**Abstract**

The psychological benefits of human-animal interaction (HAI) for pet owners and animal carers are well-documented. To further explore community-based HAI and psychological wellbeing, this paper presents findings from an ethnography at a pet rescue centre. Nine volunteers were interviewed and observed whilst looking after rabbits, chickens, goats and ducks. An interpretive phenomenological analysis produced four themes relating to the experience and psychological benefits of the work; (i) holistic, individual care, (ii) volunteer resilience, (iii) communities and interactions, and (iv) porous boundaries, strong connections. This research extends the psychological literature on HAI, which mainly focuses on pet ownership and therapeutic HAI.

**Interview transcripts: exploring subjective experience and psychological wellbeing with volunteers in a community pet rescue centre**

**Participant A**

085

Yeah, because they can have lettuce, kale, peas. I put cucumber in there quite often. Well, it's the favourite to, They love the peas. They love corn. Put it in there. But we tend to save the corn for the chickens. We'll just add this to that.

Now, look at the mess you've made. Yes.

I: How is Pickle?

Until recently that they still weren't really integrated. So there's no aggression towards her. But she was still very separate. But especially at feeding time. She seems fine.

She was a bit better last week, so I have to see how she is on this shift.

Spent a long time alone She did? Yeah she did. And she was so used to humans when we first got in here, all she wanted to do was run to us. And I think the other ducks perhaps thought it was strange behavior. So I think maybe she just needed to integrate a little bit more.

I think, I got a lengthy. But I think Jerry has taken to her. He was preening her the other day, so.

I joined in between the two lockdowns. so I don't know what I is now. About three years, something like that. Yeah. I was doing my daily walking because that we were allowed to do every day through long for park. And I saw not fit for volunteers. And I just thought for some reason I never thought about it and I just thought, why am I not volunteering?

So I got in touch. I think my first shift was with Paula, and then I was just thrown into the deep end. And I've been here ever since.

What do you normally, you work after? Most of you?

It depends really on my Monday shift. I tend to do the food and then some of the cleaning, in the aviaries.

But for the longest time, on a different shift, I would always be looking after the goats. so it depends. We mix up our shift, some of the shifts people have set, things that they like to do. But with my shift, I tend to just mix it up. Sometimes I'll do food, sometimes I'll do your cleaning. Sometimes we do fuss, but we'll always do fuss.

No matter what else we do.

0087

How many chickens are there all together?

We've got five of the new girls, aren't we? We've got four of the old girls, and then we've got four silks. So, boy, what's that?

Oh, I always start with celery

Gotta cut it really fine for them.

How do you communicate to people what not to feed to different animals?

When they're trained, they should be told they're in that, But also, everyone is encouraged to. If you're unsure. Google it And if you're still unsure, don't give it to them. Because quite often some people will ask a question. And if you go online and have a look at where the goats can have such and such, there'll be 20 sites. saying it's perfectly fine to give it to goats, and then they'll be one sign saying no, it gives them gas.

So if that's the case, you just don't give it.

But yeah, it's part of the training being told exactly what the animals can and can't have. And also there's a board in the shed there which has it's not comprehensive, but it has a lot of what you can give to each of the animals. Yeah. If in doubt, Google.

But I mean once once you've done it a few times, I mean, you get into the rhythm. We always mostly have the same stuff in the fridges. So there's it's not like we're really unless a member of the public suddenly puts a dragonfruit in the bin or something until a pomegranate in that scene. Yes. Yeah. And, pomegranates.

the chickens really like the seeds. I think the chickens can have pomegranate, and I think the goats can have pomegranate. but again, it would be something I Google before I get it to.

Yeah, yeah. Because if it's any bigger, they can’t... It's the same with the ducks. If they're in their natural environment, they can pull it stuff so they can pull the little bits off. But if we don't chop the lettuce or the kale or whatever, it is small enough, they can't eat it. And you'll know that if it hasn't been chopped small enough.

I’m not this meticulous with my own food. They eat far better than I do. And far more salads.

0089

The food mainly comes from the volunteers. People will do a big shop every week with the money that comes out of the kitty. Most volunteers will bring food also to their shifts, and we get donations from the public.

0091

Chickens love sweetcorn. Yes they do. Yeah. So try and give him as varied diets as possible. So I try and give me a bigger mix as I can on each one. We're getting some peppers as well and then we've got some grapes.

I just love spending time with the animals. I mean, and, getting outdoors, I guess. Because even then, you know, even in the pouring rain or in the snow in the winter, it doesn't matter how much I look out the window and think, I've don’t want to go,.

When I go down. I always feel great afterwards. you know, the animals are like therapy. And getting outdoors as much as you can is is another form of therapy, isn't it? So I just think it's it's really rewarding. You said you With lockdown it was just because I had never really...

I've lived down the road for a few years, but I'd walked into Pet's Corner and had a look and had looked at the goats because the goats really drew me in, but I hadn't. And I think, like a lot of people, I just hadn't really thought about who ran it, how did it work, anything like that. And I think during lockdown, when I wasn't working during lockdown, I was in between contracts.

