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11 May 2006

Christchurch City Council
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CHRISTCHURCH

ANNUAL PLAN
SUBMISSION: CATS

I am prompted to write after hearing the tail end of a caller's conversation with Michael Laws on Radio Live Talkback this morning. I then read a small article in The Dominion Post (11 May 2006, p. A8).

1. I have, to the detriment of my ego, been described as a little old lady, but we will let that ride.
2. I operate on a tight budget.
3. I have a multi-cat household (that will get everybody's knickers in a twist!)
4. My cats have all been NEUTERED.
5. My cats have all been MICROCHIPPED. That will disappoint the old sourpuss
6. At night I round them up at bedtime and shut them in the house.
7. I AM A KEEN GARDENER.
8. I feed the birds in my garden. I have a food tray and water dish hanging on an old revolving clothes line.
9. To my surprise, visitors to my property pay me compliments about my garden: e.g. "This is lovely" etc. I do not necessarily agree. It is not an immaculate showpiece. (I have been keeping a record of compliments). Remember, this is a multi-cat household and the garden is NOT wrecked.
10. Since August 2005, I know of only one bird which has been caught in my garden, and I rescued it. The Department of Conservation will be gunning for me – it was a sparrow. (Remember, I feed the birds in my garden). Likewise, only two mice have been casualties. I have one cat who goes out first thing in the morning and after dinner until bedtime, and he keeps himself busy, not killing birds, but bringing home trash that has been dumped around the streets by filthy humans.
11. I keep a pair of old kitchen tongs to pick up any cat and hedgehog poo.
12. For the garden I have a collection of little stakes which I place to discourage any digging by cats or BLACKBIRDS where I don't want it. This is usually temporary until any new plantings are established.
13. As far as "wrecking" gardens is concerned' I have yet to meet a cat who can match a blackbird's ability to excavate.

14. I would suggest that any human being holding forth about cats killing birds should be sent out without even a piece of string – nothing but their bare hands – and be made to survive for at least a month on the birds they manage to catch and eat – raw! I think they will be in for a rude shock.

15. I was made redundant in the early nineties. The salvation of my sanity was thanks to my cats, our Mobile Library and Radio Pacific Talkback.

The importance of pets in people's lives is illustrated by pages 193 and 194 from "The myth of cholesterol..." by Paul Dugliss and Sandra Fernandez, Chapter 9: Is your best nonhuman friend saving your life? Copy enclosed. In a nutshell. LIVE pets are good for your health.

17. If I correctly understood the caller on talkback this morning, he is advocating that cats who stray onto someone else's property should be killed by the City Council.

18. The solution is in his own hands. He said one can build a cat proof fence so he can go and do just that. No Council involvement, no fuss, no bother, no killing.

19. IF I CAN DESIGN AND HELP TO BUILD A FENCE ON MY PROPERTY TO KEEP OUT DOGS, HE CAN DO THE SAME TO KEEP OUT CATS. HE HAS NO EXCUSE.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I L Rowe'. The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first letters of each name being prominent.

I L ROWE

where we lose heritage buildings because investors just won't touch them?" Mr McKinnon asked.

funds available and said they would have to be shared with other heritage projects.

THE DOMINION POST 11 MAY 2006 THURSDAY P. A8

Call to microchip cats

A CAT-HATER has asked Christchurch City Council to spend \$1 million a year to microchip cats and euthanase renegade moggies.

In a submission to the council's annual plan, the Christchurch Cat Control Campaign has asked for \$10 million over the next 10 years to control cats.

Campaign president Ray Spring said roaming cats in Christchurch were killing native birds and wrecking gardens.

Mr Spring has proposed a radical campaign to rid the city of unwanted cats.

He would introduce a night-time curfew (any cat breaking it would be

euthanased on the spot), allow only one cat a household, have all cats except breeders desexed, microchip and register all cats at a cost of \$100 each and supply residents with traps to kill wandering animals.

Asked what he would say to cat lovers offended at his policy, Mr Spring said: "Get a goldfish."

Council wildlife ranger Andrew Crossland said that despite the large population of household cats in Christchurch, birdlife numbers were increasing.

