

Pets' effects on elderly to draw ministry study

The Health and Welfare Ministry will launch a study on the effect of pets on the physical and mental health of aged people, it was learned Sunday.

It will study not only the benefits of pets, such as the prevention of senility and promotion of health, but also the negative elements.

After the study is over, the ministry plans to publish a guideline on pet-keeping.

The study will be the first of its kind, officials said, adding, "The study will help aged people lead more meaningful lives."

The study will be conducted by the Japan Animal Hospitals Welfare Association, which has promoted animal therapy for rehabilitation of senile people or autistic children through contact with an-

imals.

In the study, model areas will be chosen from both urban and rural areas.

Questionnaires will be sent to aged people, and comparisons of health conditions will be made of aged people who keep pets and those who do not.

The association will also study whether pets carry parasites that cause infectious diseases and the effects of hair and dust from pets.

Through the study, the association will determine the best way of keeping animals for aged people whose immunity has weakened.

A ministry study shows that in 1992, about 4.88 million households, or 12 percent of the total, were composed of men aged 65 or older or women aged 60 or older or both.

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