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# The Future of Pets

## What does time have in store for pets and their parents?

*Wendy and LuckyDiamond will be speaking about the Future of Pets in contemporary society at the H+ Summit, sponsored by Humanity+ and the Harvard College Future Society at Harvard University on June 12th. Please visit [www.animalfair.com](http://www.animalfair.com) for more information (and a 20% discount)*

A disputed number of thousands of years ago, man met the creature that would come to evolve into his best friend. I imagine that this was a tenuous, uncertain meeting of two deeply compassionate beings not entirely sure what to make of each other. What most likely started as an uneasy alliance, the terms of which were likely bartered for with scraps of meat and affectionate nuzzles would eventually blossom into the multi billion dollar pet industry of 2010.

Surely early man and proto-Fido could not have anticipated this outcome. As technology replaced the utilitarian function of our pets, their role in our homes, place in our families, and value in the world have shifted dramatically. No longer do we rely exclusively on dogs to provide security or aid in the hunt, nor do we explicitly need our cats to perform pest control in our grain silos. Now, 90% of Americans cite companionship as the primary reason for becoming pet owners. Modern technology, and the evolution of the family unit have created a posh environment for pets of the contemporary era, but where will we go next? What will be the place and function of our pets in the future? Will we meet Canine 2.0 or a cybernetic future feline, or will our pets take on an increased importance as a link back to the organic in a world cluttered with technology? One thing is certain: dogs have been domesticated and they aren't going anywhere.

As of 2010, the pet industry grossed a whopping \$48 billion. This is an absolutely astronomical number. With 62% of American households owning at least one pet (up from 56% in 1988), and 37.2% of families owning dogs and 32.4% owning cats (thus 7.6% must own at least one of each) Americans have embraced their pets as members of their