PETS 03/22/2017 L. ERICKSON

 The number of people who own pets in the U.S. continues to rise. And, they are spending a record amount of money on those pets. According to research, the market for pet products and services is estimated at $67.5 billion. Lisa Erickson has the story.

MP3 RUNS 1:15 O/C: …FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE

LISA ERICKSON: MANY LOCAL STORES THAT SELL PET SUPPLIES AND VETERINARIAN CLINICS ARE SEEING A RISE IN PET PURCHASES AND UNUSUAL PET TRENDS. A CERTIFIED VETERINARY TECHNICIAN FOR KINNIC VETERINARIAN SERVICE IN RIVER FALLS, AUDREY SCHALLA-PICH (SHALLA-PICK), SPOKE WITH ME IN A PHONE INTERVIEW.

AUDREY SCHALLA-PICH: “THIS YEAR WE HAVE SEEN LOT MORE NEW CLIENTS THAN WE HAVE IN THE PAST. FROM JANUARY TO MARCH EVEN A LITTLE BIT INTO LAST YEAR. A LOT OF PEOPLE CONSIDER THEIR PETS AS THEIR CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY DON’T HAVE CHILDREN. THEY DO A LOT MORE SPENDING—TOYS. JUST LIKE THEIR HEALTH CARE. THEY’VE GOT THE DOGGY STROLLER AND THE CLOTHES.”

LISA ERICKSON: DR. BETH RAUSCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-RIVER FALLS, WHO SPECIALIZES IN COMPANION ANIMALS AND MIXED PRACTICE, SAYS SHE HAS SEEN AN INCREASE NOT ONLY IN PET OWNERSHIP, BUT ALSO INTEREST IN DEGREES THAT WORK WITH ANIMALS. I CAUGHT UP WITH HER IN A PHONE CALL.

BETH RAUSCH: “THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF US. BUT, I THINK THE RECENT EXPLOSION IN PET KEEPING AND COMPANION ANIMAL KEEPING REALLY CONNECTED TO GETTING BACK TO WHAT MAKES US HUMAN AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.”

LISA ERICKSON: “DR. RAUSCH SAYS DOGS IN PARTICULAR HAVE BEEN A HUGE PART OF OUR HUMAN EVOLUTION AND PEOPLE WANT TO GET BACK TO A DEEPER CONNECTION WITH THEM. THE PROGRAM PROVIDES COMPANION ANIMAL MAJORS WITH HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES. I’M LISA ERICKSON FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE.”

 Even though the number of pet owners is rising across the U.S., the city of River Falls may not be seeing the same trend. In fact, the number of people purchasing a dog license has been going down for the last three years in a row. Officials say many people don’t know they need a permit to own a dog in River Falls

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