



# Restoring Joy Ministry

## Loving Pets

### **Pet Visitation Ministry**

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# Loving Pets

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# Loving Pets

## **Mission Statement**

**Loving Pets, an extension of Restoring Joy Ministry has the mission of sharing the love and joy of Jesus to people confined in health & welfare care facilities.**

**In order to accomplish this mission, our Christian Pet Handlers with their calm, friendly, and obedient pets make visitations to nursing homes, hospitals, and children's foster care facilities. The Handler and their Pet minister the need of comfort and compassionate companionship to those being confined within a care facility.**

# Loving Pets

## **Welcome to Loving Pets**

**In the early 1990s pet visitation was a new thought and only a few nursing homes would even consider the idea. At that time, hospitals were not at all interested. Now, almost half of all nursing homes have pet therapy programs and many hospitals are welcoming pet visits as well. By joining this ministry, you have a wonderful opportunity to become involved in this ever increasing service that is becoming more and more important in the lives of many people every day.**

**There are many different titles that describe programs in which animals help people by visiting with them. The most familiar are Animal-Assisted Therapy or Facility Therapy Pets which refer to formal treatment programs. These usually involve one particular animal and handler assigned to a person in a hospital or nursing home. The handler and the health care provider consult on specific goals important to the person's recovery, and plan how to use the pet to accomplish those goals.**

**More informal programs are usually referred to as Animal Assisted Activities, Pet Visitation, or Therapeutic Visitation Pets. These pets are household pets whose owners take time to visit hospitals, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities. People in these facilities miss their pets. A visit from a pet can brighten their day and lift their spirits. For some, it helps motivate them to work harder in their therapy because they are reminded of their own pets waiting for them at home.**

# Loving Pets

**Loving Pets, an extension of Restoring Joy Ministry is a Pet Visitation Ministry. Our goal is to visit people who are in nursing homes, hospitals, and children in foster care to let them know they continue to be loved and cared about by God and followers of Jesus Christ. We also believe prayer is essential to the success of this ministry and ask you to please keep Loving Pets and those we visit in your prayers.**

**The first time you encounter a lonely, sad, and long face that becomes bright with a smile when they are visited by one of the pets in this ministry, you will understand how God can use your pet to show His love to others. Just bringing one small moment of joy and happiness to those we visit makes it all worthwhile. We are pleased that you are willing to offer your gifts, talents, and your special pet to make life happier for others through this ministry.**

**This manual should provide the answers to many questions you might have about Pet Visitation and this ministry. However, we would be very happy to talk to you personally if you would like more information concerning this ministry.**

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# Loving Pets

## **Benefits of Visiting People Confined to Health and Welfare Care Facilities**

**Animals have been recognized for years as being instrumental in the physical and emotional healing process of people who are ill, have had operations, who are elderly, or neglected and abused children. Pets pay no attention to age or physical ability, but they accept people with unconditional love. Often, they seem to be aware of illness and sadness and WANT to provide companionship and comfort; they are both intuitive and compassionate.**

**They help people cope with the emotional affect that their illness, loss, hurt and depression has on them. Pet visits redirect a person's attention from their boring daily routines, pain, loneliness, and the fact that they no longer have control over anything in their life. The most serious problem for older adults is not disease; it's loneliness. It has been found that people become more active and responsive while pets are visiting with them and even after the visit is completed.**

**Pets offer physical contact with another living creature - something that is often missing in the life of a person in a long-term care facility. Many times when people leave their homes and enter a hospital or nursing home they have to give up their own pets. When a pet visits on a regular basis it reminds them of pets they have had in the past and it can become a loving substitute for a pet that they have had to give up.**

# Loving Pets

**An animal visit can be very entertaining, as they perform tricks and welcome pats and hugs. This brings joy and laughter to those that they visit and boosts overall morale, self-confidence, esteem, and a sense of achievement. Animal visits also provide something to look forward to as they anticipate the next visit.**

**Even strangers who live in health care facilities are able to share their thoughts, feelings, and memories with each other. Pet visits give them a common interest and provide a focus for conversation even after the pets have left. Memories are left behind, not only of the visit, but of past experiences. It also helps newcomers get to know other people by sharing stories of their pets with them. It gives the person something to do, to talk about and think about, other than there selves.**

**Just the act of stroking a dog or cat can reduce a person's blood pressure and lower their stress levels. Petting encourages use of hands and arms, stimulating exercise and activity which helps circulation.**

**The residents of the facility and their family and friends are not the only ones who benefit from pet visits. The doctors, nurses, and other staff members are also happy for the relief from the stress they experience during their every-day routines when the friendly little pets come to see them.**

