# Podcast 16 - Pets in Australia

**by Rob McCormack - Thursday, June 06, 2013**

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**Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack**

*Podcast Number 16 – Pets in Australia*

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Hi,

Australians love their pets and that's how it is in our family. We have a Siamese cat named Cosmo and he's a great pet, even though he thinks he is the boss. He's 15 years old, which is old for a cat. We will be so sad when he finally leaves us.



Having a pet is quite common in Australia. Actually, there are estimated to be around 33 million pets in Australian households. This includes dogs, cats, birds, fish, reptiles (such as snakes and turtles), horses and small mammals (such as rabbits and Guinea Pigs). Dogs and cats are the most typical pets in Australia. About 36% of all households in Australia have a dog as a pet. That's 3.41 million dogs. About

23% of all households have a cat as a pet. That's 2.35 million cats. That's a lot of dogs and cats! We also spend a lot of money on our pets. For example, in 2009, we spent about $3.6 billion (yes, billion dollars) on our dogs to buy services and products for them. For cats, it was about $1.4 billion. So you can see that we really do love our pets.

Pets in Australia are quite well controlled. For example, in my part of Melbourne, you must register your dog or cat and pay a yearly fee to the local council. For dogs, it costs $128 per year and for cats it is $120 per year. However, you pay much less if your dog or cat is de-sexed. Cosmo has been de-sexed and therefore he only costs $28 per year to register. Dogs and cats must also be microchipped. This means that a small microchip, the size of a grain of rice, is put just under the skin at the back of the animal's neck. The chip has a number on it that is also stored on a computer database, together with the owner's details. The microchip and its number can be scanned by a special machine. If a pet becomes lost, the microchip can be scanned and the number can be read. It is then used to identify the animal and also who is their owner. It's a good system and helps keep down the number of stray cats and dogs.



You know, owning a pet is good for you. They make you happier. They make wonderful friends and companions. They help children learn to take responsibility for things and to care for their pet. These are useful skills to learn for later in life. For older people, having a pet helps to keep them active, provides companionship and also makes them feel safer in their homes. And of course your pet will still love you even if you are having a bad day.

Our pets also help to keep a lot of people in jobs. In 2009, it was estimated that around 48,000 people worked in the pet industry in Australia. This includes about 20,000 who worked in veterinary practices.

There are around 2,500 veterinary practices in Australia. These are places where you can take your pet if they are sick, or if they need a check up or a vaccination. We have a veterinary practice only a few minutes drive down the road.



They know our Cosmo well, as he has been a regular visitor, especially now that he is an old cat. He's had a few health problems in his life, that's for sure. For example, he was run over by a car when he was about 4 years old. His hip was badly dislocated and the vet had to operate. He had to remove the top part of Cosmo's right hip bone. Amazingly, he can still walk and run okay. But now that he is getting old, he gets arthritis in his joints quite badly. He has injections every 3 months to control the pain. He also has a problem with his blood and we have to give him special medicine every morning and every night. It is ointment which we put inside his ear. He costs us quite a bit of money, but we love him so we gladly pay it.

All he does all day is sleep, eat and sleep. Whenever he can, he loves to sit on someone's lap and go to sleep. I think he is one of the laziest cats in the world. But I guess all cats are the same. They say that a 15 year old cat is the same age as a 77 year old person. So he's pretty old. Maybe he's earned the right to sleep all day. He thinks he's the boss, so I won't argue with him.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it by clicking the comments link at the top of this story. You can leave your comment in English or in any language and I will translate it. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my slowenglish podcast. Perhaps you can suggest a topic for a future podcast. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 96]

**Vocabulary**

amazingly = when it is hard to believe

arthritis = a disease that causes pain in your joints

boss = the person who tells you what to do

companions = friends who are with you

computer database = the place where a computer stores its information

controlled = when someone tells you how it should be done

de-sexed = this means that the animal can no longer be a mother or a father

dislocated = when a joint gets out of place. For example, a hip joint

estimated = when you make a guess about something, when you don't know the exact number

households = a single family living together

industry = all those who are involved in a certain activity

lap = the top of your legs when you sit down

laziest = when someone does not want to do any work

local council = part of the government which controls the local area

mammals = animals who feed their young with their own milk

microchip = small electronic device to store information

ointment = a medicine which you put on the skin

operate = when a doctor (or vet) removes or repairs something in or on your body

owner's details = the information about the owner. For example, their name and address

products = things that are made which you buy

register = to give your details to be stored on a list, usually on a computer database

responsibility = when you take care of something and look after it

scanned = when the information is read by a machine

services = things someone does for you that are helpful

Siamese = a type of cat

stray = dogs or cats which have no owner

typical = something most often seen for a particular group

vaccination = when you are given a medicine which stops you from getting a sickness

veterinary practices = places where animals are treated by animal doctors (vets)

vets = doctors who treat animals

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