

# **Pet PEP—The Pets and People Education Program**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Eleven years ago, PetPEP began as an ambitious vision to stimulate an interest in animals and impart principles of care and responsibility to the next generation of pet owners.

The Australian Veterinary Association continued this initiative with the final resource being developed jointly by vets and teachers. The original material, consisting of a comprehensive teacher's resource book, was distributed widely to primary schools throughout Australia. In 1999 the material was re-written and updated to produce the current edition, which meets national school curriculum requirements

## **HOW DOES PETPEP WORK?**

PetPEP is more than just a text resource. It is a network of teachers, schools, vets and community groups such as the RSPCA and Local Councils, all working together to bring responsible pet ownership messages to children in a positive environment. It is run by the Australian Veterinary Association to ensure that educational needs are met and that information is consistent and accurate.

PetPEP's main strength is achieved through teachers utilising the teacher's resource book to integrate responsible pet care messages into different areas of their curriculum.

Throughout the PetPEP program there exists opportunities for teachers to invite guest speakers to their classroom. Historically, this has been local veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses as the local professionals in animal care. More recently this has been extended to include RSPCA representatives and Local Council Officers in Queensland. These classroom visits and activities such as Pet Expos enhance children's understanding of the PetPEP message.

## **“ME & MY PET” NATIONAL SCHOOLS COMPETITION**

A major focus for 2002 is the national “Me and My Pet” Competition. Winners will receive great pet-related prizes for themselves and their schools. The national winners in each category will win “Lunch with Dr. Katrina Warren - celebrity vet from ‘Harry’s Practice’” in Sydney!

The competition actively aims to increase exposure of PetPEP to all primary schools nationally and be a catalyst for schools to link with their local veterinary practice and other pet professionals in their community. In September, all primary schools will receive an information pack including a detailed information sheet on administering the competition, posters and certificate templates.

## **HOW DO I BECOME INVOLVED?**

The Australian Veterinary Association has established 1800 AVA PET (1800 282 738) to support teachers, vets and other interested participants nationally, regardless of location. They can call this number to speak with one of the PetPEP Education Officers. For more localized support, Caitlyn Feldmann is Queensland/ Northern Territory Education Officer and Michelle Lee covers New South Wales and ACT. It is within the strategic plan to also increase local support to other states. Kate Perkins is the National Coordinator and her charter is to develop and implement the strategic plan for the overall progression of PetPEP and provide support and cohesion to the Australian Veterinary Association's Divisional Education Officers.

As the founder of PetPEP, I encourage you to become involved with this worthwhile program to help educate our pet owners of the future.