

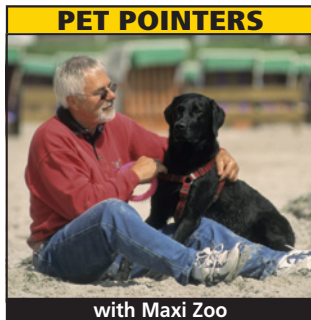
A PET KEEPS YOU YOUNG & ON THE MOVE

Dogs, cats, birds & co already enrich the homes of millions of senior citizens. There they provide an antidote against loneliness and boredom. And they've been proven to have a positive effect on health. Which animals are the most suitable as pets depends on individual needs and means. Experts from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo help decide on an animal housemate.

People with both legs planted firmly in working life often have little time for a house pet. The situation is different in old age – animal lovers acquire a pet then because they can devote their full time and attention to it. The daily duties bring a structure and variety to life and that keeps the owner fit in both body and soul. The good thing about animals: they accept their owners as they are - it doesn't matter in the slightest whether they are young or old. Basically, any animal would be suitable for older people. In the end, it's always a very personal decision, depending on preference and also state of health.

DOGS need owners who are mobile enough to walk them regularly. The amount of time one has to find for playing, grooming or physical activity will depend on the breed of dog. Small breeds such as the Maltese for instance, can get along fine with less walking but are on the other hand very playful. For humans, going for walks together in the fresh air is not only good for the health but also makes contact with fellow beings easier. Friendships can even develop from this.

CATS are headstrong and sensitive animals. They only come for a cuddle when it suits them. That's something their owner has to accept. If they can respect this characteristic, then a cat makes an affectionate and playful housemate. Stroking a cat has a calming effect and



the purring, because of its frequency, possibly even has a healing effect on human bones. If kept purely as an armchair tiger then it's better to have two of them. Cleaning the cat loo is a daily duty along with feeding and playing.

BIRDS are lively, alert and constantly provide an appropriate background sound. This can quickly dispel the feeling of loneliness. They are ideally caged in pairs at least which scarcely increases the amount

of care required. Budgerigars are particularly popular and, given lots of patience, can even learn to speak. Some parrots, such as large parrots are not considered suitable as pets due to their long life expectancy, among other things.

SMALL ANIMALS give their attention and make demands on yours. With their inquisitive ways, they quickly adapt to their surroundings. Rabbits are ideal for garden owners with space for an outdoor enclosure: these long-eared creatures love to be on the move and are inviting to watch and stroke. They are easy to look after but should be kept in pairs at least.

FISH are peaceful and unobtrusive. They are well suited to older people who like watching them and can recoup energy through this. Neon tetras, zebra fish, cardinals and guppies are easy to look after. The advantages of an aquarium: if the owner is on holiday or away for a few days, the fish don't need constant attendance.

First stop when looking for a pet is the animal sanctuary. For small animals, birds and fish, specialist pet shops are a good idea. But first of all, senior citizens should be absolutely clear who can take over caring for their pet in the event of illness, care dependency or even death.



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