

# First pet show a hit

*Critters, products draw thousands to convention centre*



MANUEL F. SOUSA PHOTOS

An estimated 6,000 people took in the first Winnipeg Pet Show, where they could get up close and personal with ferrets (above left) and a Dumeril's boa constrictor (above right).

By Alan Small

**T**HERE were furry pets and feathery pets and scaly pets and even creepy, crawly pets. Around the corner there were veterinarians, pet photographers, groomers and people selling pet health-insurance. The RBC Convention Centre was transformed Saturday and Sunday into a paradise for animals and pet lovers, thanks to the first Winnipeg Pet Show. And if the show's popularity is any indication, it will likely become a fixture on the Winnipeg event calendar. "It's awesome," said Prairie Exotics' Steve Rempel, who chatted with a reporter while a small ball python draped itself around his neck. "Even for adults and seniors, they get to see

something they're not used to seeing." Among those animals few had ever seen before proved to be one of the stars of the weekend: Phoebe is a Dumeril's boa constrictor that would be at least two metres long if it ever decided to stop curling itself around people's necks and arms while they posed with it for photographs. The snake species normally calls the African island of Madagascar home, but Phoebe was born in captivity here in Canada, said Rempel. During a presentation to curious on-lookers, he recommended people who are interested in purchasing an exotic pet to get one born in captivity instead of getting one plucked from the wild. Prairie Exotics had turtles, tortoises, lizards and pythons, not to mention a tarantula, geckos and a very calm

iguana on display. Rempel used to work with Microsoft, but after getting laid off decided to turn his hobby of caring for reptiles into a career, he said. "It's a lot of poop," he admitted, but added there are plenty of benefits when owning an exotic animal. "The more you socialize (with snakes) the friendlier they get." Another friendly critter at the pet show was Fred the ferret at the Manitoba Ferret Association booth. Like reptiles, ferrets aren't for everyone, said Adrienne Van Loon, who was holding the cuddly 30-centimetre-long furball. "We try to hit all the pet shows we can to give people information, not necessarily try to give ferrets away," she said. Count Van Loon as one of those who

can't get enough of ferrets. She used to have six ferrets in her home in Starbuck, but the animals usually live only six to eight years. Her last one died in the spring — adrenal disease is a major medical concern for ferrets, she said — and she's been ferret-sitting for other owners while she decides whether to get back into ownership. "The last one was tough, but that is part of owning a pet — you own it for life," Van Loon said. "I wouldn't trade it for anything." She enjoyed checking out the wide variety of animals on display at the pet show when she wasn't letting people in on the lives of ferrets, she said. "I like all the dogs and everything, but I still come back to my furrries." The big crowds were polite and respectful of the animals, said Sher-

rie Sparling, of Skyhaven Shetland Sheepdogs near Ile des Chênes. "The weekend has been fantastic," said Sparling, who along with her 11-year-old Sheltie, Player, represented the Manitoba Working and Herding Association on Sunday. "People have been very responsible, especially the children. Almost without exception, the children have asked if they could pet the dogs first." Sheri Rheubottom of Showtime Productions, which organized the pet show, said about 6,000 people attended the event over the two days. "We were really happy with the turnout," Rheubottom said. "It was a fun weekend, but exhausting." **alan.small@freepress.mb.ca**  
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## pets of the week

Have you got a favourite pet picture and story to share with us? We'd love to see it. We'll be publishing our pets of the week every Tuesday on this page. We'll also feature a gallery of your photos on the website at [winnipegfreepress.com](http://winnipegfreepress.com). Email your photos and story, including your pet's name and age, to [readerpix@freepress.mb.ca](mailto:readerpix@freepress.mb.ca).



**Tessa**

My darling rescue dog Tessa watching to see if any rabbits are taking a chance coming into the backyard.  
— June Striefler



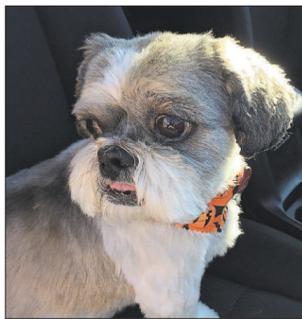
**Jazmyn Root**

Jazmyn Root is our 10-week-old puppy adopted from Norway House Animal Rescue. We have had her for five weeks now, and she is such a wonderful addition to our family. She loves to roll in the mud and play fetch. We are working on her potty-training, and she is training us at bedtime.  
— Cheryl Sinclair



**Chester**

This may look like a cat curled up on a cuddly blanket, but that's our girl Chester (13 years old) between her Bichon brother Sydney (13 years old) on the left, and her sister Alice (11 years old) on the right. We got Chester and her cat sister Orca (who's shy and not in the picture) at the same time from the Humane Society. On the same weekend, Sydney came along, and two years later, Alice. Not hard to see they're spooning buddies.  
— Gale M'Lot



**Oscar**

With Halloween coming this Saturday, Oscar decided it was time for a haircut.  
— Hugh Tibbs



**Bernard 366596**

Have you ever seen such an interesting coat pattern on a dog? If not, you should meet Bernard. He has the coolest combo of long and short fur with lovely colours. Just look at the neat 'mask' on his face! Now that you're keen to meet him, you should come on over and say hello! He is quite a friendly fellow and a bit energetic. He'll do better in a home without other dogs and some obedience classes will help him to improve his manners. He is such a smart dog eager to learn more tricks. Visit him today!

Don't miss the 22nd Annual Bow Wow Ball on Saturday, November 14, 2015 at The Fairmont Winnipeg Hotel! This year's theme is "Catsablanca" and it will be a memorable evening. Reserve your tickets now to join us for an evening of dinner, dancing, live and silent auctions, excitement, and intrigue. For more information visit our website: [www.winnipeghumanesociety.ca](http://www.winnipeghumanesociety.ca)

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