So I just had a lot of time to walk and think, and I stopped and paid a bit more attention to Pets Corner and realized and saw one of the posters and just thought, well, I could help out there. I'd love to do that. I love spending time with animals. Don't mind a bit of hard work. So, yeah, so I just dropped them an email.

I mean, we, you know, we got a lot of people getting in touch, and then we got a lot of people dropping out as well when, you know, they realized that you. It's not all just playing with animals. There's a lot more involved. But if you stick it out, it is super rewarding.

Yes. Yeah. And you do, you know, a lot of places you have to come and do a particular job. Yeah. As long as you have fed and watered and cleaned the animals, you can spend as much time as you like with them. Actually spending time with the animals, which I think is different to maybe some rescue places that you volunteer at.

You learn a lot because, you know, I've, I've had cats all my life and I've been around, dogs and that kind of thing, but I've never been around, so chickens and you have a perception of them, and then you spend time with them, and you realize that their lives are far more intricate than you ever gave them credit for.

There’s social hierarchies. They have fall outs. they have a proper little social life. it's really fascinating to see. We’re going through drama with Rita at the moment. For some reason she's getting bullied. I don't know what she's doing or what's changed, but we have to keep an eye on her and we'll keep us separate if needs be.

And then, you know, I'd never. I'd never medicated any animals or anything like that. And the year that I joined at Christmas, Frodo was really poorly. And so I think it was five days over Christmas, including Christmas Day. We had to come in and force feed him with a pipe down his throat, which, as you can imagine, was a very interesting experience.

Ultimately, he was fine, but I walked away with a big lump on my head. Yes, he did not like me getting my head too close while we were feeding him. But now you know, you were medicating ducks, medicating chickens, all sorts of things.

The thing with the goats. Well, not Frodo really. He sort of takes to anyone. But with Gandalf, it takes a while to learn to trust you. And if if during the time he doesn't trust you and he's a bit flighty, you get nervous, then you know he might never warm to you.

And I think some people are a little bit wary of him. But if you just take the time to get to know him, he's really lovely. He's he's actually just a sensitive little chap.

Is it hard to remember all the names? The ducks. Previously I did, because they were all very similar. And the silkies I guess I do a little bit for the same reason.

I'm pretty good these days. When I first joined, it was difficult. But they do all have distinct personalities, so that that's how I kind of come to remember them.

I: Are you good with names with people?

No. I'm terrible. I'm far better with the animals. And the thing about with the volunteers here, you don't always see everyone because you've got certain volunteers on Monday, on a Tuesday, on a Wednesday, we're rarely ever all together, if ever, all together. And so there can be volunteers here who volunteer for years, and you won't necessarily have met them.

**Participant B**

The feed and the bedding cost quite a lot of money and we raised that through it's voluntary donations. But most of that money comes from a series of stalls that we hold each week. He's Gandalf and he likes to play with the, broom handle. It's a challenge for him.

You can let me do the work?

You can let me do the work. Okay. Oh. That's nice. A nice scratch.

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I think, Frodo slightly more so. He likes to be stroked a bit, but they're both very friendly, and they certainly get to know the people who come here all the time. And I suppose that because they see us as a food source, they also do like being stroked. There's no doubt about that.

And during they as we move into this season, some of that softer coat starts to come away. And it's nice to give it a little, you know, just to coax it out gently. And that can be quite soft. That inner coat. And you see the, the birds of which there are many in this area come down and take some of the wiry hair, but also some of the softer downy coat use it for nesting.

108

During Covid, you know, the numbers diminished. We used to have three guinea pigs that passed away in rapid succession. Are we not sure what the reason was to have no guinea pigs now? And this used to be all chickens in this area and ducks where the pond is here. Obviously. But we've it's been a series of challenges really through Covid.

And then this is the third consecutive year of avian flu. where the, the birds have to remain indoors, away from any wild birds. And there's no sign of that ending. But now they're confined to a much smaller area which you'll see later.

I: Is there a particular animal that you get on the with?

Definitely. And until Covid I've never had a long hair and I've never had a beard. So I thought I might as well go goat like.

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Since the council decided they weren't going to maintain it any longer, a group of volunteers took it on, and that was instrumental to saving it.

I don't get too political in the days. When the coalition government came in, the council grants were greatly reduced. The council said it could no longer be maintained. And, a group of local residents, volunteers said to try and take it on.

I think that was 2012, something like that. I might be wrong in that. It's been maintained ever since then by volunteers.

It's 14 shifts a week. Come hail or shine. So you normally have two people on a shift? So that's that number. So the pool of people would be much larger, but the number of people required would be around 28. And some people do two shifts.

Some people have to cover when other people can't make it. So there's probably a very large database of people on the list to work here. But the active number would be. You know, along those lines, 28 or 35 something.

111

Difference between the two. Horns. They’re more splayed. I call them the wrong thing all the time. There's a difference between the horns..

So these are just rounded aren’t they?

It's great. Very nice. And these two are particularly docile. That sort of myth of ‘Oh they’ll eat anything. It's completely untrue. Because these two, these two. I don't know if it's because they've been cosseted here. They’re very fussy little certain things.