# Loving Pets

## **The Handler**

**The Handlers of Loving Pets meet specific criteria designed to maintain safety, professionalism, and uphold the credibility of this ministry. These are listed below:**

- 1. The Handler is a Christian and accepts the Restoring Joy Ministry's 'Statement of Faith' and 'A Christian's Creed'.**
- 2. The Handler is committed to the Loving Pets Mission Statement.**
- 3. The Handler presents themselves as a professional and adheres to a dress code representing Loving Pets Ministry.**
- 4. The Handler has completed Loving Pets training with their pet.**
- 5. The Handler knows how to handle unique situations involved with handling animals in public.**
- 6. The Handler can recognize signs of stress from the animals.**
- 7. The Handler is familiar with what to expect from people who have certain diseases/conditions.**
- 8. The Handler respects the confidentiality of the people they visit.**

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## **The Animal**

**The Animals of Loving Pets meet the following specific criteria:**

- 1. The Animal is in good health and up to date in all vaccinations.**
- 2. The Animal has been trained and temperament tested.**
- 3. The Animal is well socialized and is willing to meet new people.**
- 4. The Animal is calm, friendly, and well mannered.**
- 5. The Animal remains calm submissive during unusual events.**
- 6. The Animal does not show aggression when encountering other animals.**
- 7. The Animal is well groomed.**

# Loving Pets

## **Required Training**

### **Dog Obedience Training**

- 1. The Dog walks calmly on leash, not pulling ahead or dragging behind.**
- 2. The Dog will sit on command.**
- 3. The Dog will go down on command.**
- 4. The Dog will come when called.**
- 5. The Dog must pass a performance evaluation.**

# Loving Pets

## Required Evaluation

### Pet Evaluation

#### 1. ACCEPTING A FRIENDLY STRANGER

This test demonstrates that the pet will allow a friendly stranger to approach it and speak to the handler in a natural, everyday situation. The Evaluator and handler shake hands & exchange pleasantries. The pet must show no sign of resentment or shyness & must not break position or try to go to the Evaluator.

#### 2. SITTING POLITELY FOR PETTING

This test demonstrates that the pet will allow a friendly stranger to touch it while it is out with its handler. Evaluator pets the animal & then circles the pet & handler. The pet must not show shyness or resentment.

#### 3. APPEARANCE AND GROOMING

This practical test demonstrates that the pet will welcome being groomed and examined and will permit a stranger to do so. It also demonstrates the owner's care, concern and responsibility. The Evaluator inspects the pet, combs, brushes or strokes the pet, and lightly examines the ears and each front foot.

#### 4. WALKING ON A LOOSE LEASH

This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog. The Evaluator may use a pre-plotted course or may direct the handler/dog team by issuing instructions or commands. There must be a left turn, a right turn, and an about turn, with at least one stop in between and another at the end. The dog need not be perfectly aligned with the handler and need not sit when the handler stops.

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## **5. WALKING THROUGH A CROWD**

**This test demonstrates that the dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places. The dog and handler walk around and pass close to several people. The dog may show some interest in the strangers but must not strain at the lead.**

## **6. REACTION TO DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS**

**This test demonstrates that the pet can behave politely around other animals. Two handlers & their pets approach each other from a distance of about 10 yards, stop, shake hands and exchange pleasantries, and continue on for about 5 yards. The pets should show no more than a casual interest in each other.**

## **7. REACTIONS TO DISTRACTIONS**

**This test demonstrates that the pet is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations. This includes equipment that may be used by patients, behavior of children, etc. The pet may express a natural interest and curiosity and may appear slightly startled, but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness or make excessive noise.**

## **8. ACCEPTING A TREAT**

**This test demonstrates that the dog will receive a treat from the Evaluator without jumping or snapping. It is recommended that the treat be offered with an open hand as opposed to between two fingers. Evaluators will observe if there is an inappropriate possessive reaction to other dogs in the area because of the treat.**

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## **9. COMING WHEN CALLED**

**This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler. The handler will walk 10 feet from the dog, turn to face the dog, and will call the dog. The handler may use body language and encouragement to get the dog to come. Handlers may choose to tell dogs to “stay” or “wait” or they may simply walk away, giving no instructions to the dog as the Evaluator provides mild distractions (e.g. petting).**

## **10. SUPERVISED SEPARATION**

**This test demonstrates that a pet can be left alone, if necessary, and will maintain its training and good manners. The Evaluator will have control of the pet for three minutes. During this time, the pet does not have to stay in position but should not continually bark, whine, howl, or meow, or make other noises, pace unnecessarily, or show anything other than mild agitation or nervousness.**