

Pets

THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEMENTIA

Pets are an important part of the life of many people. This Help Sheet discusses some of the benefits of pets for people with dementia.

There are many positive benefits for a person with dementia in having pets around their home. Pets can:

- Soothe and reduce agitation
- Provide company and activity
- Let the carer know when the person is wandering

'purr therapy', a phrase coined to describe the therapeutic value of sitting with a purring cat on your lap. I have found that cats have become a very important part of my life now, as they keep me calm, and stop me racing around trying to do too much at once. They give my brain 'time out' as I sit quietly stroking them and just sitting, doing nothing.

Christine Boden, *Who will I be when I die?*

Checklist

There are however, a number of important things to consider when a person with dementia is caring for a pet:

- If the person with dementia lives alone, is the pet being fed regularly and cared for properly?
- Is there any danger that the person will let the pet escape by forgetting to close the cage or gate?
- Is the person in any danger of mistaking pet food or other pet products for their own food?
- Is the person used to having pets?
- Is there any risk of harm from the pet?

Day centres and residential care facilities often have birdcages and aviaries, which they report as being popular with people who have dementia.

In previous times many people, especially in country areas, had chickens in their back yard. Some people with dementia may enjoy feeding chickens and collecting the eggs.



Further help

This Help Sheet is one of a series of sheets that summarises some of the information in the manual *At home with dementia*. The manual also contains product information. It is available by contacting the NSW Ageing and Disability Department (ADD) on (02) 9367 6822 or from ADD's website at www.add.nsw.gov.au

A range of books, videos and Help Sheets are available through your State or Territory Alzheimer's Association by contacting the Dementia Helpline on 1800 639 331

These Help Sheets can be obtained on the internet at www.alzvic.asn.au

Your Alzheimer's Association can be contacted directly on the:

Dementia Helpline
Freecall 1800 639 331

Each Australian State and Territory has an Alzheimer's Association which can provide further information, counselling and support for carers of people with dementia.