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Animal Crackers

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Wildlife Pets

Trade in wildlife pets, helped by the Internet, has become a multi-million-dollar illegal business. It is reported that 352,000 species are traded. No federal laws prohibit ownership of exotic pets, although regulations are in place for animal wholesalers and retailers, transportation companies, and animal exhibitors. Thirteen states—Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming—prohibit keeping dangerous wildlife as pets. The definition of “dangerous” varies from state to state. In some states, it includes nonhuman primates, large carnivores, and venomous reptiles. In others, it may mean only large felids. A federal act restricts the importation and transportation of wildlife deemed injurious to humans, agriculture, horticulture, or forestry. Some of the “injurious” species are flying fox, meerkat, mongoose, raccoon dog, or brown tree snake. There also are restrictions on primates, turtles under four inches long, bats, civets, some Asian birds, and tenrecs (which can transmit foot-and-mouth disease).

An important consideration is the possibility of disease that might be transmitted to humans, other pets, or agricultural animals by a bite or contact. People owning nontraditional pets are often unable to meet the animal’s nutritional, housing, social, and behavioral need. Many captive wild animal pets are abandoned when they mature and become harder to manage. Accidentally released pets may thrive and cause damage to native wildlife.

Animal Welfare

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has adopted a position statement on tail docking of cattle. “The AVMA opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons. When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be done by licensed veterinarians.”

The AVMA also supports the concept of early (prepubertal, eight to 10 weeks of age) spay/neuter in dogs and cats in an effort to reduce the number of unwanted animals of these species. Veterinarians should use their best medical judgment on deciding at what age spay/neuter should be performed on individual animals.

AVMA is opposed to the removal or reduc-



Veterinary School Dean Rush Shippen Huidekoper in a Muybridge study.

tion of canine teeth in non-human primates or exotic and wild carnivores except when required for medical treatment or approved scientific research. To minimize bite wounds, recommended alternatives to dental surgery include behavioral modification, environmental enrichment, and changes in group composition.

Breed Popularity

A study to determine whether winning best in show at the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is associated with a subsequent increase in popularity was published recently in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. The study used numbers of purebred puppies registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC). The results did not support the view that there is a surge in popularity of winning breeds. It is suggested however, that in the future, high-profile televised dog shows may have a significant influence on breed popularity.

In a few instances, booms in registrations of certain breeds have been linked to media exposure such as occurred following the 1996 movie *101 Dalmatians*, when registrations of dalmatians increased from 6,800 to 42,816. This popularity was short-lived—registrations decreased to 1,112 in 2003.

Only purebred dogs registered with the AKC may compete at their championship shows. At the present time, there are 153 AKC-registered breeds, with more being added as they become established in this country.

Many mixed-breed dogs may be wonderful pets. One that is increasingly popular is the labradoodle. It was developed in Australia and is said to combine the non-shedding, allergy-

friendly coat and high IQ of the poodle with the gentle, eager-to-please temperament of the Labrador retriever. These dogs have become a very expensive fad and one can only hope that people will not tire of the dogs and give them up to a shelter. There is no established standard. It is conceivable that these dogs may become an officially recognized breed, but this will take many years.

The advantage of having a purebred dog is that it has a history and breed standard. One can do research before purchasing to determine which is the right breed. A breed may be energetic, sedate, extroverted, or prefer the fellowship of one or two familiar faces. Unfortunately, many people purchase a puppy on impulse, without considering eventual size, appearance, and personality.

Eadweard Muybridge

Eadweard Muybridge, born Edward James Muggeridge in 1830, in England, has been called the father of motion pictures. In 1878, using 12 tripwired cameras, he produced pictures showing that all four feet of a galloping horse may be off the ground at once. Leland Stanford, the railroad tycoon, owned the horse and track in Palo Alto, California. It is said that this was done to settle a \$25,000 wager Stanford had made.

In 1879 Muybridge invented the “zoopraxiscope,” which projected sequential stop-action photographs onto a screen, creating an illusion of movement. He toured with the device in England and France, returning to the United States in 1883. He pursued his motion studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His studio was set up at the Veterinary School at 36th and Pine Streets. The courtyard was the venue where humans and some of the animals were photographed. A tall board fence was erected for privacy. His subjects were humans, nude or draped. They were depicted in many activities—walking, running, horseback riding, etc. Athletes were depicted playing baseball and cricket and more. Artisans were shown shoeing a horse, farming, and laying bricks. Birds and animals were photographed at the Philadelphia Zoo. It was discovered that a pigeon flaps its wings 600 times in a minute.

These photographs were published in an 1887 work, *Animal Locomotion*, 100,000 photographs in 11 volumes. His book, *The Human Figure in Motion*, was published in 1901. The photographs opened the eyes of artists and scientists to the mechanics of movement.