

## Study: Pet owners score low on caring

November, 15, 2004, Albany, NY---FIREPAW, Inc., a national research and education foundation focusing on animal welfare recently conducted a study on the controversial "owner" versus "guardian" issue. The study was funded by California-based In Defense of Animals, well known for spearheading the Guardian Campaign, a movement to change terminology for pet-keeping from "owner" to "guardian". The study focused on measuring the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of those animal caregivers who consider themselves "guardians" and those who consider themselves their pets' "owners". The results of the national study showed that compared to other groups, pet owners scored significantly lower on the treatment of and caring for their pets, their attitudes about their pets, and their beliefs about companion animals in general. The results of this research study statistically demonstrated distinct differences between pet owners and guardians in terms of the way they thought about and behaved toward their companion animals. Additionally, there emerged statistically significant differences between these two groups in their responses to the perceived benefits and shortcomings of changing terminology from companion animal "owner" to "guardian." Additional insights were uncovered for those animal caretakers "on the fence", reporting that they considered themselves to be *both* "owners" and "guardians" (reported here as "Hybrids"). FIREPAW President Dr. Pamela Frank said, "We know historically that language affects our perceptions and eventually, behavior. From this perspective the results are promising for companion animals living in the U.S."

### *Summary of Findings: Treatment of Companion Animals*


Treatment	Owners	Guardians	Hybrids
Spay-neuter at least one of their pets	69.1%	92.6%	95.5%
Lost a pet in the past two years	30.9%	15.5%	11.4%
Register their pets	67.3%	91.8%	94.6%
Relinquished a pet due to personal or family problems	33.8%	18.6%	27.3%
Identification for pets (ID tag, tattoo, microchip, etc.)	55.9%	69.9%	79.5%
Permit pets to live indoors with the rest of the family	76.5%	97.4%	97.7%
Celebrate pets' birthdays	26.5%	61.7%	56.8%
Give gifts to pets	48.5%	80.8%	77.3%
Include pets' names on greeting cards w/ other family members	29.4%	69.4%	65.9%
Include pets' pictures in family photo album	65.6%	93.6%	87.8%
Takes pets along on family outings, walks, picnics, vacations, etc.	52.9%	76.2%	79.6%
Show affection towards pets more than once a day	38.2%	65.8%	63.6%

### *Summary of Findings: Attitudes about the family pet*

Attitude	Owners	Guardians	Hybrids
Satisfied with their pets	82.4%	95.3%	90.9%
View their pets as full-fledged members of the family	86.8%	99.0%	100%
View their pets as property	80.9%	10.4%	52.3%
Attached to their pets	76.5%	99.0%	100%
Identify with their pets/can relate to their pets	70.6%	96.9%	95.4%

*All results were statistically significant*

For a copy of the full Summary Report of the Guardian-Owner Study contact the authors at: [info@firepaw.org](mailto:info@firepaw.org).


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