

## Pets are the new children

By Samantha Healy The Sunday Mail (Qld) November 08, 2009 04:15pm

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VETERINARY nurse Allison Andrewartha admits her pets are spoilt rotten.

"They are my fur kids. I don't deny it," Ms Andrewartha, 37, said.

Her "kids" include Neava, a seven-year-old husky, 12-year-old pomeranian Darth Vader, her three cats Ghost, 7, Bastet, 5, and Bobsy, 3, three birds, a snake and a tank full of fish.

"I have never been overly interested in kids, so they are my kids," she said.

"They are spoilt and run circles around me - but I wouldn't have it any other way."

Ms Andrewartha, who lives in Crestmead, is part of a growing trend of animal lovers who treat their pets as children, the *Sunday Mail* reports.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, pets are twice as common as children in Australian households, with 63 per cent of homes having a pet, compared with 33 per cent with children.

RSPCA community outreach co-ordinator Briony Gray, 25, is another dog lover who spares no expense to keep her pets happy.

When they are not sleeping in her bed, along with her partner Mark Style, 29, they have their own bedroom, complete with Sheridan sheets, down quilts, electric blankets, overflowing toy boxes and shelves full of books about dogs.

"They are my children. Each one of them has their own little personality. They are more like little humans to us," Ms Gray said.

Chihuahuas Pepe, 5, and Maxi, 2, and poodle cross Harry, 1, also go on "adventures with mum and dad", eat free-range meat and have birthday parties. Pepe even has her own Dogbook site, an application on Facebook.

"They depend on you so much for love and it brings me joy to make them happy," Ms Gray said.

"It probably sounds nuts but we love them so much."

Recent Galaxy Research, conducted for Purina pet food, found a strong trend towards "pet humanisation" - pet owners elevating their pets to human status.



Allison Andrewartha of Crestmead in Queensland with dogs Neava (left) and Darth Vader.

The survey found that pet owners worried about everything from their pets' moods to whether they had friends and if they were getting adequate play time.

Social demographer Bernard Salt said the trend was likely to continue.

"I would expect, as a result of our ageing population, divorce and more people living the single life longer, the indulgence of companion animals will continue to grow," Mr Salt said.

"Indulging our pets makes us feel good and with more DINKS (double income, no kids) households, people are looking for an outlet for love," he said.

## Comments on this story

*Colleen of Qld Posted at 5:51pm November 08, 2009*

Elevating pets to human status is a bit scary but I love my 2 dogs to bits but they are still dogs. I have no kids so they get spoilt rotten they come on holidays with us and god help any poor bugger that hurts either of them. They also have a laundry basket full of toys, 3 blankies, but they sleep on the floor, they do a little obedience when Mum is not busy. Equal amounts of spoilt and being a real dog so no one laughs too much at them and their friends don't call them sissies.

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