

Written by Paperpin

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**BlackGarden** interviewed producer **Graham Nardone** during GamesCom, of course about **The Sims 3 Pets**

. Let's read together their closed door interview, also available on

[Facebook](#)

Enjoy!

***Heather: So, tell me a bit about yourself and your role in The Sims Team!***

Graham: I'm Graham Nardone, I'm one of the producers on The Sims 3, and we're working on The Sims 3 Pets right now.

***H: You're very active in the community, you're in the forums a lot, and I know the community really appreciates that you take the time to talk to them.***

G: It's great being able to go out there and communicate with our fans, that's something I've been getting more involved in recently, and I do really enjoy the opportunity to go and talk directly to them, to be able to hear from players and get that kind of feedback. There's an interesting back and forth and a dialogue between everyone. We do listen to people and we do really want to incorporate their feedback so we really do take all that into consideration.

***H: And you're on Twitter a lot as well...***

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G: Yeah, I started the Twitter thing probably about four months ago. Lots of people do talk to me on Twitter, I love answering questions on there, I try and respond to everybody. Again, it's nice to interact with our fans.

***H: We saw pets in The Sims 1 and 2, so what's new in The Sims 3?***

G: The really big thing is that you get to live life as a pet. You can totally control your pet, check out their needs, their wishes, their motives. The other big thing of course is that there are horses. People have been asking us to bring back pets for so long now, and when they talk about pets, horses are one of the top requested features. So we're so thrilled to have these now and it's so great to watch Sims interact with the horses.

***H: And they're a method of transportation as well now?***

G: Absolutely, you can totally ride the horses around town!

***H: Anyone who follows you on Twitter will know you have two adorable little kittens, has any of their behaviour inspired the behaviour of cats in the game?***

G: Yeah absolutely, I've been pointing out this one interaction where the Sims pull out a laser pointer and point it at the kitten or whatever, and it's so funny watching it in game and I'm so glad we got it in there, because my cats absolutely freak out over laser pointers.

That's the cool thing about this expansion - we've been working with animals, we've done a lot of research on how they behave, and of course everybody has their own experiences with animals - growing up with a pet, having their beloved childhood pet or whatever, and we wanted to bring those experiences into the game and make it a personal thing for players, we wanted players to have that kind of emotional connection with their animals.

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***H: Speaking of having a pet as a child, will children in the game maybe have more wishes about having pets than adults?***

G: It's not really a wish that's driven in that manner. There certainly will be desires to bring pets into the house, but it's really about the Sims and what their traits are. So if you have a Sim who's a dog person, and they don't have a dog, they're going to want to bring a dog into the house.

***H: So that's a new trait then, "dog person"?***

G: Yeah we have cat person, dog person, equestrian, you know if they really love horses, and then you might just be an all-round animal lover and want to fill your house with pets.

***H: How many pets can you actually have in one household?***

G: Well, it's a bit of a tricky answer actually, you can have up to 6 pets in the household, but you can't go over 10 things in total, Sims and pets. As long as you don't go over that 10 max, you can mix and match any way you want, so you could have 6 horses in the household if you wanted, that'd be pretty cool.

***H: So what about the life cycles of pets, can you create them as puppies and kittens?***

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G: In the console version you can create puppies and kittens in Create-A-Pet, but on the PC in Create-A-Pet you have to create them as adults and elders, so it's all about breeding of pets, the ability to have the genetics passed on to the next generation of pets, so we think that's something that's really cool.

There's also genetic technology behind it, they'll pass on pieces of their appearance, their traits, sometimes you might even get something that'll skip a generation, so there's a whole lot going on behind the scenes that makes pets super cute.

***H: Or really freaky looking?***

G: Yeah I guess if you had a pretty freaky looking parent!

***H: When pets die, does the Grim Reaper come?***

G: Yeah, the Grim Reaper will show up, but there a new ways of having him move your pet on to the underworld. If you have a cat or a dog he'll throw a toy or a stick or whatever and they'll go running off to wherever it is they go when they die. If you have a horse who dies then he'll actually get onto the horse's back and they'll ride through this portal, into the realm, you know, wherever they end up. So yeah there's definitely new stuff for the Grim Reaper to show up and take care of the pets when they pass on.

***H: Are there any other ways of getting a pet, other than making it in Create-A-Pet?***

G: Yeah that's just one of the ways, you can adopt a pet in game. For horses you can go down to the equestrian centre and buy a horse. There's also the strays that wander around the neighbourhood, you might form a relationship with them, and bring them into your household. One of my favourite things to do is, there's wild horses that roam around the world, so you can actually go out and try and gain their trust, eventually form a relationship with them, bring them

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into the household, so there's a whole variety of ways of actually getting a pet into your household.

***H: How do you control the pets, is that the same as controlling a Sim?***

G: Yeah it's very similar, you do select their pet, they are a part of the household. They have a variety of interactions, they have their own wishes, their own motives. They have different motives for the different types of pet, so it is a very similar experience but it's definitely tailored to be unique for the pets.

***H: Other than the cats and the dogs and the horses, what other kinds of smaller pets are there?***

G: Those are the big three that you can control, but there are other types of pets in the game. Turtles, snakes, lizards, birds, rodents, there's a lot of different ones out there that can live in your home. They aren't fully controllable, but there are places to keep them in your household and have fun interactions with them.

***H: So if you had a rodent, could you take it out of its cage and play with it?***

G: Yeah, you can take them out, but if you leave them out for too long, leave them in your inventory or whatever, they can escape into the house and they might disappear on you. And of course the birds have lots of stuff, you can teach them to talk, they might get out and fly around the house.

