



Sydney University Wildlife Health & Conservation Centre

Tid Bits

By Michelle Padovan

New Wildlife Centre opens its doors

The Sydney University has opened its doors to their new Wildlife Health and Conservation Centre at the Camden Campus. The Centre, which is the first of its kind in Australia will be one of the few University-based veterinary wildlife centres in the world.

The Centre is expected to have a profound influence on the research and treatment of Australian wildlife—both native and exotic within the Asian region. It will also house a clinic for the treatment of reptiles, birds and exotic animals and it has already treated its first patients.

There is a growing awareness within the general and scientific communities, both in Australia and overseas, of the urgent need to conserve and protect our unique native animals. It is planned that the Centre will be a world class scientific, teaching and veterinary medical centre devoted solely to the health, welfare and conservation of native fauna. The Centre was made possible through funding of almost \$2.2 million from the federal government's Sustainable Regions Program to the University of Sydney Veterinary Science Foundation.

All dogs are created equal, well almost

From the giant Wolfhound to the feisty little Chihuahua, all dogs are brothers under the skin. Now, researchers have uncovered a reason why the animals wearing that skin vary so much in size. Because dogs have the largest variation in body size of any land animal, researchers at the US National Human Gene Research Institute decided to probe the reasons why.

A total of 21 researchers studied over 3,200 dogs from a staggering 143 breeds—from the tiniest tea-cup Poodle and Pug to more gargantuan breeds like the Newfoundland and Saint Bernard. Their research found a section of DNA that varied, and in essence, controls size in dogs.

Zoos can be hazardous places

A spate of accidents in zoos across the globe is a sobering reminder that animal handlers are dealing with wild and potentially dangerous animals

At the Denver Zoo last February, an employee died from a broken neck after being mauled by a jaguar. Earlier this month, Taiwanese zookeeper Chang Po-yu is lucky to have a forearm re-attached following an encounter with a crocodile.

Also in April, a giant anteater at an Argentinean zoo fatally shredded the abdomen and legs of its handler. On April 20, a pride of lions killed South African game reserve owner Dirk Brink after he stepped out of his vehicle.

And in Tennessee, the Knoxville and Nashville zoos are trying to get a bill passed so that they can serve alcohol for special events. This has come under fire from family groups who believe that American zoos should be alcohol free zones.



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New Zealand based winery, Coopers Creek, have a selection of wine with a cunning feline marketing edge. There's the Pinot Nior called Glamour Puss, a twitchy Merlot by the name of Tom Cat, a robust Chardonnay aptly titled Fat Cat and a Sav Blanc with the curious name of Cat's Pee on a Gooseberry Bush.

The later term came from renowned wine writer Jancis Robinson, when in the early eighties, she claimed that young New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc was like cat's pee on a gooseberry bush. The Managing director for Coopers Creek seized this marketing opportunity and promptly had a label made up. The other cat inspired varieties followed.

Something for all cat lovers to wine about

Denver 'Pit Bull' owners sue

The city of Denver has given 'Pit Bull' owners a choice—either leave town or have your dog put down. A staggering 1,100 dogs have been seized and killed under the law which went into effect early in 2005. Denver's controversial bill applies to any dog that looks like a Pit Bull—whether or not it has the American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier or the Staffordshire Bull Terrier breed in its genetic make-up. Not surprisingly, three dog owners have filed a federal lawsuit challenging this ban and it is expected more will follow suit. Denver's ban applies to any dog that looks like the breed and does not take into consideration the animal's actual behaviour or temperament.

Prozac goes to the dogs

The makers of Prozac have launched an antidepressant for dogs. The once-a-day, beef flavoured, chewable will be known as Reconcile and is now available in the United States. The makers say that it is best used on dogs suffering separation anxiety from being left alone for long periods of time. It can be used on puppies as young as six months old and should be used in conjunction with therapy to modify behaviour.

Side effects can include, vomiting, diarrhoea, anorexia, barking and fits. Which begs the question, what's wrong with good old-fashioned therapy in the form of boredom buster toys, long daily walks, play and plenty of hugs?

Parrots are into name calling

Researchers at Germany's University of Hamburg have documented that some species of parrots give their offspring individual 'names' in the form of a distinctive call that differs from other chicks. The research found that mother birds were able to call their chicks and the distinctive cry immediately resulted in the baby returning to the nest, even responding over a cacophony of parrot calls.

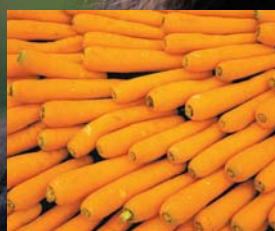
Kosovo dog cull has dog lovers angry

Kosovo authorities are offering a bounty to cull the growing number of stray dogs that roam the streets. They're offering 7.5 euros a tail for each dog killed. The dogs—many of them former pets abandoned during the brief late nineties war—roam around urban centres. Local authorities estimate the rapidly growing number of strays at 30,000 in a tiny province of only two million people.

In cash-strapped Kosovo, the hunts have won backing from concerned locals since funding is lacking for more 'humane' methods, such as neutering then releasing stray dogs.

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