

A Little Help with your Friends!

Sometimes, different animal or plant species work together so that both benefit. This is called a 'mutualism'. These animals are the best of friends! We have listed what each animal gets out of their friendship, such as food or shelter.

Can you work out who is friends with whom?

The human gets a companion and provides food, water and shelter to...

...the oxpecker bird.



Plants get their pollen spread to other plants and as a thank you, give nectar to...

...the bees.



The anemone's stinging tentacles are protected from being eaten and in return it protects...

...the hornbill.



The buffalo gets parasites removed from its body, which is a perfect lunch for...

...their dog.



The dwarf mongoose finds insects for their shared dinner and is warned about predators by...

...the clownfish.



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Humans look after their pets and get affection in return. Most 'pets' originally lived around humans for different reasons: dogs helped us hunt and cats caught the mice that ate our stored food. These relationships are also mutualisms!

When bees and other animals spread pollen for plants, this is called pollination. Plants and insects have often evolved alongside each other, so that some plants are only 'pollinated' by one particular insect species! Special friends indeed!

Clownfish are immune to the poison in anemone tentacles, so can safely live inside them. They can then defend their home from predators and parasites.

Oxpeckers eat away all the nasty parasites biting the buffalo: a pamper and a buffet!

One species finding food (mongooses) while the other watches out for predators (hornbills) is a common mutualism: meerkats and drongo birds do this too.

Can you think of any other ways different animals work together to help each other?





Working for 'the Man'

When humans domesticate animals, in most cases, the animal is protected from predators, and given food, water and shelter in return for something. Can you work out what humans get in return from each animal? Tick all the boxes that apply.

	Material for clothing	Food source	Pulling heavy loads	Companionship /affection
Donkeys				
Chickens				
Cats				
Sheep				

Do you think it counts as a mutualism, if humans get food from the animal?

Dogs are common, but their ancestors wolves have been hunted and killed across much of the world. Do you think being domesticated works out best for an animal?

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Chickens		✓		
Cats				✓
Sheep	✓	✓		

When people help each other, we call it **co-operation**.

Can you think of any ways you help other people?