

Farm animals in animal-assisted therapy

Summary

The aim of the study was to suggest potential uses of selected livestock species in animal-assisted therapy. Farm animals supply various products for human needs. Some of them can also improve people's quality of life, owing to their domestication and specific behavioural traits. The paper presents the aims and benefits of programmes involving the participation of animals: animal-assisted activity (AAA), animal-assisted education (AAE), and animal-assisted therapy (AAT). Contact and educational activities involving domesticated animals have been shown to play a supportive role in the treatment of disorders and dysfunctions in people of various ages. Sensory processing disorder is given as an example of a condition that can be treated with animal-assisted therapy. Pigs, goats, cattle, and poultry, when suitably socialized and appropriately treated by people, can take part in educational programmes and perform therapeutic functions for children and adults. The paper gives examples of educational activity for a group of children at the age of 7 to 11, with or without disorders. Observations of the relationships between participants in activities – children and animals – indicate positive interactions during the encounters.

KEY WORDS: Animal-assisted therapy, farm animals, educational activity