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).\(^1\)

- Dogs prefer gentle stroking and scratching to vocal praise, with both their owners and strangers.\(^2\)

- Dogs will comfort a crying person, by sniffing, nuzzling and licking.\(^3\)

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

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

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

- Regular gentle stroking and cradling of rescue kittens makes them less fearful when rehomed.\(^7\)

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:


2. Feuerbacher & Wynne, (2015). Shut up and pet me! Domestic dogs (Canis lupus familiaris) prefer petting to vocal praise in concurrent and single-alternative choice procedures. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beproc.2014.08.019


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