APPLE HOLIC
By Jonny Evans, Computerworld | MAR 5, 2019 8:04 AM PST

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Applehol(ic, linus/), aka el-holik: An imaginative person who thinks about what Apple is doing, why and where it is going. Delivering popular Apple-related news, advice and entertainment since 1999.

FEATURE

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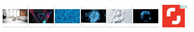

The smart pet market is predicted to become a $22 billion industry by 2025, and the innovations we will see in that market will reach into human lives.

**Updated 3/7/19 with additional comment from Felcana.*

Smarter owners, smarter pets

Connected pet care reaches further than services such as PetBnB or Tailwise, which link owners and pets with things they need.

[Further reading: The wireless road warrior's essential guide.]

Useful as they are, they're scratching the surface of what's possible as mobile technology reaches the animal kingdom.

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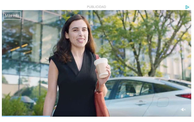

Put it this way, millions of U.S. iPhone owners already use their Apple devices to track and improve their personal health. They use the Activity app and use Health Records to share data with medical professionals.

Why can't we do this with our pets?

Indeed, given that pet care isn't quite as heavily regulated (though the industry is *highly* professionalized), it's possible we will soon look to that sector for signs of what's to come in human healthcare.

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How does your pet tell you when it is sick?

While most pet owners pretend it isn't the case, most animals can't speak.

This is why so often when pets do get sick they become very ill before human owners recognise the problem exists.

If only there was some way to augment animals.

Felcana's smart dog and cat solutions - worn fitness trackers and a range of other smart pet accessories - track and monitor pet activity and behaviour 24-hours a day and turn that information into actionable data. Available in the EU now and set to debut in the U.S. later this year.

This information is made available to pet owners via an iPhone, iPad, or mobile app.

The effect? Pet owners get much deeper insights into their pet's health and are more likely to notice when irregularities that may be symptomatic of ill health emerge.

The system is also able to identify symptoms owners may not know to look for, as it integrates machine learning, AI and veterinary expertise from the world-renowned Royal Veterinary College to help predict and treat many health problems.

The solution isn't totally unique. A smart pet tech start-up called Dinbeat provides wearable devices to monitor an animal's vital signs when they are undergoing veterinary treatment.

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These things aren't just nice to have

When your pet animal gets sick, Felcana's system lets you share all your pet's historical data with the veterinarian, enabling fast and accurate diagnosis.

Hard to spot conditions such as arthritis usually become advanced by the time they become visible – solutions like these can help spot a problem as it forms.

This way of detecting problems also has applications in the context of human care. Such early warnings save lives.

Global Venture Partners managing partner Spyro Korsanos puts it this way:

"A paradigm shift is already underway in human medicine and we see parallels in animal healthcare, with growing demand for personalised pet care." IGVP has a stake in Fulcanal.

Updated addition: Felcana on Felcana

Felcana had a lot to say. "We're science-based, veterinary credible and focused on health. Founded by veterinarians with over 20 years in this sector, Felcana is heavily embedded in the veterinary community."

The company also explained that this veterinary credibility gives it an edge against competitors. "That's why we've focused on building a connected suite of sticky products that both dog and cat owners can enjoy and value in the long-term.

"Other competitors offer heavier products (with some weighing over 22g per unit) that are only suitable for medium-large dog breeds. In comparison, Felcana's product, Felcana Go, weighs about the same a dime and is suitable for all breeds and size dogs and cats."

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Pet tech is a growth sector

The mass deployment of personal tech is prompting lots of activity in the pet tech industry. Crunchbase claims funding in pet startups reached $291.8 million in 2017 from $67.2 million in 2012 – a 334 percent rise.

Once you start digging into the market you'll find dozens of different pet tech services hitting an iPhone near you: Wag, Chewy, Barkibox, NextVet, Whistle and many more.

What these smart animal care innovations mean is that your iPhone will help you monitor, locate, feed and care for your pets -- even when you are far away.

Smart pet healthcare will also be a good place to see the paradigm shifts that will eventually transform human healthcare.

"We believe that there will be faster adoption of next generation technologies in pet care," said Felcana. "For that reason, it is likely that pet technology will be reflected in human health."

Meanwhile, as life expectancies increase and global population climbs, the efficiencies of connected agriculture require similar technologies.

The connected food chain

The pressure to feed a hugely expanding population means farming is now a high-tech industry. Smart pet tech products are already seeing deployment across the food industry, from tracking devices on cattle to blockchain-based life cycle management tools.

"The iPhone and similar smartphone technologies have enabled rapid development of new products and services across all industries in all geographies," says Felcana.

It is quite interesting to consider to what extent this transformation was accelerated in 2007 when Apple's Steve Jobs announced the iPhone as "a phone, an iPod, an Internet communicator".

I guess if he'd argued the device "will transform every industry on the planet" he may have been mocked.

Though if he had done so, he would have been right.

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Jonny is a freelance writer who has been writing (mainly about Apple and technology) since 1999.

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