But if stuff goes on the ground. They tend not to eat even the things that they like eating from a nice silver bowl. They don't like celery much, but even the stuff they really like, if you drop it on the floor accidentally on the ground, they tend to just leave it. Probably just as well, because that way it's easier to control what they're consuming.

**Participant C**

31

Yeah, it's really great. I think you get, like, really close to all the animals here, and they've all got, like, separate personalities, especially there's a duck called Piccalilli, which is really sweet.

Early mornings are great. I end up not doing anything crazy on a Saturday. I know I have to be have a, Yeah, it just energizes you a lot for the day. And, you go home, like, feeling really happy and fulfilled that you've done something to help, you know, all the animals here, and especially the fresh air kind of wakes you up a bit.

Sets you up for the rest of your Sunday.

44

I: Did you find him a bit of a handful?

No, it's fine. You got to work around, like, their ways and understand them a little bit. but no, they're fine. They can seem a little bit more daunting than I think they are because they're quite big, but, they're just really funny.

Yeah, they've definitely got two different personalities.

I've only been here three times, but I would say, I think personally, I think Gandalf's a little bit more like, confident and kind of comes out like when he first came out with pen just before, And Frodo is. I just think Frodo’s cheeky.

I've only been here three times, so I kind of just getting to know them a little bit more. but they're just funny and sweet.

46

So they only have half a banana each because they're on a diet. We both got arthritis, so we need to keep an eye on the weight. These bananas are a bit. Not really very ripe, but they like them

They eat them with the skin on. Which is a bit odd, but they like it that way

Try to give them half of everything. No favoritism here.

I always make sure they've got half a banana each on my shift.

There are green bananas and the yellow ones? I don't think my mind really all goes down.

They don't really like the celery. The thing about celery is that it's very low in calories. So we sort of, you know, it's. Good for them in that way, because we need to keep an eye on the weight. The have a constant supply as hay. And really, that's probably all they need.

But this is just a nice little sort of, sort of, it's a treat. Strictly speaking, they don't actually need this food that I'm prepping here. But I think life would be pretty boring if we only had just exactly what we needed, not what we fancied.

It’s nice for them and they’ll get very overexcited, which we'll see later on.

We've actually got food in the fridges. So, volunteers, buy the food and bring it in. We've got some very generous, great local greengrocers as well, who will drop off surplus.

We have some from Marks and Spencers. The public are amazing. We've got a donations wheelie bin out there and we've got a list of foods that they like that, that the, the animals and the birds can eat. So the public amazingly generous, they start. I've brought a few bits and bobs in this morning, so yeah, we also we have a little garden as well.

Like, say, for example, the goats, like, like the leaves in the branches. So you pick a little bit of that as well. So they like that. So we do try to grow some of our own stuff as well. I know I'm no gardening expert.

55

My favorite is opening the door in the morning to see all the ducks running out. That's probably my favorite. and I love the chickens as well, because they've got weird personalities.

What about the goats? Yeah. They're great. They are a bit aggressive sometimes, but I think you just have to be, you know? You have to be the boss. Yeah.

56

I: Do they get on well with each other?

There's a little bit of rivalry. I think it's a love hate relationship. Yeah. Here's the thing. Apparently, Frodo is. That's what I heard. That's what. That's what Christina said. She said Frodo’s the boss. I don't think it is. I think it's Gandalf. I think, you know, like they do this thing where they swap with each other sometimes, and they just. They seem to know each other. Read each other's minds. Yeah.

60

I: How long did it take you to learn the job?

Six weeks. But there's still things I don't know. Like last week you taught me the rabbits. The litter trays. I’d not done that before.

I've been volunteering to for a few years, and I'm still learning stuff.

Oh, hello. Hi. Yeah, licky licky licky licky.

Is that nice? Was it tasty? Is it good? Yeah.

What do you think about early morning?

Oh, at first it's awful. I do work 9 to 5, so it's like, why do I do that? but then I get here and it's worth, they're all happy, and then that makes me happy.

66

What about all your friends? What do you think of your new mates?

What do you think of any mates?

I know such a good girl. Oh, I love you so much. I know, I know, I know. I know it's really smelly in here, isn't it?

So she's been in quarantine for weeks. She arrived on New Year's Day afternoon. as a new arrival. her owner was emigrating to Australia, I believe.

and therefore, she needed to be taken in. So we had to bring her. So she's been in quarantine for three weeks. And this week we're doing introducktions. Really? I know you so well.

69

I just picked up three duck eggs. And basically what we do is put them in the volunteer shed, and then the volunteers can take them home with them if they want to. Sometimes we sell them as well at regular fundraisers. Sometimes we'll, you know, we sell a box of eggs or duck eggs.

These eggs actually are real good sign that all is well with them. Egg laying tends to slow down in the wintertime, so won't get as many. But we've got as you can see, we've got three beautiful eggs right now. Piccalilli is also laid an egg, which is really good, and she's tucking into a few just now, which is to say, she's got great appetite.

