

## Why Dogs Rule

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Date

7 August, 2024

Collection

[Village Reporter](#)

[VR 2024](#)

Of the over one billion pet dogs in the world, the United States owns 65.1 million. On my one-block-long street in Montpelier at last count there were 14 dogs. Dogs are the most popular pet in every nation of the world that have pets. China has 54.29 million dogs, Russia, 12 million, France, 8.8 million, Italy, 7.5 million, and Poland, 7.5 million.

Historically, Arabs did not keep pets, but this is changing. Many Arabs, both in Arab countries and living abroad, are now enjoying the unique companionship that only dogs can offer. Both the Qur'an and sunnah teach that dogs are cherished companions, workers, and helpers of humans.

DNA research has documented that humans are genetically programmed to perceive dogs as cute and adorable. No wonder they are loved. Dogs are so loved that they evoke more emotional responses than any of the 6,400 known mammals. They were genetically programmed to have unconditional love for their human master. Dogs are mentioned 54 times in the Bible. They served as watchdogs and guard dogs (Job 30:1), some were trained for hunting (Psalm 22:16), many were house dogs and domestic pets (Exodus 11:7).

A study of dogs' design, temperament, variety, and personality documents they were created specifically to be human companions, helpmates, and servants. They will fiercely protect their master and show affection for him. No other animal meets these requirements. If abused or wild, they will defend themselves. Critical is their experiences with people during their first few months of life.

# How They Serve Us

Dogs serve humans in an amazingly large number of ways, including leading the blind, as therapy dogs, herding sheep and pulling sleds in Antarctica. They are well-suited for personal protection, rodent control, and assisting police and the military.

Of all animals Dogs display the most extreme variations in height, body weight, body shape, fur length, fur color, fur texture, head shape, ear shape. They vary in size and weight from a 0.46 kg (1.0 lb.) teacup poodle to a 90 kg (200 lb.) giant mastiff. And all 346 breeds of dogs were bred from the original created dog kind, the wolf. Evolutionists have not been able to produce even a viable guess about what the wolf evolved from. The best proposal by evolutionists is some ugly mouse-like creature.

The dog sensory, physical, and temperament variety means a breed exists that is suited for almost every possible task. They are endowed with superior smell to help humans track lost children or criminals. If humans had powerful senses in all sensory areas they would suffer from sensory overload. Most humans can smell a spoonful of sugar in a cup of tea, but dogs can smell a spoonful of sugar dissolved in two Olympic-sized swimming pools. They are trained to sniff out illegal drugs, dead buried bodies, and people trapped in debris caused by earthquakes. They can even be trained to detect skin, breast, and bladder cancer by comparing samples from known cancer patients and people without cancer.

When I was a therapist at Arlington Psychological Associates, we used the therapeutic benefits of dogs to help clients. This supported the American Heart Association's conclusion that a pet has much the same effect as many calming medications. One reason why is that pets reduce adrenaline production, thereby causing the heart to pump with less force, lowering stress level and blood pressure. Pet owners are less likely to have a heart attack, and are more likely to survive and recover sooner if they do.

Image



My dog Rudy wondering about when his next walk will be.

Dogs are especially therapeutic for older people. They give their owners a sense of self-worth as well as a feeling they are needed. Having a pet to feed makes it more likely to feed yourself. One of the most important benefits for dog owners is they are more likely to walk twice or more daily, and walking is one of the most important ways of staying healthy and fit. Dogs also encourage socializing with other dog owners. Dog owners have a natural affinity with each other when they meet while walking. As any single, young man knows, a dog is a 'chick magnet.' When I visit a nursing home I first ask if I could bring my dog. The response has consistently been "of course you can." I never had a dog that did not like people.

One of the most inexpensive, yet stunningly successful, movies was based on a true story of a dog. Richard Gere starred in the American adaptation of the Japanese documentary "Hachikō Monogatari," titled *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*. The American adaptation opened in more than 60 countries. By the end of September 2010, the film's foreign box office returns totaled over \$45 million. The story is about a dog who runs to the railway station every day to greet his master, Professor Parker, who takes the train to and from the University. One day, Professor Parker suffered a fatal stroke and thus no longer rode the train. Yet Hachi continued to wait for him at the railway station every day as long as he lived. I saw this film a decade ago and it made a powerful impression on me. Dogs truly are man's best friend.

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