

Local

Pets help mental patients

Psychiatrist, veterinarian study human-pet bonds

By NANCY FLOECK
Battalion Staff
Pets can make life and communication easier for the ill, imprisoned, elderly and mentally unstable, a psychiatrist from the

University of Oregon told about 100 people at the College of Veterinary Medicine Friday.
Dr. Michael McCulloch is an associate clinical professor of psychiatry in veterinary medicine

and brother of Dr. William McCulloch, Texas A&M professor of veterinary public health. The brothers have spent several years researching emotional bonds between humans and pets.

McCulloch said using pets in therapy often promotes humor, playfulness and confidence in patients. It also acts as a catalyst for communication in patients, especially with withdrawn children, he said.

This is because animals can comfort patients and provide an uncritical and unthreatening friend, McCulloch said. They make people feel needed and offer distraction from physical and emotional worries, he said.

Pets can also act as "social lubricants," he said. Once people establish a relationship with an animal, McCulloch said, they often find it easier to relate to people.

This also helps doctors in diagnosing and treating patients. McCulloch said doctors often understand a patient better after observing how the patient interacts with animals and by asking the patient about his pets.

He said facilities where patients were able to interact with animals often report reduced incidents of suicide attempts, violence, medication requirements and a greater willingness on the part of patients to conform to acceptable behavior. Studies have shown that using time with animals as a reward motivates patients more

than promises of television time or plant ownership, McCulloch said.

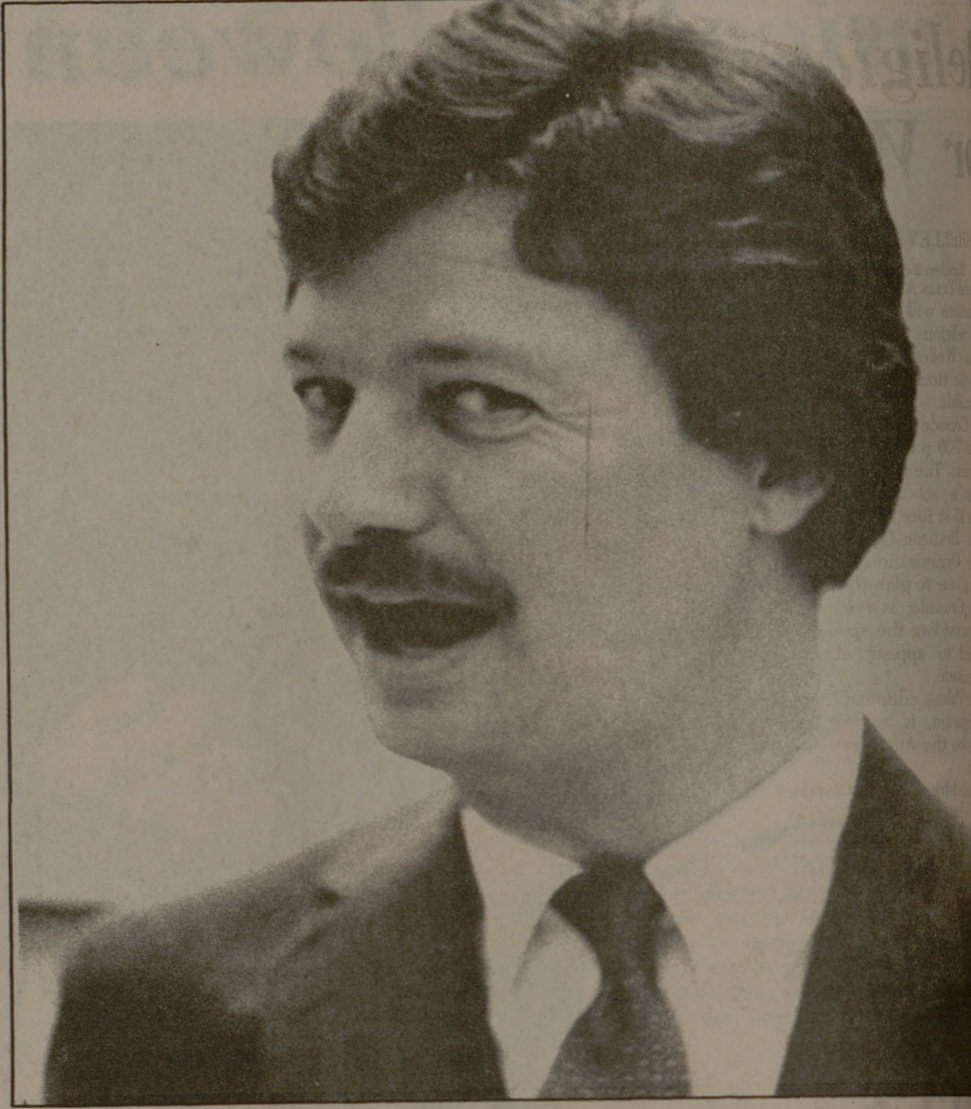
Employees in such facilities often can benefit from this, he said. Improved morale, increased contact with patients and inmates and increased optimism often characterize the staff of these facilities, McCulloch said.