73

So there's a duck care account that I follow on Instagram that talks about like the best food, like how to do the bedding and things like that. And they did a special on how to pick up a duck. so you just basically scoop it up from the front and that's the safest way to pick it up.

74

I don't mind any of it. It's nice when it’s cold when you do the washing up because it's, It's nice and hot. No, honestly. It’s just part of the part of the whole volunteering kind of thing. It's nice to cuddle the animals and stroking them and stuff, but, getting your head down and, you know, feeding them and chopping the food up and cleaning up after them as part of it as well, and you just feel like you're doing good for that.

It's just everything's part of the same thing.

I actually work with, one of the lead volunteers on Sunday, in my usual job for the week, and it was just something that I just wanted to be a part of, like it is. I've just moved to Manchester. And so for me, kind of getting involved in some of the things, was really important.

And I love animals. And this just seemed like a perfect thing to do on a Sunday morning. it just feels really wholesome as well. And you get excited about each week. You talk with the other volunteers about, like, the animals and how they get on through the week, even if you're not there. and you just, you kind of start caring about them to like, want to come.

Like, I wouldn't want to let the animals down by not being here. which is quite a big thing because sometimes I'm not really great at committing to things, but because you've because you're looking after them a bit and you because you enjoy seeing them, you kind of, because they're an innocent. Almost. Yeah. Like the ducks and everything that you want to be with them.

You want to make sure that they're, being helped.

76

I'll go out on a big bender on a Friday, then kind of have a hangover and be here Sunday. So it actually it's really good because it allows me to plan my weekend a bit better, knowing that Friday's my nights out and it means that I enjoy my Sunday because I feel healthy and fresh and, you know, ready for the day.

**Participant D**

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I like making mini-salads for the ladies. The chickens and that.

I started last year, so I've just come in upon a year, and now, April, May time. and I, because I live nearby, I would often go past. And I really liked visiting, but I always thought that they probably had enough volunteers and things that they didn't really need me, and I didn't really know what to do and stuff.

But then somebody, I guess, did put up new signs saying volunteers desperately needed or something similar, like it was just after lockdown. and I saw a fresh sign saying we do need volunteers. So, I went over and spoke to Paula, and started going on Saturdays with Paula, and then, yeah, it was great. Loved it.

Absolutely loved it. It's, brilliant for, just for being outside. Sometimes it's just nice to come in and see the animals. And that is fantastic for mental health. at least for mine. That's what I found. It the most beneficial. yeah. Just started. Started from there. And now I do two, two days a week, usually two days or more if needed, and I like doing all the fundraisers and things.

It's beautiful. I mean, especially when the weather's like this. It's absolutely gorgeous. So peaceful. you can hear the chickens in the background clicking away cause they're waiting for their dinners and, yeah, it's absolutely lovely. Very satisfying. Especially if you're a indoor type like myself.

I know a few volunteers actually started during lockdown because obviously everyone still needed, needed feeding and we still need the volunteers. And obviously I imagine it was some people would have had to stop and think so for some folks it was like the best way to get out of the house.

But the most rewarding way of being able to go do something. I think it sounds nice.

I love it. It's absolutely brilliant being able to go and give the goats a cuddle, give them a stroke, go and say hello to the bunnies, which we'll do a minute.

If you walk down there now they’ll think they’re being fed and they’ll right up and start jumping up at the fence.

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I think this might be Coco’s. A little present. I had some of their eggs this morning for breakfast. Very tasty. Highly recommended.

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I like eggs, absolute love of eggs. But it did take me a few a few days, a little bit to get used to the fact that I knew the chickens that the egg came from, cause I don't know why.

I finally ate some, this morning. I scrambled them up, and I like to have a nice, not not really rubbery scrambled eggs, really nice creamy scrambled eggs. And they were absolutely beautiful. yeah. That's it. Gorgeous. I don't know exactly which chicken it was, but they were lovely. Well done. Girls.

132

I would say that rabbits are the most tame. The ones that will come right up to you. And that they will happily climb all over you if you give them the chance.

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The sound of the chick. Well, it's gone quiet now because they've all just been fed. But earlier you’ll have noticed that they start getting really vocal. You'll get the chicken squawking with you, reminding us that it's dinner time, which I really love. And then the peace and quiet that happens when you feed them, and they're all just happily pecking away, scrabbling away, getting their food.

And it just goes really satisfying. Very busy little noises.

I mean, this is really now is a perfect example of it because the sun's in its golden hour nearly. And, and just all the sounds, you can hear the birds in the background, they're all around and, and all the little chirps and all of our little animals being little happy, happy noises.

I only live next door to the park, but, it's right next to the main road, so it's completely different. It's only about 100m away from me. and this is just so peaceful. yeah. Very idyllic. It's just absolutely. It's almost meditative. Meditative? Yeah. what else? So I'm doing the boys food at the moment. The goats. I've got root veggies. So some fruit in for, for.

I like working with the people I don't get to see. Personally, for myself, I don't get to see very many, people during my day. I'm gonna live on my own. So, you know, it can get quite quiet.

