

## Georgia Drivers Can Ride With Best Buddy

### **New license plate design features retriever promoting spaying and neutering.**

Dogs in Georgia will be doing more than hanging out of car windows in 2006. They can be seen on license plates as well, promoting a spay-and-neuter program that has already aided more than 19,000 pets in the state.

In December, Georgia officials unveiled a new design for the Dog and Cat Sterilization Program: a Buddy, a Golden Retriever, and the message Spay and Neuter. The artwork was created by Carolyn Ritter, of Alpharetta, Ga., whose design was chosen from some 400 contest entries submitted last summer.

The new design will be available at Georgia tag offices by February 1, 2006.

Drivers who pay an additional \$25 for the specialized plates will be able to choose from Buddy or the previous design a peach outline containing profiles of a dog and cat facing each other, with the text Animal Friend below it.

The 3-year-old program has proven to be successful in Georgia, with more than 46,000 tags sold since its launch in 2003. About \$22 of the \$25 fee goes directly to the sterilization fund, which helps pay for spay-and-neuter educational materials, and procedures performed by Georgia veterinarians.

The fund helped pay for spay/neuter procedures in all of Georgia's 159 counties. That is a far-reaching success I hope will continue, says Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Tommy Irvin.

At least 19 states currently have specialty license plates for spay-and-neuter programs, with others such as Florida and Washington scheduled to begin selling them in 2006..

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