



[B-Rant](#)

- submitted by D. Lloyd on 08/27/2008

Suburban Outcast: Why I Hate Pets

By Delia Lloyd

On many of the world's most pressing issues, most people sort neatly into one of two camps: Coke vs. Pepsi. Boxers vs. Briefs. Yankees vs. Mets. You get the idea. As a long-time denizen of the suburbs, I'd like to add another category to this list: Pet vs. Anti-pet. And at the risk of alienating half my friends and neighbors, I have a confession to make: I'm anti-pet.

I was reminded of this recently at a neighborhood get-together. We were sitting on the deck, enjoying some cocktails, when someone pulled a photo out from her purse. "Guys," she said, breathlessly. "I can't wait any longer..."

And sure enough, it wasn't a picture of her daughter, or her newly remodeled kitchen, or even (God forbid) her husband; it was a picture of the Chocolate Labrador she'd just adopted. In a matter of seconds, everyone followed suit, nodding and cooing over the veritable museum of pooch snapshots emerging from their wallets.

Everyone, that is, except me.

Like so many things, my antipathy towards pets likely stems from various childhood traumas. In one early primal scene, my older brother and sister put me in a dress and forced me to marry our dog, Hector (himself decked out in my brother's underpants.) The deal was sealed with a kiss on the snout.

Later on, my brother undertook an experiment with one of our many cats to see how much weight it could gain. He began secretly feeding it extra packets of Tender Vittles, while I stood by-clipboard in hand-duly documenting its progress on the scale. This was right around the time that my sister decided to shove a hapless Hector into the middle of a pond to see if he could swim.

Even without those scarring experiences, however, I think I'd still dislike pets today. To begin with, you've got all those messy bodily functions.

Call me crazy, but I'm with Jerry Seinfeld on this. Seinfeld once noted that 500 years from now when outer space aliens wish to depict Earth in the late 20th century they'll cut to a shot of humans walking behind their dogs with plastic bags and tiny shovels. As Seinfeld himself might quip, "What's wrong with this picture?" Amen, brother.

Pets are also so much work: they need food...they need exercise...they require medical attention (a friend's cat is currently on anti-stress medication). And then you have all those ancillary concerns: what to do when you go on vacation...how to break it to your kids when the pet dies...you even have to police your pet's sex life.

Our wanton canine Casanova Hector (yes, the same to whom I'd been joined in holy matrimony) sired countless bastard children in the New Jersey suburb where I grew up. I had to endure endless berating from heretofore unknown neighbors:

"So you're Hector's owner!" they'd say, in an accusatory tone.

"But he's his own dog!" I wanted to protest. "I can't make those choices for him!"

And, these days, it's not just dogs and cats that are in vogue, either.

"Thank Goodness you're here!" a neighbor exclaimed recently, as I crossed her threshold. "Chestnut is missing!"

"Chestnut?" I repeated, joining the rescue mission.

"Yes, our pet rat, Chestnut. Here, grab a flashlight-let's find him!"

My flashlight fell to the floor. "You have a pet rat?" I asked, incredulously.

"Domesticated rodents are very intelligent!" she replied, as if that spoke for itself.

Then there was my friend who house-sat for a year in suburban Michigan, rent free. The only catch? She had to feed the family's pet snake. And guess what Snakey liked to eat? You guessed it: dead mice. Which they kept in the freezer (right next to the popsicles). Just toss a couple of those babies into the microwave, set it to "defrost" and Snakey was all set. Yum. (Between the rodents and the reptiles, I think I'm about ready to pop some of my friend's cat's anti-stress meds).

I know, I know. I sound heartless. Pets are loyal, affectionate and brave. They teach children valuable lessons about care and responsibility. More to the point, my anti-pet viewpoint makes me a complete pariah in the suburb where I live (Lord knows, my snaps of my human children just can't compete!)

What can I say? I also prefer Coke. And boxers. And the Yankees. It's just the way I am.

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Burbia Wisdom

In my house there's this light switch that doesn't do anything. Every so often I would flick it on and off just to check. Yesterday, I got a call from a woman in Germany. she said, "cut it out."

--Steven Wright

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Burbia Facts

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-US Census

added on: 08/06/2008

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Delia Lloyd is a writer/journalist based in London. Her essays have appeared in The International Herald Tribune, The Christian Science Monitor, and The Guardian Abroad....[read more rants](#)

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I was totally anti-pet until - submitted by Anonymous on 08/27/2008

I was totally anti-pet until one day when my kids were 7 and 9 when suddenly, out of the blue, shocking myself completely, I wanted a dog. And we got one and she's great. But I am still sympathetic to pet-haters and try to keep her in line when they are around.

self-hating pet hating - submitted by linda keenan on 08/27/2008

i love this piece. i have tried to hide my anti pet lifestyle the way i hide the fact i hate sushi. but i was raised by people who HATED animals - and since they were never around i never got used to it. when i had two cats with my husband i hated the hair and smell. they have since died and i have ZERO desire to replace them. but i feel sort of badly for my son who is an only child. it seems sort of unfair on my part.

I was too...Until I had kids - submitted by Kathleen on 08/27/2008

Like the author, I was anti-pet for years, politely petting big furry dogs and even demure cats to the detriment of my preferred all-black ensembles and my psyche, hurriedly (though attempting to be subtle) rushing off to the

bathroom to wash my hands of dander, saliva, and fur. I would yell without hesitation at rude dog owners who would let their pets would use my kids' urban park as their toilet, apparently unable to read 'no dogs allowed.'" But having kids primed me to appreciate canines, and it's not for the reasons one might think. Recently, eight years into raising two children, in a moment of maternal weakness (it was not my kids begging for a baby creature to care for, it was my ovaries and uterus), I procured a Golden Retriever puppy who has grown into a creature that I love dearly in spite of myself (and have even, in a shock to my old self, kissed on the snout!). The author hits some of the reasons in the last paragraph, but one of the main reasons I love our dog (among many) is that, after raising two kids for eight years, the dog is a welcome contrast! She loves me, AND: she doesn't talk back or argue with me! I can put her outside when she is in the way, or bothering me when I want to read the paper! I can scream "no" when she eats something that isn't good for her! After two kids I see that dogs are low-maintenance! But, dear writer, rest assured that the old anti-dog me is still inside and I work hard not to impose her on others.

there's help - submitted by Jack on 08/27/2008

i heard cesar millan's sister is now reaching out to people like you--all you need is a little whisper and you're there.

they know - submitted by emmy on 08/28/2008

there is no need to confess.... they know and smell you and they are watching...

So, wait...you dislike pets - submitted by Anonymous on 08/30/2008

So, wait...you dislike pets because as a child you helped your siblings mistreat yours?

Boxers for me - submitted by Rob C. on 09/01/2008

I too prefer boxers.

Wait--did you mean on dogs?

Signed, Confused.

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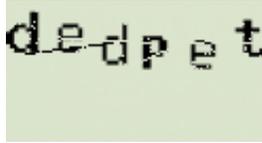
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