"In fact, they [cats] actually keep out a lot of other predators, including ferrets, stoats, rats and other feral cats," he said.

after the initial event, those who were single or lived alone suffered almost twice as many heart attacks and deaths. The risk was independent of age, gender, severity of damage to the heart, drug treatment, or other confounding factors. One to four years after the fact, the risk did not change for these individuals.¹⁵ However, yet to be identified is the specific aspect of being married (emotional, psychological, economical, social, or all of the above) that is affording the beneficial effect on heart health and survival.

Is Love in the Eye of the Beholder?

Apparently, it is the *perception* of support from others that is the key factor in soothing loneliness. Heart disease patients were asked to rate their perceived need for help with activities of daily living (for example, bathing and preparing foods). Perceptions of unmet needs were strongly associated with an increased risk of death and greater functional deterioration. Those individuals who reported needing “more help” had three times greater risk of dying; those reporting “much more help” had six times as much risk. As might be expected, individuals who were single or lived alone were less likely to perceive having adequate support.¹⁶

Emotional support, however, appears to be equally as important as instrumental support in predicting the survival of individuals with heart disease. A study looked at the impact of emotional support on the physical resilience of individuals hospitalized for an acute heart attack. The findings were as follows: (1) More than three times as many men and women who had no identifiable source of emotional support died in

the hospital; (2) After six months, 53 percent of those with no source of support died. In comparison, death occurred in only 36 and 23 percent of those reporting one and two or more sources, respectively. Overall, after controlling for the influence of other factors such as severity of the heart attack, other illnesses, depression, or age, those men and women who reported having no emotional support has almost three times the mortality risk compared with those who had at least one source of support.¹⁷

Is Your Best Nonhuman Friend Saving Your Life?

There is a soft spot in our hearts for animal friends and their role in our lives. For some of us, it may be in this context that we experience true unconditional love. Animal friends create a safe emotional space for us to give and receive much needed physical affection. We perceive them as needing and appreciating us. They provide unlimited emotional support. Gaining the trust of an animal can be a very affirming experience. To use clinical jargon, animals provide “non-evaluative social support.” All this, of course, is good for the heart. Perhaps the lesson we learn about loving and living from our nonhuman friends can carry over to our other relationships. A plaque which speaks to this issue reads: “God, help me to be the human being my dog thinks I am.”

On a more scholarly note, there is a plethora of scientific research supporting the assertion that people who have animal friends are healthier than those who do not. For example, over six times as many individuals without the companionship of dogs died during a study of individuals

who had sustained a heart attack and also had irregular heartbeats.¹⁸ A year after being hospitalized with a heart attack or chest pain, only 6 percent of patients with pets died. In comparison, death occurred in 28 percent of patients who did not have pets.¹⁹ Social interactions with animals can reduce your blood pressure.²⁰ Elderly people with pets required less physician services than their pet-less counterparts.²¹

In summary, we hope you take to heart that a positive perception of support (emotional, informational, and instrumental) during a period of high vulnerability (emotional or physical) is life preserving. In fact, the most effective intervention programs in reducing deaths after a heart attack make use of this therapeutic mechanism. The popularity of “support groups” is built on the notion that people need emotional intimacy to heal. However, in the same way that “social connectedness” can be sustaining, a heart’s sense of loss may put your life at risk. This is not a surprise. Depression, with its ensuing feelings of psychological distress, emotional isolation and hopelessness, may be considered the ultimate form of disconnection.

The elderly with pets require less physician services than those without pets.

Risk Factor #2: Depression and Hopelessness

On the issue of depression and heart disease, the research revealed that sub-clinical depression may pose an increased risk of heart disease. Ninety-three thousand women, ranging from 50 to 79 years of age, participated in this four-year study. At the onset of the study, 16 percent of the participants were assessed to be depressed; 12 percent reported a history of depression. Four years after the study began, depressed women (or those with a history of depression) had a *significantly increase risk of cardiovascular death and disease* than the control (0.79 versus 0.52 percent). But, the most dramatic finding was that *depression was an independent predictor of cardiovascular death for women without a prior history of heart disease*. The relative risk of cardiovascular death associated with depression was 1.5. This was the result after taking into account age, race, education, income, diabetes, hypertension, smoking, *high cholesterol requiring medication*, body mass index, and physical activity. Of note, the study found that taking antidepressant medication did not alter the associated risks.²²

Depression creates a higher risk of heart problems regardless of cholesterol levels.

Two other studies took the question a step further. They investigated the impact of the

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