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http://www.capps.org/archives/vol13/no3/cap_13_03_15_en.pdf

Article Overview:

This review examined the effectiveness of animal assisted interventions in children with autism spectrum disorder. 11 articles were included in the review, where studies focused on children diagnosed with ASD aged between 3 to 14 years.

Population: Children and early adolescents with ASD

Key take home messages:

1. Animal assisted interventions in all studies except one had a positive effect on the target skills of the participants with autism spectrum disorder and provided improvement.
2. Dependent variables mostly consisted of skills and behaviours that include social interaction/communication.
3. Dogs were the most utilised species in animal assisted interventions. In the 11 studies, interventions were applied for an average of 10.7 weeks. Six studies were carried out in a school or treatment centre, four studies in an equestrian centre, one study at home.
4. Most of the studies were designed as single-subject research models such as the AB and ABA models, which were considered to be weak in terms of the most basic and experimental control, and some studies were not reported as reproducible.
5. More reproducible studies are needed to test the effects of animal assisted interventions, and to report the participant characteristics, baseline and implementation phases in more detail and clearly.