

MEDIA RELEASE

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The ideal Aussie dog is different for men and women

Researchers at Melbourne's Monash University have confirmed what many dog owners might respectfully suggest they already know: the ideal companion dog is friendly, obedient, healthy, good with children, fully housetrained and affectionate to its owners.

But dig a little deeper and researcher, Ms Tammie King, says that significant differences exist between what men and women considered the ideal dog.

"Women preferred male dogs, are willing to spend more time grooming their ideal dog and want a calm and compliant dog. Men preferred female dogs, are likely to spend more money to maintain their ideal dog and are looking for a dog that is energetic, faithful and protective. Men also wanted larger dogs and preferred purebred dogs that are physically impressive to look at," says Ms King.

"I am not about to enter the minefield of what this might say about men or women but it was statistically significant across the 877 research participants," Ms King said.

Other findings from the research included:

- The type of dog (purebred, mixed or designer breed) was unimportant to 42.9% of respondents although 40.6% indicated that their ideal dog would be purebred, while mixed breeds were preferred (12.8%) over designer dogs (3.0%);
- 75.8% of respondents said that their ideal dog would be acquired as a puppy;
- Overall the most popular hair type for dogs was short and straight (29.0%) but 23.0% of people said that hair type was unimportant;
- Most people (64.7%) said that the dog's coat colour was unimportant;
- 39.7% of respondents wanted a medium size dog of 10 to 20 kg, with large dogs coming second at 27.3%;
- The largest percentage of respondents (35.1%) indicated the cost to maintain their ideal dog was unimportant but almost as many (33.6%) indicated their ideal dog would cost between \$11 to \$20 a week to maintain;
- The vast majority of participants (78.9%) indicated they would prefer to spend between 16 and 60 minutes exercising their dog per day;
- 75.5% said they wanted to spend between 1 and 30 minutes grooming their ideal dog per week; and
- Most respondents (66.4%) wanted their ideal dog to be desexed.

The Petcare Information and Advisory Service (PIAS) says these results match with recent research that identified Australia's most popular breeds and size of dog.

"In 2006, the National People and Pets Survey identified Australia's top three dog breeds as the Kelpie, the Border Collie and the Maltese Dogs and 43% of dog owners in the survey owned medium size dogs," said Susie Willis from PIAS.

“The research actually reveals some key issues that we believe could improve the relationships owners have with their dogs,” says Ms King.

“Many participants listed obedience as a key characteristic for the ideal dog but only 3.6% of people listed trainability as an important characteristic while around 20% of participants believed that some dogs could not be trained. We found this rather surprising as all dogs can be trained to some extent and there is a direct link between the amount of training an owner does and the obedience of a dog.

“Educating dog owners about the characteristics of different dogs and their behaviours is likely to help reduce the incidence of problem behaviours, such as separation anxiety, destructiveness or aggression. It is also likely to increase owner satisfaction and reduce the number of dogs relinquished to shelters.

“The research clearly showed that the Australian public does not judge a dog primarily by its physical characteristics. We were heartened to see that behavioural characteristics as well as health are recognized as important in determining the ideal dog for most people,” Ms King added.

(ENDS)

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Available for interview: Ms Tammie King, Anthrozoology Research Group,
Monash University, tammie.king@med.monash.edu.au

Susie Willis, PIAS, 02 9555 9670

Other media enquiries: Jill Hollingworth, Tango PR, 0419 508 597

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) is funded by Mars Petcare Australia as part of its commitment to socially responsible pet ownership. PIAS’ website: www.petnet.com.au provides information on the responsible and enjoyable ownership of pets. The site is suitable for children, although PIAS encourages parents to supervise any online access by their children.