So it honestly, it has been absolutely therapeutic for me starting here. being able to see people every week, getting to do some work, like, physical, being outside, feeding everybody, cleaning everybody. It's just nice. It's really lovely. yeah. Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Love it. I couldn't recommend it enough. Really.

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All the fruit and veggies that we give to the animals I would happily eat myself. Really nice healthy batch of fresh veggies.

141

Make sure you’re firm and gentle, don’t squeeze them. Keep their wings nice and tucked in so they don’t flap around and get them hurt. Lilly is really good because she will let you pick her up. Her legs just go absolutely bonkers. It’s one of the cutest things I’ve ever seen.

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This is all a new a new paddock for the ducks. So we had to move them all over here for bird flu so that there, you know, protected. And they don't mingle with any of the pigeons and things.

But you have to pick them up. You've got to, check them, you know. We have to give them a once over a, you might need to just move them out of the way or something. Something. so. Yeah. Is it same with the chickens. The first time it you pick up the chickens was, quite intimidated if you've never done it before, which I hadn't.

Yeah. So just firm but gentle, you know? Don't panic or they'll panic. You know, something will go wrong. With the ducks it's a lot easier, I think, from behind, because they can only see, I don't know what the word is, but they can only see out the sides, so they can't really see unless they're turning the head round so you can get them.

The chickens are a lot more wily though, so, they will notice you coming. And, especially our girls, they're not as used to getting picked up all the time. Kerry is fantastic at picking up the girls. She picks them up, give them cuddles. She's the lady who's constantly looking after them like she loves that. yeah. And, I'll pick up some of the silkies, as you saw before, but sometimes they just wiggle out, and they're just go for it.

So they like the lettuce. a lot of peas, some corn and some chopped up grapes. And song is everything is chopped up very small because they can't, they can't eat bigger things currently than little bills and the little throats, the cutting big chunks of food.

You can see them like the little, like the double about in the sift through and get all the good things.

143

If I was one if the animals like I say they get a pretty good deal here. They are so well looked after. the structurally, the places, you know, it's it's been better.

Absolutely. it's a bit worn and torn, but the love and the affection that goes into looking after the animals is, But I haven't seen people feel so strongly about them until I met, like people here. Katie. Paul, you know, all sorts of people, they will do anything for them. They go above and beyond, like, so much, so often.

it's absolutely wonderful to see.

That's a little bit I think I know I would say the goats, because they are everybody's favourites. they get treats all the time and they have a fantastic. You know, little apartment to themselves. They've got a wonderful garden where, you know, they've dug out their own little sunbathing holes as well.

You can often see them basking in the sunshine. so yeah, I'd say at the moment the goats definitely pre bird flu. I would say the ducks have got a really good nice pond.

If I couldn’t come here I’d miss being able to go backstage, go and cuddle an animal, you know, come and come and say hello to the goats. which I do on the days that I'm even not volunteering. I yeah, this is such a wonderful opportunity.

**Liz**

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I mean, she's not as timid as the others, but she's, she certainly, not is not as people-centred as she was.

Yeah, yeah I did, yeah, I just picked her up and put her under my arm, she was fine.

A duck like pickle that's used to people. she actually when I went up to her and started stroking her head, she actually sat down.

So then I just got my arms around her. It's important that you keep their wings close to their body, because if their wings are flapping around, you know, they're hard to hold onto and they get quite agitated as well.

If it's a duck that’s not very friendly the best thing is to kind of corner them and then get a large towel or a sheet or something and put it over them and wrap them in that, and then hold them close to your body, make sure you, you know, again, you got the wings wrapped up, support their legs so that the leg, you know, the legs are not kicking around. And just trying to sort of hold them firmly, but obviously don't squish them.

But brown ducks, that's a much harder to catch and hold, and then getting the beak open and trying to get meds down and is quite hard and it's more difficult with a duck than is with hens because they've got such a big, long, long beak.

It's easier to get a hen's beak open and get the get a syringe full of medicine. Just squirt it down their throat. But yeah, the ducks a bit more of a challenge, really.

I also get involved in the fundraising, running stalls, baking cakes and so on. So, most likely because that's like nearly eight years. Yeah. Must be. Yes. Say yes. I'm one of the longer established. I really enjoy it.

I mean, even on a cold day or a wet day, it's not so inviting. But the animals are just so great. It's just nice to be able to interact with them. Really, because there's not many places in Manchester where you can sort of get up close and personal with goats and ducks and, I've got my own rabbits, but the hens are a revelation. I didn't realize what individual personalities they had before I started to come here.

And I must admit, I've pretty much given up eating chicken and meat since being a pets Corner volunteer, I was a vegetarian earlier on when I was a student, and then I sort of got back into meat eating. But yeah, just seeing the animals and their individual personalities and friendships and so and it just seems a bit mean to eat them.

They've got grapes and, mixed salad. I think I'm just gonna see if there's any corn.

Has it changed much in the last eight years?

Well, you know, the animals come and go. We used to have guinea pigs. There was a few guinea pigs when I first started, but, they are less hardy than rabbits. And when we had, you know, cold winters, we would have to take the guinea pig hutch inside the volunteer shed, and I, we didn't really think that was great for them. So when the when the last ones died, we decided we weren't going to get any more. So, Yeah, we just stick to the rabbits.

