

# Can Dogs and Cats Sense Depression?



Many of us have tried convincing our parents to get a pet, only to see them become the most attached in the end. Pets quickly become part of the family, and many owners notice that their pets can sense emotions—especially sadness. But can dogs and cats truly detect human depression?



## Can Dogs and Cats Sense Emotions?

Research suggests they can. A study by the University of Lincoln and the University of São Paulo tested 17 untrained dogs, presenting them with images and sounds expressing emotions. Dogs spent more time looking at matching emotional cues, indicating their ability to recognize and respond to emotions.



Similarly, a study by Quaranta et al. (2020) found that cats interpret human emotional signals and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Many cat owners report that their pets provide comfort by sitting close, purring, or rubbing against them when they sense distress.

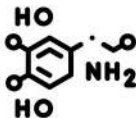


## Health Benefits of Owning a Pet

Pets offer companionship that can lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and boost mood by increasing oxytocin levels. Studies show:



Pet owners are less likely to develop depression.



Playing with pets increases serotonin and dopamine, promoting calmness.



Pets reduce cholesterol levels and improve heart health.

# Benefits for Different Age Groups

For Older Adults:

Pets provide companionship  
and reduce stress.



They lower hospital visits and  
ease anxiety in Alzheimer's  
patients.



## For Children:

Reduce allergies and separation anxiety.



Boost confidence, empathy, and responsibility.



Help children with learning disabilities manage stress.



“When an 85-pound mammal licks your tears away and tries to sit on your lap, it’s hard to feel sad.”

-Kristan Higgins



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