

Passage 1. Christine Rosen writes about Man's relationship with pets.

- 1 In October 2018, a woman was forcibly removed from the plane before takeoff. The reason? Airline personnel noticed that the “emotional support animal” she had brought on board in a pet carrier was in fact a squirrel— a pet that was not allowed aboard under the airline’s policies but one she refused to relinquish. Defiantly she exclaimed, “You’re not taking my squirrel! You will not take my baby from me!” 5
- 2 As the ballad of the therapy squirrel suggests, something significant has changed in our relationship with our pets. Pets are now endowed with new rights and privileges and emotional lives pet owners claim for them. The impulse to treat our pets as beloved children and companions is not new. Romans buried their dogs in human cemeteries and talked about them like children. But the scale and scope of our pet obsessions have vastly increased since Roman times. 10
- 3 Until the mid-nineteenth century, the standards for what defined a pet were straightforward, and rarely sentimental. Today, the term companion animal is preferable to the label pet since the latter fails to respect an animal’s dignity. The title of guardian or carer is adopted rather than the more commonly used owner, which implies that the pet is a slave. This concern for animals’ dignity and rights has coincided with a sharp increase in the availability of commodities and services aimed at those same animals. There are now countless pet obedience training services, pet insurance companies, as well as pet toy companies. 15
- 4 On social media, pets and their owners pursue followers and ‘Likes’ with a fervor even the most determined reality-TV star would admire. Contemporary films also offer stories in which master and pet roles are reversed, with pets firmly guiding the lives of their flawed human companions. The recently released movie Alpha gives the origin story of the dog human relationship the full Hollywood treatment, showing a callow boy who grows into a man only with the aid of a wolf. Likewise, in the 2017 movie A Dog’s Purpose, the soul of a single dog is repeatedly reincarnated in a different time and place, always displaying an unerring instinct to do right and save the humans around him, often at the cost of his own life. 20
25
- 5 But our changing feelings about our pets are most starkly revealed by our consumer choices: how much and for what we are now willing to spend to make our pets happy and healthy. For wealthy pet owners who can afford it, there are services that will pick up dogs and take them for weekly three-hour hikes in the countryside, even as those lucky dogs’ owners toil away in cubicles to pay for it. When pet owners leave their pets behind for a few days, they can now lodge them at resorts complete with an à la carte menu, a bed with a memory-foam mattress and Ralph Lauren sheets. Pets can be taken to the hotel in a Ferrari or Rolls-Royce. Others offer their guests pampering spa treatments with amenities that even include bottled water, gourmet meals cooked by a chef on site, tuck-in and story-time services. For cash-poor pet owners who cannot afford spa days and guided hikes for their animals, the reigning assumption is that humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets rather than the other way around, with the language of parenthood invoked to shame pet owners who might skimp on their responsibility to do so. 30
35
- 6 Animals once constituted the first circle of what surrounded man. We lived with and among animals, relying on them to survive. Today, people have elevated animals to a more privileged place in the household with pet keeping taking on outsized significance. As greater prosperity encourages more spending on pets, we would do well to reconsider the place of domesticated animals in our lives. 40

Passage 2. Jessica Pierce writes about the case against pets.

- 1 Conventional wisdom is that people are happy when they have animal companions. Animals are happy because ... well, we do not ever really ask this question. If we did, we might not like the answer.
- 2 In buying and selling animals, and in using them for our own gratification, we are treating them as objects, not as living beings with inherent value. When an animal is a product, it becomes difficult for us to appreciate the experiential world of the animal from their own perspective. We think about how our pets make us feel, not how our keeping them as pets makes them feel. 5
- 3 Scientific literature leaves no doubt about the anguish pets experience. Physical confinement, social isolation, and chronic exposure to stress can lead to physiological damage, which can increase the risk of chronic disease, and shorten lifespans. The psychological anguish of captivity manifests in certain harmful behaviors called stereotypies – repetitive movements or sounds, like a ferret pacing back and forth in her cage, or a dog obsessively chasing his tail. 10
- 4 Ethically, keeping pets is not so different from consuming meat: you have taken the life of an individual animal, and you have chosen to participate in an industry that imposes suffering on living beings. A large commercial puppy or kitty mill or a warehouse full of snakes, geckos and other small critters waiting to be shipped to pet stores is not so different from a gruesome factory farm. 15
- 5 Moreover, the billions spent on pet products every year mostly undermine animal welfare. Some pet spending goes toward welfare promoting goods, such as veterinary care. The lion's share, however, is on products like junk food, shock collars, bark deterrents, cages, and tanks. The marketing of these products with catchy labels like 'hamster hotel' can make them seem benign. But imagine spending your whole life in a space not much larger than your body, with no meaningful work, no meaningful social interactions, and no way to engage in behavioural patterns for which you have evolved over millennia? It would be torture. 20
25

Passage 3. Kenny Torrella writes about the ethics of pet keeping.

- 1 Ideally, keeping a companion animal is a good thing that enriches both of your lives, bringing nothing but benefits to both parties. I cannot find fault with someone who adopts an animal from a shelter and provides care throughout the animal's life. The internet is awash in this feel-good content starring some of the 250 million animals. It all reinforces the inherent goodness of the ancient human-animal bond and lets us believe that where there are pets — whom most owners consider to be family members - there is joy, love, play, and hope. 5
- 2 Yet, there are shadows that lie beneath the sunny narrative of pet ownership. Things like physical abuse, puppy mills and dog fighting. Beyond such extremes, there are common forms of everyday neglect and cruelty that even well-meaning pet owners may have a lot to answer for: punitive training, prolonged captivity and extreme confinement, mutilations (declawing, ear and tail docking). Add to the bill lack of exercise and socialization, boredom, and even abandonment. All this is possible because, unlike children, pets are not really family members — they are property without legal rights and few laws to protect them. Even the most responsible pet owners, which I would count myself among, are bound to fail to meet the needs of their animals due to other responsibilities and the inherent challenges of keeping a dog or cat in a world made for humans. 10 15
- 3 We may see ourselves as the best of animal lovers, but we very well could be inflicting suffering on our pets every day.

BLANK PAGE