***H: What about interactions between different kinds of pets? Can a cat make friends with a horse?***

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G: Yeah they can and you might find certain relationships easier than others. Cats and dogs are notorious for not getting along, so they can form a relationship, they can become close friends, but it might be a little bit more work. Alternatively, dogs will form instant relationships with Sims, they're man's best friend right? So there's definitely different things that are taken into account there but all the different types of animals can have different interactions with each other.

***H: What's the new supernatural creature?***

G: That is the big thing for GamesCom, we're talking about the unicorn, and revealing that for the first time. It is the new creature in the game, and we're really excited for that. We've obviously never had a unicorn before, so it's a brand new experience for fans and players. It's very cool it has all these mythical magical abilities. The unicorn's going to be very exciting for players.

***H: What's the style of the new neighbourhood?***

G: The new neighbourhood, this is the first time we're showing that as well, it's named Appaloosa Plains, and it's a mid-western ranching type world. It's really great for people who want to have a horse in their family and go galloping across the countryside and discover these old dirt trails, find all the little nooks and crannies in the world, it'll be a great place to live with pets.

***H: What kinds of non-controllable animals are there? Are there any skunks like there were in The Sims 2?***

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G: There is some wildlife in the game, so you might see deers or raccoons running around, you'll have some interactions with them but they will not come into the household.

***H: Is there any way to keep them away from your lot if you don't want them around?***

G: We do actually have these gnomes, and they're not magical gnomes, they're just ones you can purchase from the catalogue, you put them out in your yard, and they either discourage or encourage different types of animals to show up. So if you really want cats to show up but you don't want dogs around, you can certainly do that.

***H: Is there a new magical gnome?***

G: There is, but typically we don't reveal what that is, we hope that players will discover that on their own. There will certainly be one in there for you to find.

***H: You mentioned deer earlier, if your Sim grows fruits or vegetables, will they ruin your plants?***

G: They can come and graze in your yard, I don't know that they'll specifically ruin it, but they might end up eating your fruit, yeah.

***H: And how do pets react when wildlife comes into the garden?***

G: You know, it depends on their personality. So because the pets and animals are full Sims now, you can define traits for them. So maybe there's an ornery horse, or an aggressive dog, and if wildlife shows up they're not going to react well to that. But alternatively, you might have a

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really lazy pet, or a pet who's really affectionate or friendly, so they might react really well to other animals showing up. So really a lot of the behaviour and the interactions that the pets have is determined by the traits that they're given.

***H: In The Sims 2 there were some very sweet interactions between pets and toddlers, has any of that returned in The Sims 3 Pets?***

G: There are some limited things you can do with them, they'll be able to nuzzle up to them or whatever, but beyond that it's really more of a focus on the animals themselves.

***H: Can pets get sick or unwell?***

G: They don't necessarily get sick, they can get fleas. That's actually a really funny thing with them. If they spend too much time outside, they have a chance of contracting fleas, and the fleas can start to spread, so you have to give them a medical bath. So if you don't give them a flea bath, as soon as they start interacting with other animals or with Sims, the fleas start to spread, and you'll see everybody itching and scratching. So you do have to take care of that, but they don't get sick per se.

***H: Are there any ways that pets can make money?***

G: There are! Horses are a great way to make money. There's a racing skill and a jumping skill. You can take those skills to the equestrian centre and that's where you can start entering them in competitions – maybe into a race or showjumping competition, or cross country. As they compete in those, if you do well, you can earn trophies, you can earn money, and you might even see your Sim's name show up in the newspaper.

The other thing with horses is you can breed them and then once you have this great line of horses that has really great traits, and is great at competitions, or very skilled, you can take

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them to the equestrian centre and you can sell them. You'll make a lot of money that way too.

Other animals have some opportunities for earning money as well. Dogs for example can learn tricks. If you teach them enough tricks maybe they go up to the dog park and put on a little trick exhibition, and people can give tips for that. Cats, they're hunters, so they get the hunting skill. They might go out into the world and find little small critters, and bring them back and if they find some rare, valuable ones, you can make some money selling those.

***H: I was just hearing from Aaron (The Sims 3 Pets Console Producer) that the dogs can sing along to the radio on the console game, will they do that on the PC as well?***

G: Yeah definitely, that's partially driven by their traits as well, so you could have a noisy pet or you could have a quiet pet. If they are noisy, then if they start hearing that radio going, or if somebody's playing the guitar they will start howling along to themselves.

***H: How long has the team been working on Pets for?***

G: We really spend about a year on each expansion, from the initial concept and design to getting fully involved with it. We're in the thick of it right now, we're still in alpha, so we do have a ways to go, there is more stuff that's being added because it's still being developed right now. Especially the breeds, if you go around and play the game right now, you won't see too many, but once we get to the final game there's going to be over a hundred different cats and dogs, there's going to be a ton of horses in there, so there's a lot of content that we're still working on.

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***H: What's the funniest thing you've seen a pet do?***

G: Actually I was having fun earlier, because I was having my dog playing with my Sim, and they were playing fetch, and my Sim goes and pretends to throw the stick, and the dog is eagerly looking for it, but my Sim's holding it behind his back. So when the dog realised what the Sim did, he didn't like it one bit, and he went over and peed on him. So I was like "wow that's awesome". So they totally have relationships, and they catch on to what the other one's doing, and there's a lot of fun stuff in there. If you go on YouTube, people upload funny videos of their cats and their dogs, so we really want to create those kinds of experiences in the game, where you'll see them doing funny things, and it's something you want to capture and share.