

Pets

BY MARGO DEMELLO



It's tempting to think that our future will be filled with cloned animals, genetically modified (nonallergenic! tiny!) creatures, virtual animals like lolcats (images of cats) and robotic pets. But I think the reality is that as we continue to crave more intimate relationships with nonhuman animals, perhaps to fill the gap in our human relationships, we will simply incorporate animals ever more deeply into our own families.

The pet-care industry will capitalize on this by providing more buying opportunities for consumers—greater variety in pet supplies; more travel opportunities for people with pets; “pet cams” and pet cafes for people who want to keep an eye on their pets when they're away or want to visit with animals if they can't have a pet; more options in the pet-bereavement and burial business; and more advanced (and expensive) treatment options in veterinary care.

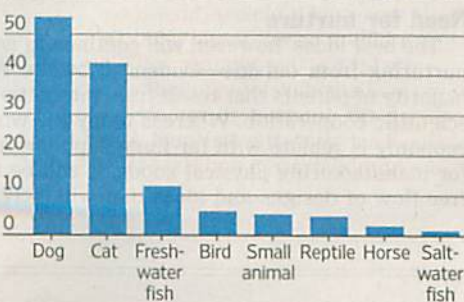
And scientific studies will continue to show that pets can be beneficial for human health, leading to an increase in therapy pets, service pets and emotional-support animals.

Anatole France, the French poet and novelist, may have put it best: “Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened.”

Ms. DeMello is program director for human-animal studies at the Animals and Society Institute in Ann Arbor, Mich., and president of House Rabbit Society, a nonprofit group in Richmond, Calif. She can be reached at reports@wsj.com.

Home Companions

Almost two-thirds of households (65%) in the U.S. own a pet. The number of households that have a:



Source: American Pet Products Association

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.