

Carbon Pawprints

Environmentalism: As polls show belief in global warming is dropping, a new study suggests that dogs and cats, like people, are a plague upon the earth. They say people should have edible pets. Here, kitty, kitty.

A new Pew Research Center study conducted Sept. 30-Oct. 4 says the number of Americans who think there's solid evidence the average temperature on earth has been getting warmer over the past few decades has plummeted from 71% in April 2008 to 57% today.

Over the same period, there's been a comparable decline in the proportion of Americans who say global temperatures are rising as a result of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels.

Just 36% say that today, down from 47% last year. Part of this decline is perhaps due to the increasing number of scientists who have come forward to say that while the earth has been warming, it has not been dangerously so, and that in the past decade it has actually *cooled*. The people don't need to be told that — they can feel it themselves.

These scientists also have diminished man's role in affecting the climate, forcing the warm-mongers among us to come up with even more unbelievable cause for the climate change you will shovel off your driveway. Now, we are told, it's all Fido's and Fifi's fault.

Anthony Watts reports on his Web site WattsUpWithThat on a study by Victoria University (New Zealand) professors Brenda and Robert Vale, architects who specialize in sustainable living.

They advise in the study, published in *New Scientist* and in their new book, "Time To Eat The Dog" (we are not making this up), that because of the impact of pets on the earth, people should have pets that are edible.

They do not actually say your wiener dog should be on the menu. But they've calculated the carbon emissions created by popular pets, taking into account the ingredients of pet food and the land needed to create them. They advise having pets like rabbits or chickens. Maybe we could start a Cash for Cluckers program.

"If you have a German shepherd or similar-sized dog, for example, its impact every year is exactly the same as driving a large car around," Brenda Vale said.

"A lot of people worry about having SUVs, but they don't worry about having Alsatians, and what we are saying is, well, maybe you should be because the environmental impact . . . is comparable." They make no distinction between purebred and, uh, hybrids.

On the other hand, not many SUVs can fetch the newspaper. They calculate that a Toyota Land Cruiser has half the environmental impact of a medium-size dog. Cats have an eco-footprint slightly less than a Volkswagen Golf.

And it gets better. If you have two pet hamsters, they have the impact of a decent plasma TV. At least they could generate some electricity while turning that wheel. Goldfish have an eco-finprint equal to two cell phones, so those goldfish-swallowing contests in college were really attempts to save the earth. Who knew?

When everything from your bacon double cheeseburger to the family dog is said to cause climate change, it's easy to see why folks are skeptical as they tune up their snowblowers.

Investors Business Daily 26 Oct 2009 p-A18