutered. Managers appeared to be trying to exclude large breed dogs from their apartments.

Managers perceptions of the problems associated with allowing pet owning tenants were fairly consistent between the three groups: apartments never having allowed pets, apartments having changed their policies, and apartments allowing pets. However only thirty-three (58%) of fifty-seven of the managers of apartments which had never allowed pets responded to the question, as compared to thirty-four (97%) of thirty-five for apartments having changed their policy from allowing to excluding pets, and twenty-seven (100%) of the apartment managers allowing pets. The major problems associated with pets were: damage to apartments, defecating on apartment grounds, and owners not following apartment rules. Managers felt that pets caused unneeded hassle. (Tables 2,3,4)

Managers of apartments that do allow dogs and/or cats reported fewer problems, and seemed to minimize the importance of the problems they did have. Managers of five (29%) of seventeen apartments that allow both dogs and cats and eight (80%) of ten apartments that allow only cats, considered pets to be no problem in their apartments.

Discussion

Literature on the subject of pets and apartment complexes is almost non-existent. The few articles that have been written deal mainly with the problems associated with allowing pets in apartments, and suggesting ways of minimizing problems, if pets are allowed in apartments or condominiums.^(1,3,4,5) Studies on the economic impact of pets or comparing the costs of allowing pets in apartments, as compared with the costs of allowing children, have not been done.

Despite a lack of hard economic data, ninety-two (77%) of the apartment managers questioned did not allow pet owning tenants. Managers seemed to feel that pets were potential problems to be avoided if possible. Several managers said they would not work for apartments that allowed pets, feeling that pets detracted from the overall appearance of a complex and increased maintenance and managerial problems. This negative attitude toward pets may also include children, and may be reflected in an increased number of adults only apartment complexes. One manager recalled that his complex had stopped allowing children three years ago and excluded pets a year ago.

A consultant at the Roseville office of The Apartment Guide, an apartment referral agency, said that she felt that market conditions for apartment units dictated whether apartments would allow pets or not. She stated that several years ago many apartments had difficulty filling vacancies, and thus were more

willing to accept pet owning tenants. Recently the apartment house market has tightened up and fewer vacancies exist. Under these conditions apartments are less likely to accept the problems associated with pets, and thus are excluding pet owning tenants. The large number of apartments that changed their pet policies within the last two years would support this hypothesis.

Many managers expressed the opinion that pets in and of themselves are not a major problem in apartments, but that irresponsible pet owners, who disregard rules, cause most of managements pet associated problems. A major complaint of managers, that of dogs defecating in undesignated areas, clearly falls in this area.

Certain types of tenants may be more prone to becoming problems than others. Pet owning couples, where both individuals work, often become problems. Pets left alone all day may out of frustration cause damage to apartments or irritate the neighbors by barking. In contrast, the elderly who often have more time available, may be excellent pet owning tenants. One manager reported that he started allowing cats because of an elderly woman who was attached to her cat. Another manager reported that his elderly tenants, who had pets, were very responsible and did not cause any problems.

For some apartment complexes damage from pets is a real problem. Several managers reported having to replace carpeting soiled by dogs or cats, and one complex had to have a unit steam cleaned after a cat owning tenant left. Most managers felt that if an apartment unit was damaged by a pet, the damage deposit would not cover the cost of repairs. Several managers expressed the theory that if the damage deposit was set high enough, owners would be more careful to insure that their pet did not damage the apartment.

Comments by managers of apartments that allow pets indicate a higher threshold to complaints or a greater tolerance of pet problems. One manager

said that "pets are no more trouble than kids". Several of the managers that stated pets were "no problem", later when asked if carpets had ever been damaged by urine stains from pets responded that some had been damaged.

From a management and economic perspective, individuals that own dogs and/or cats appear to be undesirable tenants for apartment complexes. The following suggestions are recommended to managers who wish to allow pets in their apartment complexes:

1. Make a list of the rules and have prospective tenants sign and keep a copy.
2. Enforce the rules promptly and evenly, following up on all violations.
3. Require recommendations from prior landlords.
4. Require current vaccination certificates from a veterinarian.
5. Set a size limit in writing. Preferably weight and height limits should be specified.
6. Require that all pets be neutered and that cats be declawed.
7. Provide a designated area for walking dogs, and require that tenants pick-up after their animals.
8. Charge a reasonable damage deposit.
9. If several buildings are available in the complex, consider allowing pets in only one building or restricting pets to lower floors.

