

Tuesday, 20 November 2007

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advocate**

06 October 2005 - 10:25AM

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Pet owners throughout the world yesterday celebrated World Animal Day; the feast day of the Patron Saint of all animals, St Francis of Assisi. St Francis, born in 1182 in Assisi, Italy, was the wealthy son of a cloth merchant. In 1206 he rejected all his worldly goods and founded the order of the Franciscan Monks. He loved all God's creatures and called animals his brothers and sisters and it is this love and respect that is celebrated on his Feast Day. In Rome on World Animal Day, stray dogs are temporarily spared from the city's dog catchers and offered free bones from the butcher! In Australia, World Animal Day has been set aside to recognise the important role pets play in the everyday lives of millions of Australians. Twelve million Australians are associated with pets and 64 per cent of the 7.5 million households in Australia own pets; one of the highest incidence of pet ownership in the world. Typically the major carer of the pet is female, married with children, living in the suburbs and most likely employed. Ninety-one per cent of pet owners report feeling "very close" to their pet, reinforcing that pets are an integral member of the family unit, however constituted. Pets were a normal part of childhood for more than 83 per cent of Australians. Of the Australians who do not currently own a pet, 53 per cent would like to do so in the future. Research has shown that owning a pet is beneficial to health with people who own pets typically visiting the doctor less often and using less medication, on average having lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure, recovering more quickly from illness and surgery, dealing better with stressful situations and being less lonely. In many areas of Australia Blessings of the Animals or other activities allowed pet owners to celebrate their relationships with their pets.

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