

Ethics Reference Number HEC20222

Pandemic pets and people project: Exploration of pet owner wellbeing, health and pet welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research is being carried out by the following researchers:

| Role | Name | Organisation |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Principal Investigator | Prof Pauleen Bennett | La Trobe University |
| Co-Investigator | Dr. Vanessa Rohlf | School of Psychology and |
| Co-Investigator | Dr. Tiffani Howell | Public Health |

1. What is the study about?

We are exploring the risks and benefits of pet ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, we will examine relationships between pet owner wellbeing and health, and pet welfare.

2. Who is being asked to participate?

We invite you to participate if you are:

- a pet owner
- at least 18 years old
- can read and write in English, the language of the survey

3. What will I be asked to do?

If you want to take part in this study, we will ask you to complete an online survey, which will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

When you get to the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked whether you would like to continue your participation by being contacted via email to complete additional questionnaires every four weeks for up to 12 months – or until you opt out. This is so we can continue to track your wellbeing, your health, and your pet's welfare during the pandemic and beyond.

4. What are the benefits?

The results will be used to help us understand the impact of COVID-19 on pets and pet owners, which we hope will inform strategies to support people and their pets. This information may also inform future crisis management policies and procedures.

5. What are the risks?

With any study, there are (1) risks we know about, (2) risks we don't know about, and (3) risks we don't expect. We do not believe there are serious risks associated with this study. Some items in this study discuss physical and psychological symptoms and experiences

which some people may find distressing. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't feel comfortable with.

Should you experience any distress during or after you have completed the survey, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 (Australian residents only). For those living outside of Australia, please contact your local crisis support line. In addition, if you experience something that you aren't sure about, please contact Dr. Vanessa Rohlf by phone (+61 3) 9479 2248 or email V.Rohlf@latrobe.edu.au, so we can discuss the best way to manage your concerns.

6. What will happen to information about me?

By clicking on the 'I consent, begin the study' button, this tells us you want to take part in the study.

If you decide to continue your participation after completing this questionnaire, you will be asked to provide your email address and we will send you an email inviting you to complete a survey every four weeks. Your contact details will be removed from the data file before we analyse any data you provide. You are not required to provide your email address in order to complete this survey. If you choose not to, your responses for this first survey will be completely anonymous.

Survey data will be kept on the survey site (<https://www.project-redcap.org/>) during data collection. After data collection, the data will be maintained on password-protected computers owned by the Investigators. The raw data from the survey will be stored for seven years using La Trobe's data storage services. The results of the survey may be published in electronic or printed scholarly journals, reports and books, and presented at academic conferences; however, you will not be identified in any way. Other members of the research team may also use this data in de-identified form for related studies. The storage, transfer, and destruction of your data will be undertaken in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy <https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/>. The personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

7. Will I hear about the results of the study?

You may request a copy of the results by contacting Dr. Vanessa Rohlf by phone 03 9479 2248 or email V.Rohlf@latrobe.edu.au. Preliminary results will be available by June 2021.

8. What if I change my mind?

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you do not provide your email address to be contacted for future surveys, we will not be able to withdraw your data after you submit the survey, because your responses will be completely anonymous and cannot be linked to you. Your decision to withdraw at any point will not disadvantage you in any way.

9. Who can I contact for questions or more information?

Any general questions, concerns or queries relating to how the project has been carried out should be directed to Dr. Vanessa Rohlf by phone 03 9479 2248 or email V.Rohlf@latrobe.edu.au. You may also download and print a copy of this Participant

Information Statement for your records, by opening the “Pandemic Pets and People PICF” attachment.

10. What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or concerns about your participation in the study that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Senior Human Ethics Officer, Ethics and Integrity, Research Office, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (P: 03 9479 1443, E: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au). Please quote the ethics reference number HEC20222

- I consent, begin the study
- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate