

# S.M.A.R.T. Guide for Animal Care



## Introduction

This brochure aims to provide educational information about animal well-being to raise awareness and provide readers with practical tips to facilitate the improved care of animals.

## About Let's Be S.M.A.R.T.

Let's Be S.M.A.R.T is a public charity organization with global campaigns, registered in the State of New York under 501 (c) (3) and based in New York City. The main goal of Let's Be S.M.A.R.T. is to **Successfully Manage Animal Rights Today**. We hope to achieve this by using creative community projects and educational programs to create an understanding of and compassion for animals among people of all ages.

LBS is dedicated to **giving back to our animals**, helping **to educate the community** about how they can do so, and **promoting the transfer of positive energy to all animals**. We will work to support special projects throughout the world as they arise.

The inspiration for our organization and mission comes from an important saying by Mahatma Gandhi, which goes *'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.'*



***We invite you to join us in fulfilling our mission!***

## Be Aware: Behaviors that Make a Difference

### 1. Poop Control

When it comes to our dogs for their daily walks down the street, we must remember that helping to **keep the streets clean and free of dog poop is our responsibility!** Picking up after our dogs is a simple behavior we can adopt to respect other people, their pets, and our neighborhood and community. Not to mention that keeping the streets free of dog poop means contributing to the prevention of possible diseases and health risks we are all affected by.

There are a few **S.M.A.R.T. tips** you can follow to do your part to help curb the poop problem:

- Make sure you always carry plastic bags with you to pick up your dog's poop.
- If you see other people walking away without picking up their pet's poop, approach them, explain the problem, and ask them to help keep your community clean.
- Talk to your mayor about adding 'dog poop bag stations' to local parks and public areas. These stations help everyone by providing easy access to bags and waste disposal.
- Educate yourself about the dangerous health implications of bacteria from exposed dog poop. Dog waste, an environmental pollutant, falls into the same category as herbicides and insecticides, oil, grease, toxic chemicals, and acid drainage from abandoned mines as a non-point source pollutant. Do we want to continue being exposed to this bacteria?



Keeping the community streets clean and beautiful shows respect to your surroundings and the people you share space with. Practicing **Poop Control** is a **simple way** to help you remember to **take responsibility for your dog** and **encourage others to do the same**.

## 2. STOP the poisonings

The practice of poisoning animals, especially street cats and dogs, is common practice and has been for decades. It is only recently that the public has become aware of the **cruelty of this inhumane practice**, and just how much **suffering it causes animals**.

There is a solution to the overpopulation of stray animals which is birth control NOT poisoning! It's against the law in every U.S. state to treat animals cruelly.

Do not stay silent if you suspect or witness the poisoning of animals. **Please report poisonings to the police!**



## 3. Spaying and Neutering Practices

Making the decision to spay or neuter your cat or dog is one of the most critical health decisions you must make as a pet owner.



SPAY & NEUTER

*Spaying:* The process of removing the ovaries and uterus of your female pet. This is a simple procedure which brings lifelong benefits to your pet and requires minimal hospitalization.

*Neutering:* The process of removing the testicles of your male pet. This procedure will help keep your pet close to him and help improve his behavior greatly.

Stray dogs and cats are **result of irresponsible pet owners** who choose not to spay or neuter their cats or dogs. When pet owners choose not to spay/neuter their pets, unwanted offspring are born. These offspring find themselves in animal shelters, living on the streets, or, in the worst case scenario, they become the target of cruelty from pet owners who try to rid themselves of the animals unethically.

The stray animal population is an issue due to the subsequent problems these animals contribute to. Strays prey on wildlife, cause car accidents, damage local flora, and often frighten children and adults alike.

The **negative consequences that come with a stray overpopulation** make it easy to overlook the real tragedy, which is that stray animals are very often subjected to cruelty and abuse.

It is for these reasons that the **practice of spaying and neutering must be properly implemented to reduce the population of street animals**. There are many volunteer networks dedicated to 'trap-neuter-return' programs which aim to control the number of stray animals.

