

Power of the human-animal bond

By Las Vegas Sun

The gentle nudge of a paw. A friendly chirp. A boisterous purr. A soul-penetrating gaze.

These are the moments pet owners cherish and cling to, that make messes or misbehavior irrelevant. Because, at the end of the day, we need their love as much as they need ours. But why? Why can animals – whether they're furry, feathered or scaled – inspire such deep emotion in humans? And how do they maintain such loyalty despite the broken promises to walk them, the late dinners we feed them and the hours we spend venting to them?

Scientists call it the human-animal bond, an indisputable phenomenon supported by an ever-growing body of research. The average person might call it unconditional love.

"They're not judgmental; they'll listen to us all day," said Steven Feldman, executive director of the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative Foundation in Washington, D.C. "They're always happy to see us. ... It's a strong bonded relationship where they really do focus on us and give us everything, which you don't always get from another person."

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