

LOVE ME, LOVE MY PET

Heavy petting prevents singles from finding love

- ***Nearly half of Britain's singles now own a pet – 6.1 million people***
- ***Singles spend £5.6 billion each year pampering their pets***
- ***Owning a pet can reduce your chances of finding love by as much as 40%***
- ***One in four men wouldn't date a woman with two or more cats***
- ***A third of women won't date a man who shares his pillow with a pet***
- ***If push came to shove 25% of singles would choose their pet over a new partner***
- ***Nearly two thirds of singles say they really love their pet and think of him/her as a member of the family***

According to new research from PARSHIP, the UK's largest serious online dating service, more singles than ever before are turning to pets for companionship. Nearly half (47%) of Britain's 13 million singles now own a pet, spending an average of £928 and dedicating 21 days a year to their animal's wellbeing and upkeep. However, PARSHIP advises that single pet-owners could be putting romance at serious risk: owning a pet could reduce your chances of finding love by as much as 40%.

Treating pets as children (12% of respondents), sharing your bed with your pet (33%), over-indulging your pooch with the latest designer accessories (40%), or simply owning two cats or more (23%) – these were just some of the factors that influenced other singles against dating a pet-owner. What's more, if push came to shove 25% of singles would favour their pet over a new partner.

The implications of this could be serious, considering Britain's singles own 1.24 million cats, 1.18 million dogs, 624,000 fish, 436,800 hamsters, rats and gerbils, 187,200 birds, 124,000 horses, donkeys and pigs, 64,000 snakes, and 120,000 exotic animals as pets – which includes spiders and insects. That's a lot of two-, four-, six- and eight-legged creatures edging their way between Britain's singles and their potential happiness with another human being.

- ***The puss on the pillow reduces your chances of finding love by a third***

In conjunction with YouGov, and covering 2,000 singles, PARSHIP conducted a wide-ranging study exploring singles' relationships with their pets. A third of singles say they wouldn't date someone who shares their bed with their pet, (29% of men/36% of women), 23% are turned off by owners of two or more cats (26% of men/21% of women), and 22% are repelled by owners of snakes (18% of men/26% of women) and spiders 40% (33% of men/48% of women). 40% wouldn't date people who overindulge their pets by spending £100 or more a week on animal upkeep (44% of men/37% of women), while going as far as treating a pet as a member of your family will alienate you from 13% of men or 11% of women; on the other hand, NOT doing so will alienate you from 11% of men or 12% of women

- ***The animal attraction***

So what's driving this animal love affair? Nearly two thirds (58%) say they love their pet and think of him/her as a member of the family, compared to just 27% who love their pet as an animal, but not as a surrogate human. In fact, singles love their pets so much that in some instances they would put their pet's feelings above their own.

- ***Pets over partners***

Sometimes they will even put their pet's feelings above their lover's. One quarter (25%) of men and women say that if their live-in partner developed an allergic reaction to their pet, under no circumstances would they put their boyfriend or girlfriend before the animal: Mr or Ms Right would just have to find somewhere else to live. More encouragingly, 15% of men and 22% of women said they'd visit a top Harley Street specialist – no matter what it cost – in the hope of finding an effective treatment for the allergy, while 32% of men and 19% of women said they'd find a loving new home for the problem-causing pet.

Dr Victoria Lukats, psychiatrist and PARSHIP's dating and relationship expert commented:

“People invest a lot in their pets emotionally, but whilst some singles may see their pets as surrogate partners or children, this research shows that these people are in the small minority. Rather than the stereotype of a spinster with several cats, the reality is that many singles simply enjoy owning a pet but they would probably put their human relationships first.”

“Provided the balance is there and pet owners don't avoid socialising or dating and that they maintain a healthy attitude to their pet then it shouldn't interfere with their love life. But perhaps single pet owners would be wise to take note of this research: if there's seems to be potential for a long-term relationship developing then it might be best not to boast about how much you indulge your pet and avoid making harsh statements about how your pet comes first, especially on the first few dates.”

- ***Is it time to put the cat out?***

25% of singles wouldn't date someone with two or more cats. In most cases this is attributable to an allergy, with 26% of adults suffering from sneezes and discomfort when close to a feline. There are very few treatments available to counter the allergic reaction. However, there's good news for the 40% of singles who wouldn't date someone who owned a pet spider: Even a single session of real-life exposure based therapy can be effective for up to 90% of phobic individuals. (Ost, Brandberg and Alm, 1997, Ost, Salkovskis and Helstrom, 1991)), so you really could learn to love your partner's little (or not so little) eight-legged friend

PARSHIP is Europe's largest and most successful serious online matchmaking service, with 5 million members. PARSHIP draws its strength from its unique psychometric compatibility test and a methodology which ensures that its members are only matched with people who are genuinely right for them.

Dr Victoria Lukats, explains how the test works:

“The factors that make two people a good romantic match are highly complex. Common interests such as a love of animals can help but the importance of complimentary personality traits in determining the long-term success of a relationship cannot be underestimated.”

“PARSHIP uses a unique psychometric test to match members with similar and complimentary characteristics. Many people believe that opposites attract, whereas others believe that similar personalities are compatible with one another. In fact, both these points of view can be valid, as research conducted over many years by leading psychologists has demonstrated.“

“For example, if an individual highly values domesticity or has a high need for emotional intimacy, then he or she would be well matched with a partner with similar values.”

“For other characteristics, differing scores on the test can be acceptable, even desirable, although wildly opposing scores could spell disaster. A member who is extremely assertive in their communication style would not be well matched with someone who was similarly assertive as this could lead to a major clash of personalities. Likewise, an individual who is slightly shy might be drawn out of themselves by someone who is slightly more outgoing, whereas a complete introvert is less likely to be successfully matched with someone who is the complete opposite.”

In addition to matching members through their personality profiles, members can also choose to specify what they are looking in a potential partner including age, height, location, whether they prefer a non-smoker and whether a potential partner has a pet.

Overall the PARSHIP test has been shown to be an accurate reflection of an individual's personality and furthermore it has proven to be a highly successful method to help people find the love of their life.

- Ends -

For Further information or case studies please contact Penny Conway on 020 7014 4046, 07775 992350 or email penny@parship.co.uk

The research was conducted by YouGov between 30th June and 4th July 2007 questioned 2,353 adults over the age of 18 and by PARSHIP questioning 200,000 singles from its UK database.

About Dr Victoria Lukats (www.drlukats.com)

Dr Victoria Lukats, MBBS MRCPsych MSc is a psychiatrist, agony aunt and dating and relationship

expert. As well as working as a relationship and dating expert for PARSHIP Dr Lukats is a Specialist Registrar in Psychiatry within the NHS

References

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