### **Why You Should Spay and Neuter Your Pets**

- Female pets will live longer, healthier lives of better overall quality.
- Neutering your male pets provides them with major health benefits.
- Spaying means your female pet will not go into heat/come into season.
- Male dogs will not stray far from home and male cats will not spray throughout your house.
- Neutered male pets exhibit much better behavior.
- Spaying and neutering are highly cost effective practices, which help reduce the stray population for the good of the community.

## 4. Community Stray Care

### What Do Stray Animals Need?

It's important to remember that stray animals are in an extremely vulnerable position in that they rely on the empathy and kindness of humans to secure their **basic needs**. Just like the pets you keep at home, stray animals need food, fresh water, and shelter.

### Here is How You Can Help:

**Water:** Do what you can to ensure that the stray animals in your neighborhood have constant access to fresh, clean water. This is especially critical during the summer, as strays the danger of dehydration.



**Note:** Please **do not** give milk to cats and kittens, as it gives them diarrhea!

**Food:** Rather than throwing away your leftovers like meat and fish, keep them and set them out for the neighborhood strays. You can leave food near rubbish bins or at the curb underneath a parked car. Talk to your neighbors and encourage them to join you in feeding your neighborhood strays. Sharing the responsibility will lighten your load and keep the strays well-fed.



**Shelter:** Think about how you can create accessible shelter for the strays in your neighborhood, especially during colder weather. If you have space, consider allowing strays to take shelter in your home. Otherwise, you can provide makeshift shelters at a very low cost. There are many ways to create and places to find ready-made low-cost shelters for strays. The most important things to keep in mind are keeping the shelter well insulated with little air space and waterproof.



## Care: Meeting Animals Where They Are

### 1. The Spiritual Element: Respect and Love All Living Things

Before thinking about your relationship with your pets and the strays in your neighborhood, think about how you regard all living things from humans to plants and animals. Learning to live in harmony with all living things is essential to our quality of life. Fostering respect and love for everything living will help enhance your spiritual well-being and growth.

### 2. Active Responsibility

Part of our experience as members of communities, countries, and the world is to **extend our help to others, humans and animals**, whenever we can. The help we offer does not need to be of material matter. It can be simple love or an act of kindness.

Giving your care and understanding to animals is an important contribution. With the endless demands that our thrust upon us these days, especially financially, it can be difficult to focus on anything other than doing what we must to survive in our world.

However, if you take the time to care for others, you will find that positive energy comes your way.





## Simple Active Steps You Can Take Right Now!

- Find an animal and give them love for 10 minutes, an hour, as long as you can!
- Put out a bowl of water or food for your neighborhood strays.
- Speak up firmly, but nicely if you see someone engaging in harmful behaviors such as littering, harming animals, or not picking up their dog's poop.
- Sign Petitions. There are many animal organizations (check Facebook) offering many opportunities to sign petitions aimed at helping the community.



### 3. Delicate Psychology of Animals

Animals are just like us in that they are vulnerable to psychological issues and have mind energies and the experience of various mental states. There are **three main energies** through which animals experience life - **fear**, **love**, and **sadness**. We are similar in this regard.

Animals also have a powerful psychic ability to connect with forces of nature, which makes them especially sensitive. This ability is heightened when animals live outdoors, as their natural instincts are in action.

#### ***Quality of Life for Indoor Cats***

Indoor cats live safer lives away from predators, careless drivers, and accidental or fight-induced infections and diseases, and keeping cats inside can result in a longer lifespan.

However, even indoor cats **have their vulnerabilities**, and they come in the form of higher risk of obesity and less access to fresh air and fiber-rich grass nutrition. Keeping cats inside can also hinder their natural instincts, such as the instinct to hunt, due to the limited opportunity for exercise and exploration.

It is essential that **you provide your indoor cat with safe places to nap, hide, climb and scratch**. You want to make sure your cat stays fit, receives the proper nutrition, and avoids boredom. Boredom can lead to destructive behaviors that are undesirable for both you and your cat.