Pets and apartment complexes can peacefully coexist if management is willing to make the extra effort necessary to carefully select pet owning tenants and enforce rules promptly and fairly. In view of the importance of pets to many families and elderly individuals, responsible pet owners should be allowed the opportunity to live in apartment complexes if they so choose.

TABLE 1
 POLICIES OF 119 HENNEPIN COUNTY APARTMENTS TOWARD PETS

	<u>Minneapolis</u>		<u>Hennepin Co. Excluding</u>		<u>Hennepin Co.</u>	
	#	%	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	#	%
Allow Cats Only	4	15.4	6	6.5	10	8.4
Allow Dogs and Cats	1	3.8	16	17.2	17	14.3
No Dogs or Cats	21	80.8	71	76.4	92	77.3
TOTAL	26	100	93	100.1	119	100

TABLE 2

REASONS FOR NOT ALLOWING PETS

AS STATED BY 33 OF 57 MANAGERS OF APARTMENTS NEVER HAVING ALLOWED PETS

	# of Responses	% of Managers Responding
Damage to apartments	13	39%
Apartment Cleanliness	8	24%
Area not suitable for pets	6	18%
Defecating on the grounds	6	18%
Damage to carpeting	6	18%
Noise	6	18%
Complaints to management	6	18%
Odor, smell to apartments	5	15%
Damage to grounds (kill trees, grass, dig)	3	9%
Other (owners not responsible, owners not caring for pets properly, basic health, dogs urinating or defecating in halls or elevators, don't mix with children)	1 ea.	3%

TABLE 3
 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PETS
 AS STATED BY 34 OF 35 MANAGERS OF APARTMENTS CHANGING THEIR PET POLICY
 TO ELIMINATE PETS

	# of Responses	% of Managers Responding
Defecating on the grounds	18	53%
Damage to apartments	14	41%
Damage to carpeting	13	38%
Owners not following the rules	10	29%
Odor, smell to apartments	5	15%
Noise	5	15%
Damage to grounds	5	15%
Owners not caring for pets properly	5	15%
Complaints to management	4	12%
Dogs urinating or defecating in halls or elevators	3	9%
Other (area not suitable for pets, apartment cleanliness, insect problems, large dogs)	2 ea.	6%

TABLE 4
 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PETS
 AS STATED BY 27 OF 27 MANAGERS OF APARTMENTS ALLOWING PETS

	# of Responses	% of Managers Responding
Damage to apartments	7	26%
Urine staining carpets and walls	7	26%
Defecating in undesignated areas	5	19%
Large dogs	4	15%
Smell, odor to apartments	3	11%
Other (noise, owners not following rules, damage to grounds, owner not caring for pet properly)	1 ea.	4%

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PET OWNERSHIP: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Man's relationship with other animals, and the benefits derived from that relationship, have been explored by several authors including Levinson, Fox, Corson, and Clayton, to name a few. One of the serious deficiencies of the literature on this subject is the subjective nature of the reporting. Most articles amount to an individual's perceptions of the animal-man relationship, and the benefits derived from such a relationship.

I will attempt to briefly review the literature to include: the benefits man derives from pet ownership, problems this relationship may bring about, examples of pets used in psychotherapy, and the potential benefits for senior citizens.

Boris Levinson, PhD, Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yeshiva University, has written extensively on the subject of the man-animal relationship and the use of pets in psychotherapy. He believes that being close to nature is a basic human need.^(23,24) Several other authors echo this idea, that man throughout history has had a need to relate to nature and live in harmony with other animals.^(4,5,16,29) Usually, but not always, man has chosen the dog to fulfill this need to relate to nature.⁽¹⁵⁾ Marcel Heiman, M.D., psychiatrist, describes man's relationship with dogs as symbiotic, each fulfilling needs of the other.⁽¹⁴⁾

Ryder has listed the benefits he believes that pets provide man. They include: (1) socially acceptable tactile contact, such as kissing, hugging, and caressing., (2) empathy, owners feel that the pet understands their feelings., (3) give the owner a sense of importance., (4) Loving and feeling loved., (5) help the owner to get in touch with nature., (6) security, (7) narcissism,

(8) exhibitionism, (9) scapegoats, (10) branded slaves, (11) sex, (12) play, (13) go between or catalyst between owner and others, and (14) pet psychotherapy. (29)

Feldman, the Director of the University of California Pet Clinic, breaks down the reasons people own pets into four categories: (1) friend and partner, (2) self identification and self esteem, (3) facilitation and catalysis, and (4) childhood development. (11)

