

# In nature, Foster photographs pets at their best

Alice Ann Dabin has grown weary of the photo shoot. The first-time model posed beautifully for the first 15 minutes.

Photographer Peggy Foster lies on her stomach on the ground holding up items that might interest Alice Ann.

The model ignores the squeaky mouse. She yawns at the baby rattle.

Finally, Foster whips out a stuffed snake.

Alice Ann pricks up her ears. Click. Foster gets the shot.

The world of pet photography isn't glamorous photo shoots in exotic locations with trained models. Usually, it's a time-consuming process in an animal's backyard waiting and hoping the model will cooperate.

Foster has been a pet photographer for 10 years. She's the only name listed in the Real Yellow Pages under pet photography. Anyone who has tried to take a perfect shot of his pet only to have it make a beeline for you and your camera, understands how difficult pet photography can be.

Foster's career in pet photography began when she used to photograph horses at horse shows with her now ex-husband. She used to snap pictures of horse owners' dogs and cats that would also be at the show.

"I've always loved dogs," Foster said. "If you looked at my grandmother's encyclopedia set, the D book is worn out because I was always studying the dogs."

She also hated seeing the cheesy shots of animals sitting in a studio with a fake background or some other unnatural shot. "Animals look best in nature," Foster said. "Most people don't realize how wonderful their backyard can be for a photo shoot."

She prefers to do the work at the animal's house because she



**CINDY WOLFF**  
Pet Scoop

wants the animal to be relaxed. For some animals, the only time they ride in the car is when they go to the veterinarian, which usually upsets them.

It's tricky to get an animal to sit still for a photo session, but Foster said it's not impossible. She usually enlists the owner, who is just outside the photo frame, to persuade the animal to be still. She carries a bag of toys and gadgets to get the animal's attention.

"I'll usually get their attention when they hear the rewind sound coming from my camera. I've thought about recording that sound so I'm not sitting there with my film all gone when the shot comes."

One of her biggest challenges was getting a litter of seven Doberman pinscher puppies to hold still for a photo shoot. She finally put them on a wrought iron bench, which limited their wiggle room. The owners were on each side of the bench.

"The best shot was when Norman (one of the puppies) lay down on the bench and his sister, who was sitting up like the other good puppies, looked down at him. It added some character to the shot."

That picture eventually made it to a 1997 calendar filled with Dobermans.

It usually takes Foster about an hour for a photo shoot. First, the animal has to get used to her being there. She also has to



By Peggy Foster

Wriggling increases exponentially as seven Doberman pinscher pups pose for Peggy Foster, who specializes in catching their attention on film. Tanja Todd and Allan Kellum own the pups.

find a safe spot for her camera bag because male dogs will urinate on it.

Often she'll let her subjects choose the spot they want to sit. She'll move her equipment to the cat tucked in the flower bush or the dog sitting under a tree.

She's done family portraits with humans and pets for Christmas cards and annual birthday portraits of pets.

"Some people want a picture every year, just like they do with children," Foster said. "They always call me when they (the pets) die to let me know and to tell me how much

the pictures mean to them. That's what matters."

Foster charges \$35 for a sitting fee. Portraits start at \$25 for a 5-by-7 and go up to \$95 for a 16-by-20. To contact Foster, call 324-7695.

## License plate delay

People who ordered an animal-friendly license plate for their car will have to wait a few months before they claim their plate.

It's taking the state longer than expected to print the plates, said Donna Deweese, one of the developers of the

new specialty plate.

About 620 license plates have been sold, well over the 500 required by the state to activate the plates. People who didn't pre-order the plates will be able to select it when their old plate is up for renewal.

People who pre-ordered will receive a letter from the Shelby County Clerk's office notifying them when the plates are ready to be picked up.

Proceeds from the plate will go to state highway projects, the Tennessee Arts Commission and a new fund created for grants for spay/neuter programs throughout the state.

## Run, Weenies, run

Pet lovers will get a chance today to watch dachshunds race, adopt a homeless dog or remember a pet that has died.

The Germantown Animal Shelter will host the 1999 Running of the Weenies Race at 3 p.m. today at Germantown Horse Show Arena.

Dachshunds also compete in a Best Dressed Hot Dog contest at 2:30 p.m.

The Responsible Animal Owners of Tennessee will hold a dog adoption 1-4 p.m. today at SuperPetz, 6208 Stage, Bartlett. It costs \$70 to adopt the dogs, which have been spayed/neutered, are taking heartworm preventative and are current on their vaccinations.

Dixie Memorial Pet Cemetery is hosting National Pet Memorial Day. An open house is set for 2-5 p.m. today. A candlelight memorial service will be held at 7 p.m. The event is open to anyone who wants to spend some time remembering a pet that has died. The pet cemetery is in Millington at 7960 Epperson Mill Road.

## Doggy auditions

Dogs with a special talent can audition 1-5 p.m. Saturday at Agricenter International to be in the St. Jude Showcase of Dogs there Oct. 16-17. Proceeds from the showcase will benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. To register your dog for the audition, call 373-8078.

Reporter Cindy Wolff, owner of two spoiled dogs, can be reached at 529-5220 or E-mail wolff@gomemphis.com

Send letters to The Commercial Appeal, 495 Union Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38103.