Here are a few tips to keep your indoor cat's natural behavior stimulated:

- **Food Games:** Help your indoor cat feel like they must search for their food on a daily basis. Separate the daily food ration into small portions and place them in different spots around your home. To help your cat start foraging for her food, you can place a few small treats in open areas leading to various food portions.
- **Support Hunting Instincts:** Your cat wants to experience the feeling of hunting and catching their prey. Try to collect different types of toys for your cat. There are self-play toys for your cat to play with on their own, and toys you control which encourage chasing and pouncing. The toys that boost your cat's activity and make them hunt tend to be the most enjoyable for them. The best times for play are early morning and evening when cats have the most natural energy!
  - Wand toys with strings, feathers, and fabric attached are great options for hunting games, and will be favorites for your cat.
  - You can create a simple 'mouse trap' game by putting small balls in your bathtub and letting your cat chase them around.
  - Other great toy options include mice toys, balls, door knob puzzles (you can even put treats inside), pool-toys, and bubbles.
  - Try making a fun scavenger hunt by placing treats in square tupperware and placing them around the house.



- **Scent Searching:** Activate your cat's nose by using old socks as washable scent bait. Put a bit of lotion, perfume, scent extract, or spice on the sock and rub it with a piece of deli meat. Spread the socks throughout your house and let your cat search for different scents to keep their nose sharp.
- **Box Land:** Cats love cardboard boxes. You can use them to make beds, dens, tunnels, and even mazes!
  - Create a 'busy box' by attaching small toys with short cord or string to the ceiling of a large box. Cut windows of different sizes into the box at different heights.
- **Think Tall:** Vertical space will add an enriching dimension to your indoor cat's life. Having elevated structures allows your cat to fulfill their climbing and scratching needs. Give your cat the outdoor experience from the comfort of home using perches, cat furniture (like cat trees), or rest areas by windows. This is **SMART FURNITURE!**
- **Add a Cattery or Catio:** If you have space in your home, one of the best ways to give your indoor cat a taste of their natural environment is to build an outdoor enclosure. After you build your cattery, you can add sources of enrichment like cat trees and toys!
- **Bird Watching:** For an easy source of hours of entertainment for your indoor cat, place a suction-cup bird feeder right outside your cat's favorite window. Make sure to think of the birds and don't put the feeder too close to the ground, leaving them vulnerable to attacks. Keep your window closed, as your cat can push right through the screen if they want!
- **Outside Exploration:** If you have a yard, consider adding an outdoor enclosure like the ones previously mentioned, to give your cat the chance to get fresh air in a safe way. Otherwise, you can take your cat outside using a cat harness. Just make sure that your cat has flea and tick prevention and is up to date with their vaccines to keep them safe outside.

## Our Companions: Health and Therapeutic Benefits of Animals

Animals have been a part of our lives for thousands of years, but it was not until the 1800-1900s that people such as Florence Nightingale and Elaine Smith, nurses practicing in Europe, promoted the **use of animals in various therapies**, after they saw the benefits for themselves.

**Animal Assisted Therapy** is now an integral part of alternative medicine and is widely recognized for its **ability to support health and offer relief** from various human health conditions. Animal Assisted Therapy is a structured and individualized form of therapy used with professional supervision and animals specially trained for this purpose.

Animals bring **benefits by changing the atmospheric energy** of a health setting, fostering a calming and normalizing experience to institutions, through the transmission of **their non-judgmental and unconditional love**.

The animals most used for therapy are: **dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, dolphins, horses, pigs, and fish**.

### The Benefits Animals Offer

#### 1. Relief of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, and Loneliness

It has been proven that using therapy animals is an option that works just as well, or better than, traditional medicine when it comes to relaxation and stress relief. Many international companies permit employees to bring their pets to work to reduce stress during a long work day.

What is it that makes animal therapy so effective?

Animals **help reduce anxiety** by providing the opportunity to connect with the element of touch, which then produces feeling of love and a sense of connection. Scientists have found that animals even act as a positive force in the process of healing depression.

