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People with pets have more friends

■ Claire Tyrrell

Lisa Wood always knew she had a special bond with her dog Nala but now the University of WA associate professor has made it official.

Dr Wood led an international study on the social benefits of pet ownership which has found that owning a pet is beneficial for wellbeing and social connectedness.

The study, to be released today, expands on research Dr Wood conducted 10 years ago into social capital and pet ownership in Perth and which included US cities Portland, San Diego and Nashville.

“Our findings were remarkably

universal — pet owners had higher social capital than non-pet owners in all four cities,” she said.

“It was slightly higher among dog owners, but it is true for people with all types of pets.”

Dr Wood described social capital as “the glue that holds society together” and a measure of trust.

“What we are interested in is the extent to which pets contribute to the social fabric of a community by forging connections and trust between people,” she said.



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RIGHT: UWA researcher Lisa Wood
with her dog Nala.
Picture: Danella Bevis