Because Coco kept getting into fights with the with the hens next door on that side. So, we swapped them over.

That’s Victoria. There's the longest serving guest. here. Yeah. That's Victoria. She's been here longer than any other animal as we got. Before I came. I'm not quite sure how long before that. So she could be, like ten years old. Yeah, yeah. Could be. She had a sister? She died in 2006.

She got really bds arthritis. One of the volunteers took her to live with them. She had to be put to sleep, unfortunately, because he arthritis got so bad.

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When hens are poorly, because they have such a fast metabolism, they need to have medication three times a day because it doesn't last very long in their systems. So that's not really possible at Pet's Corners.

We only have volunteers twice a day. So I've taken, several of our hens home and accommodated them in my in my kitchen. I've had Victoria, who was poorly, and Dolores to be a friend for her because hens, you know, they bit miserable on their own.

And I had Coco Pops because her feet were painful and she had a companion as well. I think Rita, and I had one of the silkies. Minnie, I think it was Minnie. One of them, with another silky to be a companion. And, I've had a rooster, Kellogg's the rooster, and also some of the bunnies.

The older bunnies. The female bunnies, when they've had when they've been, spayed. They stayed with me so that I could give them their meds and just keep an eye on them, make sure you know their stitches were okay and not infected. like in the kitchen. And when you go.

There was chicken poo all over the floor. I've got a stone floor in my kitchen, so I haven't got some carpet, but yes, after that, I, I built a pen and then I put a newspaper down so that. But yes, it's, you know, It's probably not very hygienic, but one of them actually Victoria flew up and was sitting in my fruit bowl one day.

She was a bit of a character. got onto the draining board at one point. I put a cover on the pad and clipped it. So that said that, that shouldn't happen again. But yeah. Victoria and Delores were my first kitchen guests. So, I kind of learned from that experience that, it was better to keep them a bit more, enclosed and under control rather than completely free range and flying about and sitting in the fruit bowl and all that kind of stuff.

**Participant E**

It’s a handwarmer. Keeps my hands warm. Can’t chop vegetable when your hands are cold.

They like, something green and leafy. Got some cabbage, and then they'll eat. I've got some carrots today. There's parsnip as well, but parsnip. and then sometimes there's, celery. But, cucumber, leek, cucumber. I try and do a bit of a mix.

Vegetables. So they don't tend to eat the sweet stuff like the grapes and stuff to save them. So they for the chickens, those.

Yeah. I do eat a lot of the same thing. Yeah, a lot of vegetables. Yeah I do,

Some lettuce. Because they're inside and they're not able to eat any grass. Okay, so we've got. They've got hay. But, they need I lots of green, leafy things.

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Yeah. Used to have a rabbit hole. Harry. She was a girl. I thought she was a boy. When we got her, so we called the Harry, but she turned out to be a girl. She was similar to these ones. She was. Yeah. She had floppy ears like Casper.

So she was a Dutch lop, and she was sort of big brown. Yeah. Just as cute. Like her food.

**Participant F**

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I've been volunteering at Pets Corner since, early 2013, when the council first sort of stepped away. A group of us formed a committee to try and keep the place running.

They know I've got treats in my pocket.

So we worked alongside the council staff for probably 4 or 5 months before they did the proper handover. And then obviously we assumed full control. I think it was, around September 2013, something like that. So we've been at it for close to nine years now.

So a lady had advertised on Facebook that she had reared some ducks from chicks and she sort of hatched them at home. Unfortunately, some of them got eaten by foxes and she didn't have safe accommodation for the remaining two. So she messaged on Facebook and said, would we be able to take them? So I've been up to Blackpool this morning to collect two ducks.

Well, they don't have names yet. We're going to ask the volunteers to kind of pick names for them. they're both pure white. So Luna and Daisy I think are favorite at the moment. but we've had so many appropriate duck names over the years, like Jemima and stuff like that. We kind of struggle to find, like, new ones for them, but, yeah.

So you can come and meet them and you can get away from these rabid goats. It's only because I've got treats in my pocket, right? Leave us alone now, please. Go on.

You know, there's a new lady to be coming tonight for the guided tour. But whether she actually turn up…

So at the minute we need to quarantine them, because they've been kept in an enclosure where they've been, mixing with potentially wild birds and sharing food and water with the wild birds. And obviously they're the big carriers of bird flu. So we have to quarantine them in here a for a couple of weeks before we introduce them to the rest of the flock.

Hi. So they're really, really pretty. Dorothy. They'll just live in here for probably 10 to 12 days until they can be sure that the health and they seem really healthy. They're eating well. And that is what should happen. And they're really, really hefty when you pick them up.

But as the lady has said, as I say, the fox got into the garden and killed the other. So she's a bit concerned for the safety of these two.

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These are just like grass nuts. Super healthy. They smell quite minty, actually. And he really loves them.

I: I think sometimes the animals eat healthily.

