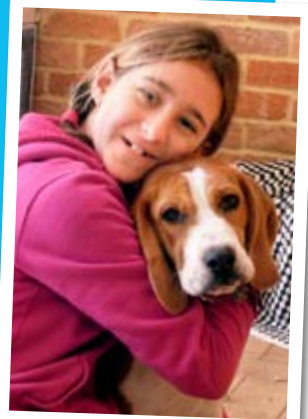


For the latest on
pets, don't miss
New Idea
WEEKDAYS
AT 3PM



PET CORNER

This is our 10-month-old beagle Jake who loves playing with his tarpaulin, chasing birds and eating inedible objects. Whenever Jake wants something, he looks at us with those irresistible big, brown melting eyes – and he usually succeeds.
KATIE GARNER, WA.



If your photo of you and your pet is chosen for Pet Corner, you'll win \$100 worth of Vetalogica products (please state if you would prefer cat or dog-related goods). For more information on Vetalogica's new range of products for dogs and cats, please call their pet healthcare hotline on 1300 881 730 or you can visit www.vetalogica.com.au.



Caring for the animals

Actor Bryan Wiseman's foster scheme means pets are looked after even if their owners aren't around

There's some heavy petting going on at actor Bryan Wiseman's house – with six dogs, three cats, six ducks, 20 frogs, a rabbit, an aviary full of birds and a disabled ferret currently in his care.

The former *Home And Away* star has become an unofficial foster father for much-loved animals whose elderly owners can no longer look after them, due to illness or changed circumstances.

'Old people who have to go into nursing homes or hospitals are often most worried that their cherished pet is being well-fed and loved,' says Bryan, 40, who played Dr John Wilson on the top-rating soap for four years.

'Every year hundreds of animals whose owners have died, or are too sick and old to care for them, are surrendered to animal shelters, where they usually have to be put down. It breaks your heart.'

Bryan's mercy mission started in 1998, when a good friend was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer and asked him to look after her dog and cat.

Since then, he's played surrogate parent to dozens of creatures – most bizarrely, three eels befriended by an old fisherman and a particularly foul-mouthed cockatoo.

It's a labour of love for big-hearted Bryan, who nursed his mother at home

in Sydney's southern suburbs for 20 years after she was felled by a stroke, aged 60, in 1988.

'If I can find good permanent homes for the animals, I adopt them out,' he explains, surrounded by his mini-menagerie. 'But if that proves impossible, of course they end up staying here and become part of my family.'

'I love them all, but it's time-consuming and very expensive – although the local vet gives me a substantial discount – because I get all the dogs and cats de-sexed.'

'To be honest, I just can't take any more animals. I need other volunteers to help me save these poor creatures and alleviate a huge concern for their elderly, sick owners.'

At present, Bryan's foster-care scheme runs on a word-of-mouth basis in his local area. But the need is national and it's growing with Australia's ever-greying population.

If you can do anything to help, please email Bryan at bryanwiseman@aol.com. **NI**

By Jenny Brown

Main photo: Nigel Wright

• Carers Week is October 18 to 24. Visit www.carersweek.com.au for event details.



Bryan starred alongside Kate Ritchie as *Home And Away's* Dr John Wilson.