

**Struggling Australians go hungry to feed their pets**

**Thursday 11 April 2024, SYDNEY:** Pet owners living in food insecure households are resorting to self-sacrifice to protect the welfare of their pets, with almost a quarter (24%) skipping meals so their pets can eat.

According to a report published today by Foodbank Australia to mark National Pets Day, food insecure households value their pets to such an extent that they don't want to let them go hungry. Despite continued cost of living pressures, surrendering pets is an absolute last resort with 14% of pet owners in food insecure households reported giving up a pet during the previous 12 months. As low as this is, it is still twice the national average for Australian households (7%).

The report, supported by Mars Petcare Australia, a long-standing donor to Foodbank with brands such as Pedigree and Whiskas, reveals that half (56%) of food insecure households in the past 12 months own a pet, higher than the Australian average (48%).

According to survey respondents, pets play a crucial role in their lives. They offer companionship, emotional support, increased social interaction and a sense of security and purpose – all of which can be otherwise challenging for those doing it tough.

“Many families facing food insecurity struggle to provide proper nutrition for themselves, let alone their pets, which can lead to significant health and wellbeing consequences for pet owners as well as their pets,” said CEO of Foodbank Australia, Brianna Casey. “We have heard previously that parents skip meals in order to ensure their children can eat, but we are now hearing this sacrifice extends to the welfare of pets, who are very much-loved family members.”

Commenting on the report findings, General Manager of Mars Petcare Australia, Craig Sargeant said: “We know the valuable role pets play in Australian households, particularly households in need, and we are proud to support Foodbank in highlighting the struggle that pet parents in food insecure households are facing. This includes continuing our donation program with Foodbank focused on keeping pets healthy and remaining in loving homes.

Last year, Mars Petcare Australia donated more than 148,000 kilograms of pet food to Foodbank to help the many households in needs and it’s something we will build on even more this year, to help pet parents in food insecure households and the pets that mean so much to them.”

In 2023, Foodbank provided over 430,000 kilograms of pet food, valued at over $6 million, thanks to food industry partners such as Mars Petcare, yet the research reveals that only 9% of pet owners from food insecure households are aware that pet food is available as a part of food relief services.

“This figure is staggering and shouldn’t be happening. We want people to know if they are doing it tough, if they have pets, we can help them and their pets. Head to the Find Food button on our website to find a service near you that can assist,” said Ms Casey.

As part of Mars Petcare Australia’s ongoing support of Foodbank Australia to assist Australians experiencing food insecurity, Mars Petcare Associates will be donating their time on National Pet Day to make essential pet food hampers including Pedigree, Greenies, Whiskas and My Dog.

**ENDS**

**INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Foodbank Australia CEO, Brianna Casey will be available for phone, zoom or in person interviews. For all interview requests **contact Rebecca Collins 0409 786 132**.

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**ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

The report presents a subset of findings from the [Foodbank Hunger Report 2023](https://reports.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2023/?state=au) research which was conducted between 12 and 31 July 2023, through an online survey of 4,342 Australians aged 18 years or older. The sample was nationally representative by age, gender and location (capital city / rest of state) in each major state.

All 4,342 Australians answered up to 18 questions in the United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) for measurement of the prevalence of household food security over the 12 months ending July 2023.

A total of 1,514 respondents (36%) were identified through the HFSSM as being from moderately and severely food insecure households. This group continued to answer a deep dive module about their experience living with food insecurity over the last 12 months including a series of questions relating to pet ownership.

**ABOUT FOODBANK**

At Foodbank we believe everyone should have access to good food.

There are Australians going without every day and we are working hard to change that.

In Australia we work with 2,844 frontline charities and 3,379 school breakfast programs to get the equivalent of 92 million meals out to those who could use a hand.

For more information, please visit [www.foodbank.org.au](http://www.foodbank.org.au).

**ABOUT MARS PETCARE**

Mars Petcare is a family-owned company that has been making Australia pet food favourites including PEDIGREE, WHISKAS, MY DOG, and SCHMACKOS since 1967. Factories in Wodonga, Bathurst and Wacol feed around half of all Australian pets from our portfolio of grocery and specialist brands for cats, dogs and birds.

Mars Petcare fights for a better world for pets making healthy, safe, nutritious food and advocating for the positive benefits that having a pet can have on individuals and communities.