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Tid Bits

By Michelle Padovan

Insurance that bites—dog owners hounded by new law

New dog owners in the Austrian capital of Vienna will be forced to take out liability insurance as of January 1, 2006. Known as Hundehaftpflichtversicherung (Pet liability insurance), policies must have a minimum coverage of 725,000 Euros (\$1,172,700 AUD) to cover legal fees, hospital or other costs arising from damage or injury caused by dogs. Even more of a bite is that those nabbed without insurance could be hurt with a fine-up to 3,500 Euros (\$5,670.00 AUD).

eBay decides not to be PetBay—Auction site receives negative feedback

Online auction site eBay has decided not to sell pets through their site. eBay's plans to open the live pets side of their site came to a grinding halt after receiving thousands of angry letters, emails and calls from concerned pet lovers. eBay has long banned the sale of live animals through its online auction site but had recently planned to add a classifieds section where they would offer free ads to shelters wanting to re-home animals and paid ads to breeders. Many users barked back with concerns that there could be no monitoring of whether the site would be unwittingly running ads from puppy mills or policing the legitimacy of shelters.

Border Puppy Task Force—puppy peddlers are being sniffed out

A new task force has been set up to combat the lucrative and cruel trade of puppy smuggling from Mexico to California. The Border Puppy Task Force is a group of 18 animal control, health and animal protection agencies that can inspect anything carrying feathers, fangs, fur and fleas across the US border. Unscrupulous smugglers are buying fashionable breeds like Poodles and Chihuahuas for as little as US\$50-\$150 and reselling them on the streets of Southern California for up to US\$1,000 (over \$1,350 AUD). The task force was set up after complaints from people who had bought pets only to discover that many were sick and in need of veterinary attention—common diseases included distemper, ringworm, parvovirus and rabies. Searches have netted hundreds of puppies smuggled in seats and discovered in the trunks of vehicles. Border Puppy Task Force lacks bite though as no arrests have been made with authorities stating that this is 'census' to determine how many dogs are being smuggled across the border.

Pets get five star treatment, Tokyo style

Tokyo travellers can now treat their pets to luxury hotel accommodation. The Pet Inn Royal opened its doors to their furred clientele at Narita airport in December. It has 170 rooms—not kennels and can house up to 250 animals. It's not just for the dogs though—cats, ferrets, guinea pigs and rabbits are all catered for. Veterinary, clipping, grooming and exercise personnel are on hand 24 hours a day to attend to their guests' needs. All rooms are fitted with air purifiers and air conditioning but deluxe digs do not come cheap. A standard room is around 4,000 Yen (approx \$49 AUD) to 20,000 Yen (\$232 AUD) for a deluxe suite. Pet owners are encouraged to stay with their pets until their flights are called.

Year of the dog—mythical icon and menu item

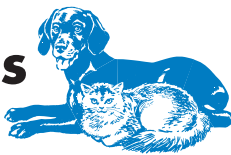
In the Chinese horoscope, 2006 is the year of the dog. People born in the year of the dog are described as loyal, discreet friends and make for excellent listeners. Dogs are energetic, can be brilliant business people and are happiest when either constructing or cleaning things up. Asian shamen believed that dogs lead the dead to the underworld. It was believed that after you die, a mythical dog would appear on a bridge and lead you to the afterlife. If you fall off that bridge you're brought back to life. In Korean folktales a white dog often appeared as a messenger for death. In recent times Korea has embraced the dog as a household pet with the Kennel Club of Korea estimating that there are 4,000 pet stores and 2,000 veterinary hospitals. Korea's canine cuisine tradition has sadly not disappeared with an estimated 5,000 restaurants serving dog meat.

Kitty and Canine Cashmere—a new spin on pet yarn

Wear your pet out, literally. A US based company can now arrange to have your pet's fur spun into fibre that can be knitted or crocheted. VIP Fibers also can arrange to have the knittable fibre into something as small as a teddy bear sweater to large items like blankets and their top product 'pet-able picture frames'. A vast majority of Victoria Pettigrew's customers have had their deceased pets' fur made into keepsakes. Happy customers include Chow Chow, Golden Retriever and Samoyed owners along with cat owners who've had a variety of items made—no testimonials from any Chinese Hairless Crested enthusiasts though.

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