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Urban Animal
20 Hordern Street,
Newtown NSW 2042
Ph. (02) 9557 7766 E. critters@urbananimal.net
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Welcome to our sixth quarterly edition ushering in 2006.

In the past year, we've had a lot of media exposure from those interested in either pet lifestyle or the pet industry--newspapers, magazines, radio and TV--and one question an interviewer recently asked me made me pause. "Did you think when you started this magazine with your partner Lisa that it would turn out to be such a success?"

Though we hoped our concept would catch on, we knew it was a gamble and that we had a limit of about \$50,000 as a budget to last us through a year if advertisers didn't 'get it' and if we were ignored. We were as lucky as we were careful to keep the integrity and quality in place. Now with our sixth issue, we've passed all the tests, survived the long haul and established this as a strong title with over 320 outlets in the Sydney area (which you can find by suburb on our website).

But the real mark of our success has been the offers we've received for either expanding the magazine into other cities or into other media, such as TV and radio. Just after our last issue came out, we were offered a slot on the ABC's new non-commercial program 'The Pet Show' to do a Pet Chef segment for 37 episodes. They had seen our Cuisine De Critters columns and wanted to snare us and our animals as on-air talent.

Because we liked the ABC's ethics, the producers' approach and their concept of offering a quality half hour program for a family and older demographic audience, we took up the opportunity and had a ball shooting 14 recipes in two days in December and January for everything from Pussy Paste to Horse Muffins! The producers wanted the sort of foods we offer in this magazine as well as the nutritional information in a light-hearted presentation of two minute segments.

But while we were shooting the light-hearted segments, the contract that was originally offered for signing and execution was suddenly revoked in a heavy-handed manner by the suits and 'upper management' who had originally agreed to only a year's repeats and overseas rights to be negotiated at a later time. Despite the best efforts and good will of the producers and crew, it was a bad faith gesture.

To cut to the chase, as they say in filmmaking, the ABC wanted to arbitrarily change the deal, mid-stream in taping, and just before the third day of shooting in early February, leaving us no choice but to cease production rather than give away our rights for lunch money. Needless to say, someone else could be found to be 'The Pet Chef' on 'The Pet Show' without regard to their rights or future earnings.

So here we after our 14 minutes of non-fame, back at the computer screens doing what we do best--bringing you Urban Animal in all its light-hearted, fun and serious journalism, design and presentation.

Phil Tripp - Urban Animal Publisher

In recent editions it would appear that this column has become the 'Lilly blog'. A column containing all the news and progress a small Dalmatian has been making from scared, weird, rescue pup through to a more stable, trained and well-rounded adolescent. I've had some nice feedback from many readers and enquiries as to whether my childhood toy, Ruppy, was still 'alive'. Other callers made contact to dispense advice on how to steer Lilly through her fear aggression. We've had offers from trainers and doggy day care folk to assist in helping her to become more socialised. And all the kind thoughts, encouragement, advice and help have been most appreciated. But this quarter's column is not about Lilly--instead it's about my other dog Jerri.

Jerri is one of those dogs you're lucky to experience once in a lifetime. Since coming to us as a pup she's been an absolute dream dog--easy to train with a delightful disposition. She's been described by others as a diamond dog and indeed she is. I always laugh when describing her--she's an oxymoron--a 'quiet Dalmatian'.

On her first general health check our vet announced that Jerri had the heart of a lion. In many respects that sums up her personality too. She's always had a big heart and this was tested when a new dog was brought into the household. One of my greatest concerns in bringing Lilly home was how Jerri, a much older dog, was going to take to the youngster. At all times I kept in the back of my mind that we could work through all things with Lil but Jerri came first and if she couldn't adjust then... well you get the idea.



Phil Tripp and feathered friends



Lilly and Lisa Treen

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 20 Hordern Street, Newtown NSW 2042
 Ph: (02) 9557 7766 Fx: (02) 9557 7788 E: critters@urbananimal.net Web: www.urbananimal.net
 Publisher: Phil Tripp topdog@urbananimal.net Managing Editor: Lisa Treen lisa@urbananimal.net
 Design & Layout: Mark Berry mark@urbananimal.net Staff: Michelle Padovan, Crystal Silvester
 Contributors: Trudi Thorpe, Melissa Catt, Adam Gordon, Alex Rosenwax, Michelle Warren,
 Danielle Heald, Geoff Slater
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However, Jerri didn't miss a beat and immediately took the newbie under her wing. She played with the little pup and seemed to take on a new lease on life even acting a little puppyish in her own play. Her tolerance has been amazing and it's like she understood this new addition to the household was a 'special needs' case and required 'dog guidance'. I was determined that Jerri was still going to receive the same amount of love and attention as always despite all the obvious distractions.

This is one reason why I take the girls out on separate morning walks and if I was to be really honest it's because I selfishly don't want to give up my one-on-one time with Jerri. The second walk is with little Lil and means she can be more focused on me and I on her. Her walk starts on a lead with basic training and then moves to games and social interactive play with other dogs in the park. But the most important walk of the day is reserved for Jerri--it's more like meditation for me as we quietly stroll together. It's a calm start to my day and I really look forward to my 'quiet' time with such a chilled and cheerful dog. You could say she's a little piece of zen in my day.

Another great thing about Jerri is that she's been the most robust and healthy dog I've ever known. Apart from one broken toe as a young thing, she's generally only visited the vet for her regular check-ups and vaccinations. So it was a surprise to get the news at her most recent health check that my lion-hearted dog has developed a murmur. The heart murmur is very new and it's come out of the blue as there was no tell-tale signs of a problem. As much as I hate to acknowledge it, she is a mature dog and is approaching the final years of her life. Perhaps it's fitting that this compassionate and affectionate dog's heart would start to show some wear and tear from the years of love she's lavished on us.

Oh, and how is Lilly? She's doing just fine.

Lisa Treen - Urban Animal Editor

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