



MEDIA RELEASE

21 June 2012

Dog ownership = active mums

With a baby born in Australia around every two minutes¹, the health and wellbeing of pregnant women is a key issue. And the latest findings from a UK study of over 14,000 pregnant women suggest that one of the answers to achieving the recommended levels of exercise during pregnancy could be as simple as walking the dog.

“The research² found that pregnant women who were dog owners were 50% more likely to achieve the recommended three hours of activity per week. The researchers also noted that, as walking is a low risk exercise, the participation of pregnant women in dog walking could be useful as part of a broader strategy to improve activity levels,” says Susie Willis from the Petcare Information and Advisory Service.

PIAS notes that it is not just pregnant women who could benefit from the research findings.

“We know from research undertaken by Dr Hayley Christian at the University of Western Australia that dog owners, in general, are more likely to meet the recommended levels of exercise than non-dog owners. Dr Christian also identified that people who acquired a dog increased their recreational walking by 48 minutes per week,” says Susie.

“Of course, you do not need to own a dog to achieve the increased levels of activity but this research indicates that there is a clear association between dog ownership and increased physical activity,” she added.

(ENDS)

Issued on behalf of the Petcare Information and Advisory Service

Available for interview:

Susie Willis

Petcare Information and Advisory Service

Ph: 0419 362 442

Other media enquiries:

Jill Calder, 03 9654 8098

1 From statistics in *Australian Social Trends*, 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics

2 Westgarth C, Liu J, Heron J, Ness AR, Bundred P, et al. (2012) *Dog ownership during pregnancy, Maternal Activity and Obesity: A Cross-Sectional Study*, published on www.plosone.org, February 2012

Australia – A nation of pet lovers

Australia is a nation of pet lovers. It is estimated that 63% of Australian households have some type of pet with 53% of households owning a dog or a cat.

Over many years, Australian and international research has shown that owning pets can help improve a person's mental and physical health, reduce the effects of stress, help children learn about responsibility, facilitate social interaction between people and build a sense of community.

The Petcare Information & Advisory Service (PIAS) provides non-commercial information on socially responsible pet ownership.

PIAS' website: www.petnet.com.au is suitable for children, although PIAS encourages parents to supervise any online access by their children.

Images are available for use by the media on www.petnet.com.au

Follow PIAS on Twitter @PetcareAus