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Geelong cares for pets



Geelong dogs and cats have something to wag their tails or purr about after the release of figures by the RSPCA that show their owners are bucking a state-wide rise in abandoned pets.

A spokesman for the Victorian RSPCA says there has been a significant increase in people handing in their pets due to financial stress across the state's 11 animal shelters. During the 2007/08 period, 19,087 dogs and 17,870 cats were left at shelters throughout Victoria; 1692 more dogs and 3881 more cats than the previous year.

Geelong Animal Welfare Society president Dr Ian Walter says over the past 12 months there had been a decrease in the number of lost or abandoned dogs and cats. In 2007/08, 2856 dogs and 3401 cats were brought to the Moolap centre; for the financial year just finished the numbers were 2777 dogs and 3141 cats, nearly a 3 per cent decrease for dogs and 7 per cent

decrease for cats.

Dr Walter doesn't know why Geelong pet owners, and their pets, are faring better during the downturn, but was happy with the news, as well as figures that show more pets that find themselves at Society's shelter are being reunited with their owners.

"Three years ago, 40 percent of pets at the centre had to be put down, but that number has dropped to 25 to 30 per cent," he said. "There are a lot less dogs roaming around and getting injured now because of the tougher penalties for an unrestrained, unregistered animal, which is now \$500. Microchips have also helped."

The former vet also said that the number of pets being de-sexed has increased as councils offer lower registration rates over breeding animals. One year's registration for a de-sexed and microchipped dog costs \$26.50, and \$18 for a cat; dogs and cats who have avoided either procedure will cost their owners \$116.50 and \$88 respectively.

There are still a number of pets at the Geelong Animal Welfare Society looking for new homes and loving owners. Anyone with the means and commitment can contact the centre on 5248 2091.

By Ian Kenins.