

Media Release

December 2018

Aussies pets won't be in the dog house this Christmas as owners prepare to splash the cash

Pet owners to spend \$145m on presents for their pets this Christmas – and \$8.1bn overall in 2018

Aussie pets are considered just as integral to the family unit as a partner or children by the vast majority of pet owners (87.1%), and it shows. Pets have gone from sleeping outside to in their owners' bedrooms (48.7%), pet owners say they love their pets just as much as they love their human family (82.2%), and close to two-thirds (64.8%) say their pets are their children.

In fact, the love Aussies have for their pets is so pawsome that an incredible \$145 million will be collectively spent on Christmas presents for our furry friends this year, according to new research from Real Insurance.

The *Real Insurance Pets Survey* is the fifteenth installment in a series of national studies that observes the values and concerns of Australian families.

While most pampered pets are likely to find toys in their stockings this festive season, tech devices are becoming increasingly popular gifts for animal lovers. Owners who currently are planning to use wearable devices, such as pet activity trackers, spend an average of \$147, or \$38 million in total, on pet-tech across Australia.

Spending big on our pets isn't restricted to Christmas time. Aussies are showing how deep their love and their pockets are, spending a whopping \$8.1 billion per year when all costs including insurance, food, medicines and amenities are tallied. While food makes up the majority of pet spend at a combined \$5.1 billion annually, Aussies are willing to spend \$1.1 billion on pet funerals a year as well – an expense that only reiterates how much Aussies adore their pets.

Real Insurance spokesperson, Tania Bradley, says: "From our research, we can clearly see just how invested Aussie families are in their pets, both emotionally and financially.

"Given so many pet owners see their 'fur babies' as an important member of the family unit, the investment they put towards making sure their pets have the happiest and most comfortable life possible should come as no surprise. This is especially true of the 49.1% of pet owners who believe that all members of their family – including pets and children – should be treated equally."

Time is money when it comes to pet ownership with Aussies clocking in 37 hours per week of quality time with their pets – in comparison, this is almost the same amount of time spent on the job in an average full-time working week, and even more than the average 31.4 hours of quality time parents are spending per week with their kids according to the Real Insurance Family Survey (2015). All up, this quality time equates to a third (33.0%) of all waking hours of the average pet owner, or, over the course of a year, roughly 1.31 million years in total.

Whether spending time with a pet alone or as family, there is no denying the pawstives of having an animal companion. Around three quarters of partnered or married Aussies say that, thanks to their pets, family life is less stressful (79.6%), strong family relationships are built (77.1%) and overall more quality time is spent together as a family (74.7%). Pets also make Aussies happier (97.7%), less lonely (92.7%) and are great for mental (95.9%) and physical health (91.9%).

In some cases, a pet can become king of the household and take out the title of favourite family member. Close to a third (30.5%) of pet owners have admitted they prefer the company of their pets than that of their partner or children because their pets are less demanding (46.0%), more loving or affectionate (43.9%) and less stressful (41.1%).

For those single or unpartnered, two-fifths (43.7%) say that having a pet substitutes for having a partner, saying that having a pet is less stressful (54.1%) than a partner, and that pets show more loyalty (52.7%). Pets also rule the roost when it comes to love, with the vast majority (85.2%) of respondents saying they would consider it a deal breaker if potential suitors didn't like or want pets. Pet owners also say that having a 'fur baby' is good practice for those who want to start a family (68.9%) and treating pets as children is a healthy mindset.

Charlie Veitch, Founder of DogTrax says: "There are numerous benefits that come with animal companionship, both for families and solo pet owners.

"Whether it's bringing unconditional love and friendship into the home, instilling responsibility or preparing for the future, pets can offer something for everyone. What is also clear from this research is that it's important for owners to align themselves with those who hold similar pet values."

Unsurprisingly, given the important place they hold in their owners' hearts, pet health is a key priority for owners. Similar proportions say they put more effort in the health of their pets than themselves (54.5%) and are more likely to take their pet to the vet than they are to visit the doctor (50.4%). To keep their pets in tip-top condition, the vast majority of respondents (85.8%) vaccinate their furry friends, and close to a quarter (23.8%) say they have pet insurance policies, up from 14.7% in a similar study conducted last year.

Pet lovers are also a conscientious bunch, with the large majority (96.2%) agreeing that Aussies should be encouraged to adopt not shop, and provide more support to rescue organisations that rehome animals (94.6%). The majority of Aussies say they would be happy to welcome a rescue animal as a new pet in their home (88.1%).

The obsession with our furry friends sees most pet owners snap around 10 pictures of their pet a month on average but Australia-wide, pet lovers are taking approximately 722 million pictures annually.

Despite being a pet-loving nation, Australia has a long way to go in becoming truly pet friendly. More than two in five (42.4%) respondents say they have been held back from getting a furry friend in the past because of their living situation, while almost a quarter (24.3%) say they have hidden the fact they have a pet from a landlord. Anti-pet rules and regulations have also seen close to a third (31.9%) of Aussies discount moving into a potential new property based on attitudes towards pets which differed from their own.

Mr Veitch concludes: "Overall, it's clear that our pets are top dogs with Aussie animal lovers – no matter the breed or species! A pet is a great addition to the home, and it's great to see

Aussies embracing all the joys and benefits that having a pet brings, especially around seasonal family occasions such as Christmas Day.”

ENDS

Media Enquiries

Shannon Cuthbert

Senior Account Manager

Haystac

m: 0405 652 703

e: shannon.cuthbert@haystac.com.au

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning Australian insurer, with a goal to protect the quality of people's lives. Real Insurance has been named as the top Risk and Life Insurer in Roy Morgan's 2017, 2015, 2013 and 2012 annual Customer Satisfaction Awards. Real Insurance was also awarded the 2017 Reader's Digest Highly Commended Trusted Brand Award in the Funeral Insurance category, and previously the 2014 Highly Commended Trusted Brand Award in the Life and Funeral Insurance categories, as voted for by Australian consumers. The company has been in the Australian market since 2005 with product offerings in life, income, funeral, pet, car, home, travel and bike insurance. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd and The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd.

About the 'Real Insurance Pets Survey'

In order to explore the perceptions of pets in Australia, CoreData surveyed 1000 typical Australians across the nation in October 2018.

The sample collection employed soft quotas to monitor representativeness of the Australian adult population. Hard quotas by state were also engaged to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples (NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200)