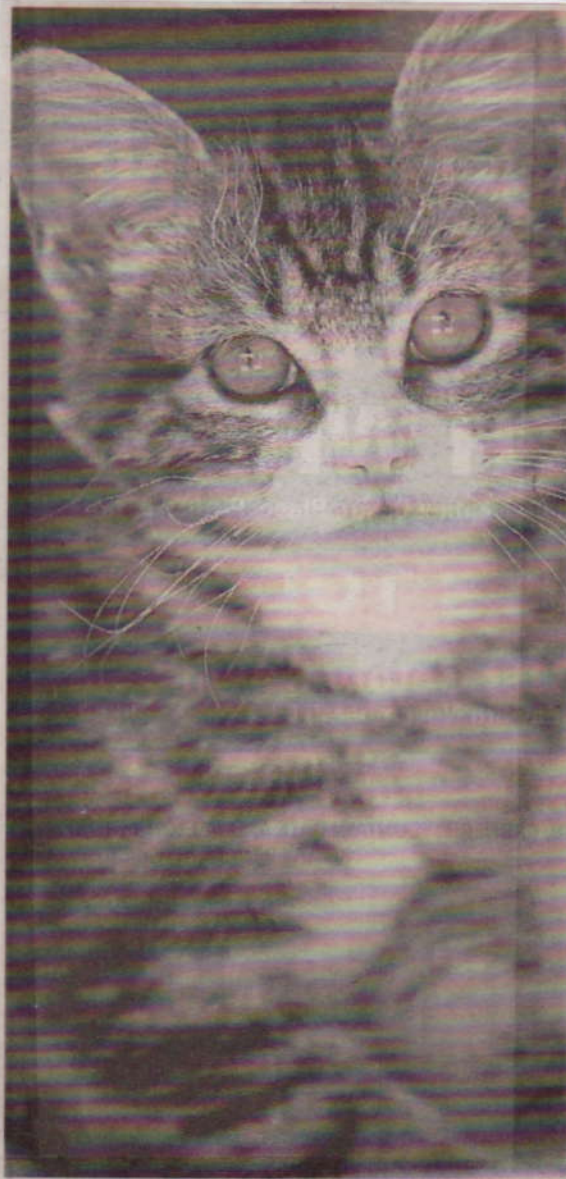


Fighting like CATS and DOGS



Kelly Ryan

DOG lovers are howling with delight while hissy cat fanciers have their claws out over a new book set to divide Australia's millions of passionate pet owners.

Why Dogs Are Better Than Cats is likely to send the fur flying when it hits bookstores this week.

Among his many controversial boasts on behalf of canines, best-selling Australian author Bradley Trevor Greive claims dogs are social while cats are sociopaths; dogs teach us patience while cats test it; and dogs match up to people while people must match up to cats.

Claiming not to hate cats, Greive says a simple difference between the animals is that dogs want love while cats want fish.

A supposedly humorous coffee table book that does not aim to demonise finicky felines features one photograph of a cute pup with the headline, "For the record, dogs are inherently good." An alien-looking cat sporting devil horns on the opposite page claims: "Cats are something else entirely."

The book's release continues the centuries-old division between animal lovers about whether dogs make better pets than cats.

Australia, like much of the western world, is a nation of animal lovers and pet owners.

But dogs do outnumber cats, in terms of registered ownership at least, with about four million dogs nationwide compared to 2.4 million cats.

Victoria is home to about a quarter of them, with about one million canines and 600,000 pussies.

But the statistics are very different internationally.

Domestic cats are said to outnumber dogs by about 200 million. China has about 30 million cats and the USA 20 million.

Cat Protection Society chief executive Carole Webb said the independent umpire had spoken and cats were better than dogs.

"They won the 2009 Grand Final premiership flag for starters," Dr Webb said.

"There is a saying that cats have staff and dogs have masters and that just proves that cats are smarter at getting what they want from life.

"They are cleaner animals than dogs — you've never heard of anyone being fined because their cat has littered or left its mark on the nature-strip and they groom their own coats without having to be regularly bathed.

"Unlike dogs, cats are quiet and peaceful. Have you ever heard of a cat being subject of a barking complaint?

"They are also safer than dogs because there is no need for dangerous cat laws."

Dr Webb said she had not — and would not — read the book because she knew from experience that cats were better than dogs.

"There are dog people and there are cat people, and I think to tackle the subject in

such a way is confrontational and sensationalist," she said.

She said living arrangements often prevented people

owning dogs. Cats made wonderful companion animals for them instead.

"Cats are more economical because they eat less and they are a far preferable pet for the elderly or disabled who might not be able to manage the more physical demands of having a dog," she said.

"Cats don't need to be leashed and taken for walks and they don't slobber. And there are few things in life more pleasurable than having a purring cat sitting contentedly on your lap."

Full interview in Weekend