

Conference Report

HINDOLII GOPE

The Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) is an organization dedicated to the study and promotion of the bond between humans and their companion animals, such as dogs, cats, and other domestic pets. SCAS focuses on understanding the multifaceted relationship between humans and animals, including the psychological, emotional, and physical impact of this bond on both human and animal well-being. The organization supports research initiatives, educational programs, and advocacy efforts aimed at advancing the understanding of the roles and benefits of companion animals in society. SCAS also promotes responsible pet ownership and advocates for the welfare and ethical treatment of companion animals. The annual virtual conference hosted by the SCAS emphasized the correlation between pet ownership and its impact on human mental and physical health. Titled "Are Pets Really Good for Us? The Role of Pets in Mental and Physical Health," the event took place on September 17, 2023.



Barbara Cooper's adept management of the conference was commendable, setting an inviting tone for all participants. Dr. Elizabeth Ormerod, the chairman of SCAS, offered an insightful overview of the organization's mission and ongoing projects.

Distinguished speakers including Dr. Sandra McCune, Dr. Jon Bowen, Dr. Roxanne Hawkins, Dr. Cheryl A. Krause-Parello, Peter Reneiers, and Elle Boden contributed to the dynamic discussion on the intricate relationship between human-animal interactions and individual well-being.

The conference shed light on the positive effects of pet ownership on stress reduction, where numerous studies have demonstrated the ability of pets to lower indicators such as blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels. Additionally, pets were noted to provide vital companionship and social support, particularly benefiting individuals facing social isolation.

A significant focus was placed on the role of pets in promoting physical activity, with dog owners highlighted as more likely to fulfill physical activity recommendations due to their pets' exercise needs.

Furthermore, the conference underscored the role of pets in bolstering mental health, showing evidence of reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among pet owners. The sense of purpose and responsibility that comes with pet ownership was also acknowledged as beneficial for mental well-being.

Ultimately, the insights from the SCAS conference hold crucial implications for policymakers and practitioners,

encouraging the integration of pet-oriented interventions to enhance overall mental and physical health. As an enthusiastic student with a deep fascination for animal behavior and welfare, the conference has significantly broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for this field of study.