Several authors comment that pets can provide the stability that individuals need in these rapidly changing times. (2,13,24,25) With the increased mobility of today's society, and the breaking up of families, pets can provide the stability so important in the lives of children. Levinson states, "for the average human being pets are invaluable. We all need a friend with whom we can communicate, to whom we can reveal ourselves in all our nakedness without any fear of rejection. How important it is to have a friend with whom we can be very intimate, who will be acceptant and non judgemental no matter what we do." (24) "Pets satisfy a multitude of needs such as acceptance, warmth, security, physical interaction, and perhaps most significantly, the need for love." (5)

All of the above evaluations of the benefits of pet ownership are highly subjective and based on the authors perceptions and experience. However many of us would not question these assumptions because they conform to our perceptions based in large part on our cultural background.

While many authors extole the multiple benefits man receives from his relationship with animals, these relationships are not without potential hazzards. Leigh, in his article on the psychology of the pet owner, points to four potential problem areas: (1) severe depressive illnesses may be precipitated

by the loss of a dog, cat, or budgerigar., (2) individuals may neglect themselves and their diets to feed their animal., (3) individuals may develop a preference for animal versus human relations, and become isolated., and (4) the individuals household may decay into a state of filth. (17) Kathleen Szasz, author of Petishism, feels that "raising pets to the status of humans is a way of coping with a society that is largely emotionally ill. These pet owners are lacking in certain healthy human behavioral characteristics, a lack of affection for mankind." (31) These authors suggest that if people use pets to retreat from the real world, it may be harmful to their physical as well as mental health. This line of reasoning is not explored by many authors, but should be considered when possible uses of pets are contemplated.

From a public health standpoint, little has been written about the potential disease hazards from zoonotic diseases. Jordan feels that the potential dangers to the pet owner are small. (16)

Boris Levinson has been a leading proponent of using pets in psychotherapy. This is in line with his stated ideas that pets "promote positive mental health". Levinson also feels that pets restore a healthy communication between members of a family. (19) He has reported on the use of a canine mascot in a N.Y.C. rehabilitation center for narcotic addicts, and calls the dog, "one of the best therapeutic tools" because it is non judgemental. (24)

Pets have been used in many different clinical settings as a form of therapy. Florence Clayton, in a paper written as part of a masters degree program, lists some examples of pets used in therapy: (1) Levinson in the treatment of emotionally disturbed children., (2) The Mid-Missouri Mental Health Center, using a golden retriever with mentally disturbed children., (3) Skeezer, a labrador cross, used in Childrens Psychiatric Hospital, Univ. of Michigan Medical Center., (4) Kittens in the Metropolitan State Hospital,

Norwalk, California., (5) a zoo project for handicapped children with the San Diego unified school district. They used zoo trips to motivate handicapped children and allowed the children to work with the animals., (6) Lambs Pet Farm, Libertyville, Illinois. Retarded individuals run a farm and associated pet shop., and (7) George B. Fage Boys Ranch, where boys from broken homes, foster homes, orphanages, or with disciplinary problems work with animals in a farm setting. (16) These are but a few of the interesting uses inovative individuals have made of animals and which are well documented by Ms. Clayton in her paper.

Samuel Corsen has written on the practical problems associated with setting up a dog in a childrens hospital and on the benefits derived from this novel form of therapy. (8) Christy describes the benefits of using pets in institutions for children, and states that there have been good experiences with a wide variety of animals, but that dogs work best. He feels that "it is hard for a child to resist the effervesent, unrestrained joy of a puppy." (3)

Mugford and M'Comisky recently did a small controlled study of the mental health benefits of pet budgerigars to senior citizens in England. This small study proported to show a positive beneficial effect as measured by improvement in answers to a standardized questionnaire, particularly on items that probed attitudes to people and attitudes to the subjects own psychological health. The problems with this study were the small size of the groups (six subjects per group) and the high dropout rate (40% in the five months of study). (28) Pets have been used in nursing homes with positive results (32) and dogs are now being trained as "hearing ear dogs" to assist the deaf and elderly, many of whom live alone. (32) The literature provides many examples of beneficial uses of pets (3,5,6,7,8,9,10,28,32), however most are anecdotal in nature. The study

by Mugford and M'Comisky, alluded to above, is one of the few controlled studies attempted using a uniform test to measure the benefits, and then comparing groups. As with all the social sciences interpretation of the test results is highly subjective and therefore difficult to measure for validity. One problem inherent to all these reports of beneficial effects, is sorting out the true benefit from the pet from the benefit due to increased attention due to the study.