Dogs are an especially helpful animal **for creating a calming, therapeutic effect**, as they facilitate connection with another living being, shifting focus away from daily stressors. Dogs can sense illness and sadness, and have a genuine desire to provide companionship and comfort, while improving mood. Dogs are very intelligent creatures that are intuitive and compassionate.

As we know from research, it is not cancer or heart disease **which hits older people the hardest, but loneliness, as love is the most critical healing tonic. Pets are one of the best sources of nature's pure love**, they can help you broaden your circle of friends, and offer a sense of protection and security.

## **2. Lower Blood Pressure**

If you're at all concerned about your blood pressure or heart rate, **stroking and petting animals** can help you keep them under control. Research shows us that blood pressure and pulse rate decrease in both the human and animal being petted.

According to studies, just spending time communicating with animals will help to lower your blood pressure and improve your health. When you talk to animals in that special upbeat tone or laugh around them, you're releasing hormones that work to lower blood pressure, and make the animals feel good **too. Spend time thinking happy thoughts and engage in 'happy talk' with your pets** to feel more at ease.



### 3. Raise Your Spirits

When you spend time **petting animals**, you melt your stress away by prompting the release of **mood-elevating endorphins**, your body's natural opiates.

Since interaction with animals raises our spirits, animal therapy is used for many purposes including boosting the moods of nursing home residents to working to improve the cognitive functioning of developmentally disabled children.



### 4. Emotional Growth

Caring for and connecting with animals helps to foster empathy and supports the emotional growth of humans. It's ideal to **nurture empathy and caring behavior** from a young age, so involving children in the care of pets and other animals will have a highly positive influence on their emotional and social development.

### 5. Act as Health Protectors

Animals have many special abilities, but one of the most amazing is their **ability to detect serious illness, even cancer**.

Multiple studies have shown that dogs are 'intriguingly accurate' at detecting the scent of malignant tissues and noticing certain forms of cancer. Other studies have exhibited that dogs are also able to pick up the odor which indicates low blood sugar.

Many diabetes patients have said that their dogs alerted them to low blood sugar, before they noticed the symptoms themselves! Epileptic patients have also reported their dogs' practice of warning them about the onset of a seizure.

## 6. Rescue Animals

You have likely heard at least one of the countless stories about **animals who saved human lives**, and it is true that many people owe their lives to the protection and bravery of their pets or other animals.

There are rescue dogs, dogs who predict earthquakes, animals who save people from burning buildings, whales who save drowning divers, cats who save choking babies, and more! All these animals are **true heros** and deserve to be respected and treated with our loving care.



## 7. Help the Elderly

As mentioned before, the biggest issue that elderly people face is loneliness, and animals are just the company they need to overcome this difficult feeling.

The relationship between **animals and elderly people** is not limited to **fighting loneliness**, animal therapy also offers benefits for **patients with dementia or Alzheimer's**. There are even animals that are trained to remind their companions to take their medications!





## 8. Companion for Children

Pet therapy is widely used to **help children with cancer, autism and other disabilities**, and those who have been abused.

Pet therapy has been shown to increase range of motion and improve sensory modulation and interpretation through interactions with animals. **The relationships between children and animals lead to improved social skills**, especially in preschool-aged children.

Another well-documented relationship between animals and children is the that exists between autistic children and dolphins. Autistic children have been observed to demonstrate higher levels of communication skills with dolphins.



## Conclusion

### Care for Animals - Care More for People - PEACE

Let's Be S.M.A.R.T. is one organization trying to make a difference in Greece. Everyone that helps and contributes to our success is doing a great justice by respecting their community and helping animals.

When it comes to increasing interactions between people and animals, the benefits will be felt far beyond unconditional love, as they reach the health of children and adults.

Pay it forward and you will feel self-gratification and the stimulation of positive energy and happiness, while also sharing the positivity with the animals. The more we spend the time caring for animals, the more naturally caring for other people becomes.

If each and every one of us makes the decision to raise our awareness and focus on making positive changes to help animals, we will experience endless rewards and an overall more peaceful world!





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