

Compassionate Handling Series

Pets



Why does Compassionate Handling matter?

Handling describes how humans work with, respond to, and interact with animals within their surroundings. It is unavoidable when living and working with animals and can have profound and lasting effects on both animals and humans.

Pets



Dogs and their owners are happier after a short period of stroking and petting, showing increased dopamine, oxytocin and endorphin levels (happiness hormones).¹



Around 60% of pet rabbits find being lifted stressful and this can often cause them to struggle or show fear-related aggression.⁵



Dogs prefer gentle stroking and scratching to vocal praise, with both their owners and strangers.²



Tickling rats increases their positive vocalization and approach behaviour, decreases fear, improves handling, and in some cases decreases stress hormones.⁶



Dogs will comfort a crying person, by sniffing, nuzzling and licking.³



Regular gentle stroking and cradling of rescue kittens makes them less fearful when rehomed.⁷ Giving animals time to get used to human contact, and allowing slow introductions helps build up trust and the human-animal bond.



Pigeons learn which people are hostile towards them when giving food, and avoid them in favour of people who are calm and still.⁴

Many animals learn about how humans behave and modify their own behaviour accordingly, they can also find handling by humans pleasurable if done correctly. We commit to handling animals with compassion - wherever, whenever and with whomever it takes place - so that all animals experience a positive human-animal relationship throughout their lifetime.



Get in contact with us via email:
handling@thebrooke.org or
thebrooke.org/compassion to learn more.

#AnActOfKindness

How about posting pictures on social media of you and your pet telling us what they enjoy!



References:

- 1 Handlin et al., (2015). Short-Term Interaction between Dogs and Their Owners: Effects on Oxytocin, Cortisol, Insulin and Heart Rate—An Exploratory Study. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175303711X13045914865385>
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- 3 Custance & Mayer, (2012). Empathic-like responding by domestic dogs (*Canis familiaris*) to distress in humans: An exploratory study. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10071-012-0510-1>
- 4 Belguermi et al., (2011). Pigeons discriminate between human feeders. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10071-011-0420-7>
- 5 Bradbury & Dickens, (2016). Appropriate handling of pet rabbits: a literature review. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsap.12549>
- 6 LaFollette et al., (2017). Rat tickling: A systematic review of applications, outcomes, and moderators. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175320>
- 7 Casey & Bradshaw, (2008). The effects of additional socialization for kittens in a rescue centre on their behaviour and suitability as a pet. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2008.01.003>



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