The beneficial effects of pet ownership to senior citizens is less well documented. While most of the literature concentrates on the benefits of pets for the development and emotional stability of children, comments as to the benefits to the aged are minimal and appear almost as an afterthought.

Levinson tries to identify the possible benefits of pets to the elderly, in his article, "Pets and Old Age".⁽²¹⁾ He writes, "It becomes imperative for the aged person to find a new role that he considers worthwhile and that is not in competition with the young. Adoption of a pet, which is immediately feasible, can lead to new interests, adventures, and untrodden paths. A pet can pave the way to new friendships: walking a dog can provide ready introduction to people, and casual conversation about the dog may kindle new interests. The old man may identify with his pet, giving it all the love he himself may be desperately craving, but is unable to receive. How satisfying to have a living creature reciprocate his affection and reward his care! This may help the aged person develop an idea of being wanted and loved, and give him a different concept of self."⁽²¹⁾

Michael Fox comments on the benefits when he writes: "senior citizens, retired people, widows, and widowers have a need for close companionship, be it cat, dog, fish, or parakeet. This need for companionship is exaggerated

when families separate and when people are lonely or alienated in a depressing urban environment. Pets fulfill the social needs of the owner for company, and can give an owner a sense of identity." (13)

The companion animal may be the closest relationship the elderly living alone have. Ferguson states that the "elderly spend a higher proportion of their savings on pets than other segments of the community. The importance of their pets is paramount." (12) These spending habits if true generally, may be a detrimental effect of having a pet, as Denis Leigh mentioned in his writings. (17)

The literature cites many individuals who feel that, at least in the western world, pets play an important role in our daily lives. As Ferguson states: "Pets are a permanent and integral part of a healthy community and the reasons for keeping them embodies much that is good and worthwhile in human character." (12)

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APARTMENT COMPLEXES AND PETS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

I was unable to find many references to pets and apartment complexes in the literature. After checking seven texts on apartment house management, I found that five did not even mention pets, and that two others referred to pets under suggested rules and regulations.^(2,5,6,7,10,11,12) Real Estate Management by Bliss suggests a rule stating, "dogs, cats, parrots, etc shall not be allowed in any part of the building.", and then follows with "rules may be varied as necessary".⁽²⁾ The Resident Manager suggests, "no occupant shall keep or maintain a pet on or about the demised premises without lessor's prior written consent." This author also included a pet responsibility clause.⁽¹¹⁾

Writing to the institute of Real Estate Management in Chicago, I asked if they knew of any studies on the economic impact of pets in apartments. My letter was referred to the library of the National Association of Realtors, who listed four references to pets in apartments.^(1,4,8,9) The librarian reported she could find no references to a study on the economic impact of pets in apartments. The articles cited comment on the problems pets pose for apartment and condominium managers.

Michael Petlik in "Pets in Apartments states that high vacancy rates may force managers to allow pets, with the usual stipulation that they be small pets."⁽⁸⁾ Included is an example of a "Pet Rider" for apartment leases. As Petlik sees it, the major problems with pets include older pet owners who cannot carry their pets outside and dealing with tenants who violate the pet codes. Petlik recommends that management require letters of recommendation from previous landlords and vaccination certificates from a veterinarian to help reduce problems from pet owning tenants, if pets are to be allowed.

Klumb in "Management Problems" gives advise on keeping annoyances from pets to a minimum. He recommends, "establish clearly defined areas in which pets are to be exercised. Incorporate into your lease the rules by which pets may be governed, and double or triple the security deposit for pet owning tenants, with the understanding that the tenants who do not conform to regulations will not be eligible for the return of this deposit."⁽⁴⁾

In the article "Pets and the Condo Board", the author quotes William Sally a general manager of a property management company. Sally feels that pets infringe on the rights of others and that among the arguements agianst pets are the following: Damage to property, both inside and out; Damage to people; and a general nuisance catagory which includes barking and pet droppings.⁽¹⁾ Recommendations range from outright banning of pets which he prefers, to the use of an "amortization rule" whereby the owner can keep a pet but cannot replace it when it dies and must dispose of any litters, or the confinement of pet owners to certain areas or buildings in the condominium.

The final article by Gallese in the Wall Street Journal seems to sum up the feelings of many real estate managers and developers. This article deals with the conversion of an old run down 408 apartment urban housing project outside Boston, into a new low, moderate, and upper income developement. The conversion was brought about by a tenants association and a private developer. As a condition to the developer working with the tenants group, the developer insisted on the right to ban or evict tenants who wouldn't obey certain rules. The rules included prompt payment of rents and a prohibition of pets.⁽³⁾

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