



The African Tails 2010 calendar aims to raise funds for mass sterilisations to curb the overpopulation of neglected dogs. As the cost of living rapidly rises, more and more pet owners are handing over their animals to shelters.

Dogs too, feel the recession's bite as owners desert pets

LOUISE PORTER.

PEOPLE aren't the only ones suffering through the recession – family pets are increasingly receiving the short end of the stick. With the rising cost of living, home owners are relinquishing dogs to shelters or abandoning them to fend for themselves.

Nothing is more distressing than to see a neglected dog, trying to fight for its survival. One organisation, African Tails, is trying to do something about it and has released a calendar in time for Christmas to raise funds to support their animal outreach programme.

Yael Fialkov, spokesman for African Tails said that the organisation's main aims were to rescue, sterilise and care for neglected street dogs in the Du Noon and Joe Slovo informal settlements of Cape Town.

"We are hoping that by highlighting the huge challenges in these areas, caring people will be encouraged to extend the programme to other parts of the country."

Fialkov said that South Africa was not alone and that according to figures from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) 57 percent more animals were abandoned in the UK last year than in 2007. Since the launch of African Tails in 2006, the charity has sterilised over 700 dogs. It feeds 150 a day and has homed over 200.

"We have had an increased volume of calls over recent months from pet owners who, in these tough economic times, can no longer afford to support their dogs," said Fialkov.

"Unfortunately, owners have been forced to give their pets up for adoption and have asked African Tails to care for and rehome their animals.

"We urge homes not to abandon their dogs but rather to call their closest animal rescue organisation that can responsibly rehome their dogs."

Among the success stories, is Phoenix, a German Shepherd rehomed to South African motivation trainer, Jason Hartsliel.

"When Phoenix was found on the side of the road," said Hartsliel "he was skin and bone, only weighting 11kg and had a broken leg – we couldn't even decipher what breed he was.

Rehabilitation

"African Tails made his total rehabilitation possible and we decided to give Phoenix a home. In the early days, he was too shy to look us in the eye... today he's lived up to his name and grown into a big strong dog who's our friend and protector.

"He's my little girl's best friend, we really have come to love him, and he seems to know that he's got a second chance at life."

Pedigree has agreed to support African Tails for a second year, throughout 2010, by donating food regularly to feed rescued dogs.

The company is also sponsoring the African Tails 2010 Calendar which will allow the charity to raise funds for mass sterilisations to curb the overpopulation of neglected dogs.

For more information on the African Tails calendar go to www.africantails.co.za

