

## Children and Animals - A Valuable Relationship

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**Received:** February 17, 2017; **Accepted:** April 05, 2017; **Published:** April 10, 2017

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**Citation:** Mercado KPL. Children and Animals - A Valuable Relationship. J Pediatr Care. 2017, 3:2.

### Introduction

Doctor, is good to have animals at home when there are children? Will I have to give my dog or my cat? Often in our consultation we are faced with this type of question by the parents, and it has been a subject that causes questions and concerns in the same way that causes other types of topics such as: start a formula milk would be good? When does the complementary feeding start?

It is necessary that we as an important and supportive figure, are able to respond to this question, based on good information. (Although not an issue we learned in our training as paediatricians) because more and more pets are becoming an important part of the family with strong and emotional bonds. Perhaps the essence is based on having a pet, or being able to arouse in people, the deepest and most sensitive feelings. Leaving with a pet where there are children at home brings excellent benefits in the emotional development of the latter. Teaching a child to care for an animal, to treat it with love, patience and respect gives him an invaluable learning to treat a person in the same way [1].

In the first analysis of the observatory Affinity Foundation on the link between people and pets reveals that 8 out of 10 Spanish children prefer to play with their dog or cat rather than with video games. Also the affective ties with the mascot help to overcome the feeling of fear or sadness, since the child usually resorts to his pet to embrace it and find relief in these situations.

But, when is the right time to have or bring a pet at home ?. Only until the 4 years of age that the true relationship between them begins before this age the child is not in the capacity to differentiate who is the mascot and who would be a toy. Do not control their impulses of aggressiveness and irritability. If you have a pet before this time the child's age, parents monitor when they are with them (pets) [2,3].

Already at 4 years of age, pets become an irreplaceable companion, then there is an authentic relationship, " it is the friend that to trust". According to the AACAP (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) the advantages of having a domesticated animal (Pet) at home are: They can help develop responsible behavior in children who care for them. They provide a connection with nature [4]:

1. They can teach the child respect for other living creatures.
2. They can provide lessons about life: reproduction, birth, disease, accidents, death and mourning.

Also on the emotional level through the experience of physical contact, tactile touching, allows to gain security in oneself and

in relationships with others, (jealousy for the arrival of a brother for example, are much easier to handle). Even interacting with an animal that of course does not speak, allows the child to assimilate rules of non-verbal communication, which is beneficial for developing the capacity for intuition.

However in the midst of what could be this wonderful relationship, there are fears of parents as to the worsening in allergies of children or the emergence of diseases. In the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, in September 2015, this belief is controversial. A scientific study by the University of Turku in Finland says that children living with animals have more than twice the chance of carrying an animal bacterium in their intestines, such as *B. thermophilum* and *B. pseudolongun*, which would probably explain why early exposure to pets would protect you from some allergies. This early incorporation of pet microbes into the intestinal flora would strengthen your immune system. In order to ensure a positive relationship between the child and the pet, it is necessary to establish guidelines that guide how to relate, teach from an early age, the basic management and care of pets. Here is a list of the canine breeds (plus nannies) recommended for pets, it is advisable to choose a breed of calm temperament.

1. Labrador Retriever.
2. Golden Retriever.
3. Collie.
4. Beagle.
5. Saint Bernard.
6. Boxer.
7. Yorkshire terrier.
8. Bulldog.
9. German shepherd.

## References

- 1 AACAP (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
- 2 [www.fundacion-affinity.org/observatorio](http://www.fundacion-affinity.org/observatorio)
- 3 Fonseca LMM (2007) The connection between children and pets Crianza and health. Colombian Society of Pediatrics.
- 4 Influences on Children's Health - Children's Health (2007) The positive influence of animals on children, who have developmental, affective, cognitive and behavioural processes.