You wouldn't think it, though, looking at him, would you? Loads of people say he's like goat pregnant and it would be nice to have babies around, but I don't think it's going to happen.

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Some people are a bit intimidated when I'm showing people around, especially him. He'll sort of try it on and try and sort of bite them. He’ll chase after them and stuff. And I think he's just testing the boundaries. And I always say to people, if you don't show fear, you'll be absolutely fine.

Yeah, it's the ones that go, oh, get away from me. You know, he loves that because he thinks he's won. But this fella is just a cuddle monster. Aren't you? Yes. He's a little boy. Yes. Oh. Did you sneeze at Andrew's camera?

That was a steep learning curve as well. Like having to learn how to trim their hooves. You need, like, a lot of maintenance on the hooves. to sort of keep them trimmed down. And because it's like a cloven hoof, it can get, like, soil and twigs and stuff, like, stuck like in the cavity in the middle. And you've got to sort of get a brush and sweep out all the debris and everything.

And they hate having their feet messed with. You have to sort of tether them to the fence and supply loads of treats to make them cooperate. And even then we go home covered in bruises. So stuff that, probably doesn't look that great on your CV, but it's a life skill.

I don't yeah, I don't think anyone would ever hire me on the strength of, oh, I know how to trim a goat hoof.

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Hi girls. So obviously they don't know me so they’ll be a little bit nervous.

Hi ladies. When you pick them up and you keep your hand on the back so the wings come flat, quite amenable.

Then that one's just done a poo. So what we're going to call you? What are we going to call you? We think we like Luna and Daisy. Don't worry. We’ll have to decide what suits you. Somebody else has voted for Jemima Puddle. Duck. So they've been, like, well handled. And the lady was really sorry to let them go.

But she said she couldn't forgive herself if the fox got in and got these two.

I: They should help with integration.

Yes. Piccalilli. Yeah, because she's been living on her own for a couple of years. And then after her sisters killed by Fox. She's quite sort of human. Yeah. And she's having to, like, relearn how to behave like a duck.

So we're hoping having the two new ones will help her to integrate as well. We've not really seen any aggression from the others, but they don't particularly have any positive bonding experiences together either. You don't see them snuggling up together, but maybe that's just not a duck thing, I don't know.

So what we'll probably do, is we'll pick a couple of the more dominant ones and the females that are kind of at the top of the pecking order and bring them in here to introduce them to these girls, leave them for obviously supervised for maybe 20 minutes, half an hour. And if it all looks quite, you know, calm and nobody's getting attacked or whatever, then we'll bring them across and will introduce them to the rest of the flock. You bring the dominant ones out so that they're on unfamiliar territory, and they're less likely to sort of defend their patch against any newcomers. I mean, these girls seem quite confident and quite healthy, so I'm sure they'll be fine.

They're lovely. I feel sad, really, when people buy eggs on the internet and just start incubating, you know, when they hatch, they're all really cute and everything. The don’t have anyone who teaches them how to be a duck, if that makes sense. You know, they normally follow the mum about and learn to forage for stuff, so I'm sure I'm sure they'll get on really well.

Can't wait till the bird flu things over and we can all get out on the pond together.

Believe it or not, this was really clean this morning. They sort of made themselves at home pooping everywhere and flicking food all over the walls

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You're beautiful, aren't you? I mean, this is the only reason why. Why else would you sort of drag yourself out in the wind, in the snow, when you know, why would you be breaking ice on the pond at 7:00 on Christmas Day morning?

You know, you do it because you love them, and you want them to have the best possible life that you can give them. It doesn't help when people post stuff through the fence that they're not allowed to have, and you end up having to deal with that. Let's just focus on the positives.

They've all got their own personalities, even the ones that you wouldn't think are particularly cute, like the chickens and stuff, they've all got their own personalities and it might be totally food orientated, but when you walk up and they all recognize you and they come running, it feels like really special, you know? most people go vegetarian after they've been volunteering here for a short while.

Goats - obviously they're vegetarian and they've got five stomachs. So they take a lot of hay and grass-based stuff, but just to give them a bit of enrichment and to sort of make life a bit more interesting they, they love, like root vegetables. They love like parsnips and carrot and stuff like that. We don't give it in massive quantities because it has a high sugar content. And but they absolutely adore like, romaine lettuce. again, they like dark green stuff like broccoli. Spring cabbage. Don't give it in massive quantities because it can cause bloating.

It's all about obviously everything in moderation. Really. just making sure we keep an eye on the, you know, their poops and their general behavior.

So the ducks have, like, a pellet that's actually got, like, all the nutrients in it that they need, and it's like a meat based thing.

I'm not quite sure what meat. but that that's just like a dry pellet that we just give them with a dish of water. But again, that's got all the, nutrition in it and all the calories that they need. But again, to make life a bit more interesting, we also supplement that with some chopped lettuce. they might have like a few grapes, a bit of tomato, because they don't have teeth, they can't really have anything that's difficult to chew, like cabbage or carrots or anything like that. It just tends to be like the soft sort of chopped up lettuce leaves and things like that for the ducks. Rabbits have pretty much the same as the goats.