However, pet therapy isn't effective in all cases, he said, and must be used appropriately and not forced on patients or facilities.

Animals must be appropriately matched with those individuals who would benefit from them and must be coordinated with other forms of therapy, McCulloch said. He also said pets shouldn't be used in facilities where the staff is not receptive to the idea, since non-compliance by employees could prevent positive effects.

And animals may cause rivalry and feelings of rejection among patients, as well as bother those with allergies, McCulloch said. Pet therapy also raises questions about humane laws, building sanitation and health problems, he added.

But the biggest threat to pet therapy is that it won't be taken seriously, McCulloch said. This type of therapy is not a fad that will peak in popularity and then disappear, he said. The comfort offered by pets is the basic obligation of the helping professions, he said, and is sometimes the only help these professions can provide.



Staff photo by Ron...

Dr. Michael McCulloch, from the University of Oregon, discusses the use of pets in emotional therapy in a speech at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

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MSC Council to meet tonight
By NANCY WEATHERLEY
Battalion Staff
MSC Council members will hear the MSC Arts Committee budget proposal for upcoming events tonight at 8 in the MSC Council Conference Room, Student Programs Office.
The Arts Committee budget proposal calls for financing a concert with classical guitarist David Grims, a jury arts and craft show and a Gallery exhibit.
Doug Dedeker, MSC Council president, said the committee's budget is subject to Council approval because last year the committee's budgetary process was not satisfactory, and members were not spending funds properly.
Until the Arts Committee works out its problems, it is required to submit a program-by-program budget proposal to the MSC Council.
Some problems the Arts Committee had last year included low attendance at the group's programs and poor promotions, Dedeker said.
This year the Arts Committee has done a good job, he added, and the Budget Review Committee probably will look at its record in the spring to see if the committee can go back to approving its own budgets.
The Council Building Studies Committee will present its budget proposal for a building study to the MSC Council for approval.
The first request for the building study is for the Student Programs Office and the proposal is subject to Council approval.
Complaints concerning the Society of Creative Anarchists, a University organization, will also be included in the Building Studies Committee report.
Complaints filed against the MSC Council include overcrowding their space, using phones other than those designated to it and loss of boisterous behavior by SCA members, Dedeker said.
Paul Fisher, vice president of MSC Council Operations, reported to the committee he received a letter asking for the removal of SCA from the Student Programs Office.
Even though SCA is not an MSC Committee, it is given space in the SPO, he said. Applications for spaces, which cost about \$10 per semester, are available during the spring semester.
The committee has decided pending approval tonight, all letters pertaining to SCA's removal be sent to the SCA and that all members must attend the Building Studies Committee questioning.

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Today's almanac
Today is Monday, November 2, the 306th day of 1981 with 59 to follow.
The moon is moving toward its first quarter.
The morning stars are Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.
The evening star is Venus.
Those born on this date are under the sign of Scorpio. James Polk, 11th president of the United States, was born November 2, 1795.
On this date history:
In 1917, a Jewish homeland in Palestine was proposed by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour. Israel became a reality 31 years later, setting the stage for Israeli wars.

CO-OP OPPORTUNITY IN CANCER RESEARCH
On Tuesday, November 10, and Wednesday, November 11, representatives from the Stehlin Cancer Research Foundation (associated with St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston) will interview students interested in beginning Co-op with them in the Spring semester. They want to interview students majoring in any of the Sciences (including pre-med), BICH, BIMS, ANSC, or Food Science Technology; and plan to hire four students to begin work in January in their formal alternating semester Cooperative Education Program in Houston.
A minimum grade point average of 2.7 and U.S. Citizenship are required. You must call the Director of Cooperative Education's Office at 845-7725 or come by Room 107, Harrington Tower to sign up for an interview with Stehlin Foundation, an orientation to co-op, and to complete your application PRIOR TO YOUR INTERVIEW.