

# Must Love Dogs: More Singles Getting Pets



By Laura Seldon for GalTime.com

A new study suggests American singles are taking their search for love into the wild! The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) says there has been a major rise in pet ownership among singles since 2006 as they look to fill a sense of love and family in their lives. It seems these little creatures are serving as creatures of comfort for singles.

## **Singles Tap into Their Animal Instincts**

According to a recent AVMA survey, pet ownership among single people has increased by an impressive 16.6 percent – from 46.9 percent pet ownership in 2006 to 54.7 percent in 2011. While

it's still more common for a pet to be owned by a family, the increase in pet ownership by singles far exceeds the growth of pet ownership for families, which has only grown by 1.37 percent since 2006 (from 65.5 percent to 66.4 percent). Other interesting findings include:

- Pet ownership among divorced, widowed and separated adults grew by 17.7 percent, from 51.3 to 60.4 percent.
- The number of single men living alone with pets increased by 27.7 percent, from 34.3 to 43.8 percent.
- The number of single women living alone with pets increased by 22 percent, from 46.8 to 57.1 percent.

## **Paws for Thought**

Pet ownership has not only been linked to positive mental and physical health outcomes, but in general has been shown to make people happier.

“Surely the most important role our pets play in our lives is that they love us. No person is too old or ugly or poor or disabled to win the love of a pet – they love us uncritically and without reserve,” writes *Between Pets and People: The Importance of Animal Companionship* author and animal behavior expert Elizabeth Marshall

Increasingly, singles are becoming aware of just how much a pet can serve as a source of love.

“It's interesting to see that more and more single people are discovering the comfort and satisfaction that owning a pet can offer,” says Dr. Douglas Aspros, president of the AVMA. “Pets are powerful, positive influences on our lives, offering unique emotional, psychological and physical health benefits to their owners.”

Animal Magnetism

Pets can serve as important sources of social and emotional support. However, according to research published by the American Psychological Association in 2011, researchers found that pet owners were just as close to key people in their lives as to their animals, indicating no evidence that relationships with pets came at the expense of relationships with other people – or that people relied more on pets when their human social support was poorer. So, while more and more single people may be in the throes of “puppy love,” it doesn’t mean your love life has to go to the dogs!