They love carrots and parsnips. but again, not in massive quantities because of the sugar content. They love broccoli. Can't really have spinach because it's got, like, an acid in it that's hard for them to digest. they love romaine lettuce. yeah. Broccoli. Spring cabbage. That's about it, really. We try and keep it interesting, like by varying the kind of salad.

You know, we sometimes get radicchio and, different kinds of, like, mixed bags of salad so that, you know, because you and I would be bored if we had the same thing all day, every day. I'm sure it's the same for the rabbits as well. They don't really need pellets. That's kind of a myth. We only give them pellets in the winter.

You know, to sort of give, put a bit of timber on them and keep them warm. Generally, they get by really, really well. And just hay and vegetables. The chickens again, have a, like, a poultry pellet, which has got all the nutrition in it that they need.

We supplement that with chopped lettuce similar to the ducks are. They love tomatoes, grapes, everything has got to be chopped quite thin, because obviously they've only got small beaks, and no teeth. And they love mealworms. But again, that's only sort of a handful a couple of times a week. And because of the calorie content and there's a lot of protein in them, chickens are actually omnivores.

Like in the wild, chickens, they'll eat like frogs and small rodents and slugs and, you know, all that lovely stuff. But obviously here, because the captive, they just basically get what, what we can give them when the bird flu restrictions are over and they're allowed to come out on the field. They love like following you around, you can turn logs over and they'll jump on beetles and, you know, worms and things that they find under the logs.

So that's really quite interested and quite sort of enriching for them as well, to sort of be able to forage in, in the soil.

What's really lovely is like when they see you come in, you know, they'll sing to you as you walk it down the drive because you get to recognize different volunteers and different cars and everything.

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People are sort of like a bit paranoid about handling them and stuff because of the wings and the flapping. But as long as you sort of keep the wings tucked in, they can't hurt you. And, you know, generally, obviously we don't handle them too much because we don't want them to get stressed out.

But if you've got to catch them, to take them to the vets or whatever, or to move them from one enclosure to another, you obviously, you know, safe handling is all is all part of it. So yeah, the key thing is just keep the wings tucked under and then they'll sort of sit quite nicely under your arm three times if you want them to be working.

I love being out in the fresh air. I love, obviously spending time with the animals. I mean, I've got like seven rabbits at home, but I also, obviously, you don't get an opportunity to snuggle with goats and stuff like that in your general day to day life. I've got an office job, so I'm kind of chained to a laptop all day.

So it's just really nice to get out in the open air and do something that's, you know, a bit less sedentary than what I'm doing, like Monday to Friday. It's all like a really nice group of volunteers as well. Everyone you know gets on well. And yes, there's a lot of dirty jobs involved as there is with any, you know, animal care.

And you do sort of get attached to them and you get quite upset if somebody dies. It's like losing one of your own pets. But what you've got to focus on is the fact that they have a really nice life here. You know, they've got the freedom to exhibit natural behaviors. Yes, people complain that the chickens are in cages and stuff like that, but at the minute, because a bird flu, that's where they need to be for their own safety.

They've got like foraging boxes, you know, the digging around looking for mealworms and stuff. And it's as natural an environment as we can possibly make it while also ensuring that they're safe and, and sort of not going to catch anything from the wild birds that are on the site.

I think it's got to be the goats because they've just got like so much personality and they're and I think they are what Pets Corner is all about. I can't imagine ever being here and the goats not being around. To be honest, I don't even like to think about it because they're getting on a little bit now.

But you know, everybody, all the volunteers and all the visitors seem to make a beeline for them. You know that that's the kind of most popular. So yeah, it's definitely I won't I won't say I don't wanna be controversial and say which is my favorite goar, but I will say that Gandalf's headbutted me twice already today. So you can draw your own conclusions from that.

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I mean, you're supposed to live on a mountain, you know, in the wild. Oh, look at the face. You'll do anything for a treat. §He was kind of attacking the volunteers and stuff just out of frustration, because this is the sort of thing they would, you know, they're exhibiting natural behaviors now, doing like the play fighting and stuff.

And he had no one to fight with. So he's taking it out on us. So we got this one to keep him company.

Good boy, good boy. All the treats are gone now. Be nice. It's not nice to fight with you, brother.

Frodo is normally the dominant one. I think he likes having the height advantage when he's up there.

These guys, when he's skidding about all over the place, though.

They’re usually quite fussy the first thing Monday morning. Yeah. Takes him a while to warm up. They're always like this on an evening shift. If the. Well, not if it's raining. No, they just stay in the shed looking miserable. If it's a sunny day like this, they're always a bit feral on an evening shift.

So the vet said because he's got arthritis in his knees, and we needed to get some weight off him. And the muesli to stop. It kind of swells up in the stomach and stops them eating stuff they're meant to be having, which is obviously the grass-based stuff and the veggies.

So again, they're still allowed to have it as an occasional treat. But the thing is, he's been on a diet now for probably six months. Does look any slimmer today?

Just when this was the first time I saw it, I was terrified. I thought you're going to hurt each other.