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FOOTY TIPPING COMPETITION

Aussie pets enjoy purr-fect life

Helen Hawkes | 19th March 2012 10:23 PM

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Tags: advantage, giaan rooney, pets, rod straw

WITH rising debt, political turmoil and a weather pattern that seems more erratic by the week, you may have suspected that Australia was going to the dogs.

But new research confirms what many of us may previously have only suspected.

Australia is going to the dogs - and cats - literally.

You can forget about Julia or Kevin or La Nina or the global financial crisis.

We Australians have other things on our minds.

Like what we'd say to the boss if Fido got sick or which bank we'd apply to if Fluffy was hit by a car and needed a hip replacement.

These startling priorities have been revealed by new research released by petcare company Advantage that shows that there are now 33 million pets in more than eight million households.

In fact, Australia tops the world for pet ownership.

More shockingly, behind the lives of these pampered pooches and much-cuddled cats are owners who are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure their health and comfort.

The survey found that 71% of owners would risk facing reprimand at work and stay home to look after the pet if it fell ill.

Another 80% would cut their holiday short if their pet was sick, and 88% said they would dip into their savings if their pet's life was in danger.

Not only that, but many people reported they felt emotionally closer to their pets than they did to some of their friends or family.

Of course, with divorce rates sky high, that seems rational.

Olympian and animal lover Giaan Rooney, who is a spokeswoman for Advantage, said that when it comes to animals, she too has a soft heart.

"I would do just about anything for my dog Lester and it is so refreshing to see that the rest of Australia feels just as passionately about their pet as I do about mine," she said.



Australian pet owners are going to extra effort to treat their pets as part of the family.

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While all of this may point to better lives for Australia's pets, it seems that all this furry love has a downside too.

A surplus of affection for our fluffy friends is translating into too many treats and expanding waistlines.

The latest warnings about canine obesity come from leading veterinarian Dr Rod Straw, who founded Brisbane Veterinary Specialist Centre.

He's urging Northern Rivers pet owners to stop giving their dogs too much food.

Mr Straw said pet obesity was often overlooked as a serious issue by pet owners.

"We have recorded a steady increase in the number of overweight and obese dogs requiring treatment recently," he said.

"Approximately 30% of dogs we treat are either overweight or clinically obese."

Dr Straw said obesity poses many health dangers for dogs and contributes to a shorter life span.

"Canine obesity can lead to a number of serious health issues including respiratory problems, arthritis, heart disease, skin problems, diabetes and urinary problems," he said.

"Obese dogs are also more likely to be tired and lethargic, greatly reducing their quality of life."

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What the survey found

- Australia has one of the highest incidences of pet ownership in the world, with 36% of households owning a dog and 23% owning a cat.
- 71% of owners would stay home and 80% would cut their holiday short to look after their sick pet.
- 82% pet owners in NSW consider themselves to be a parent to their pet.
- 88% would dip into their savings and 64% of people would take out a loan if their pet's life was in danger.
- 68% have a closer relationship with their pet than with some of their friends.
- 84% agree that pets understand their moods and feelings.
- 74% say that if their pet seems unhappy, they feel unhappy.

Fido and Fluffy online

Watch out, Fido is blogging. Bayer, one of the world's top 10 pharmaceutical companies has launched friendsforever.com.au as a "social petworking" site for Australian pet parents.

The site offers promotions, social news and updates on all things dog and cat related. Owners can create a profile to socialise with other Furry Friends.

It's a Dog's - or a Cat's - Life

After a bit of upmarket pet shopping? These finds are from the original deluxe boutique pet store dogue.com.au

The Original Cat Condo - De Luxe, \$649

Feather Bliss Poncho made from Peruvian Cotton (for dogs), \$54

Pro Chucktails Dog Shoes made from canvas with a rubber sole \$40

Polka Dot Cat Collars \$16.50

Pod Player Squeaky Dog Toy \$14.95

Does Your Doggie Need to Diet

If you can't easily feel your dog's ribs, he or she is overweight, said leading veterinarian Dr Rod Straw.

"Like humans, dogs will gain weight if they fail to expend sufficient energy to burn off the kilojoules they consume," he said.

To help counteract dog obesity, pet owners are encouraged to walk their pet regularly.

Reducing the amount of food you give your dog - grate apple or carrot into a smaller portion to bulk it out or switching to a "lite" version of dog biscuits - can also help conquer obesity.

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