

control in public places, London witnesses a hefty slice of the 50,000 road accidents caused by dogs each year.

All dogs must wear a collar bearing the name and address of the owner, but it is rare that anyone enforces this law. Colonel Tony Hare, the director-general of Battersea Dogs' Home, which takes in up to 20,000 strays each year (often abandoned when their owners go on holiday), would like each dog injected with an identifying micro-chip. Armed with the correct monitor, the authorities would then be able to trace the name of its owner in seconds.

While the German shepherd is Britain's favourite breed of dog, the wives who lunch in Chelsea and Kensington prefer Norfolk and Yorkshire terriers. The Dulux television commercial led many unwary parents to buy their children Old English sheepdogs, while a NatWest advertisement created a demand for the shar pei.

TOKYO

THERE are about 240,000 dogs in Tokyo, providing company for the capital's 11.7 million residents, but cramped apartments make dog-owning a luxury. As a result, dogs that find a home in the city are usually pampered. Designer clothes for pets are common. Take-away gourmet dinners from department stores, at 13,000 yen (£50) a tray, chocolates included, are not unusual.

There is one dog for every eight children in the city, although it is usually the parents who follow the pooches with plastic bags and little shovels. Dog-owners can be fined up to 4,000 yen (£16) for not scooping. Those who fail to keep their dogs on a lead in public face a similar fine.

The Japanese, who have learnt to live cheek to cheek, try to make sure that their pets learn the facts of life in an overcrowded city. Dogs whose barking keeps the neighbours awake may find that their owners take them to have their vocal cords cut. A dog with a history of biting can be ordered, by the mayor, to be muzzled.

Large dogs are much fancied, but little kept. Shibas, a Japanese breed about 15in high, with pricked-up ears and a curly tail, are among the most popular, as is the Shetland sheepdog, a smaller version of the collies made famous in Japan by the television programme *Lassie*. Small fluffy dogs that fit in coat pockets or bicycle baskets are favoured companions for rich women during their sprees through Ginza's department stores.

Few Japanese have enough money to buy a house or apartment at Tokyo's dizzy property prices, but more than enough to pay for the daily necessities — and luxuries. Spare cash is often sprinkled on the family dog.

Japanese businessmen have not been slow to cater to this indulgence. Luxury hotels for pets have been around for a while. So have £5,000 mink coats. Dentists for dogs are in fashion, and pet funerals can cost up to £5,000.



In London, as elsewhere in Britain, German shepherds are first choice

ROME

THERE is a wide gap between legal theory and reality for most of the Eternal City's canine inhabitants. All dogs should wear a metal tag on their collar as evidence of registration with the council and of payment of an annual tax ranging from £5 to £20, but few owners see the point of paying a tax which is never checked on.

Accurate estimates of the city's dog population are difficult. There are 38,000 legally registered dogs, but the city authorities believe that another 200,000 are un-registered tax evaders, in a human population of under four million.

Theoretically all dogs should wear a muzzle and be kept on a lead in public places. In practice leads are used only if a dog has a habit of running away. One can be fairly sure that any dog wearing a muzzle has already developed a taste for human flesh.

By law, fouling should be done only in the gutter, but few owners train their dogs that carefully. In any case, the city's street-cleaning service is so haphazard that Romans are used to side-stepping a variety of unpleasant things (syringes, cigarette packets, old sandwiches).

The most dramatic problem caused by dogs, and to dogs, is their abandonment at the beginning of the summer. People who buy a puppy in the winter discover to their dismay that bringing up a dog is almost as much trouble as

bringing up a child. In July when it is time to leave for the summer holidays, what easier solution than to drive out to the ring road and boot the dog out of the car?

To combat this, the city authorities have made the tattooing of a serial number on the inside of a dog's leg compulsory. But this, of course, can only be applied to "legal" dogs. Recently, the city dog pound stopped killing dogs which had not been claimed or sold after ten days. Strays picked up on the street are kept until they die naturally. "At first sight this seems humane and generous," said Claudio Fantini, the director of Rome's veterinary service, "but apart from the expense, I wonder how kind it really is to condemn a dog to a life sentence in a cage two metres by one metre."

As in other matters, Romans are fashion conscious in their choice of dogs. In the early Seventies it was cocker spaniels, soon followed by a wave of enthusiasm for Afghan hounds. Now trendy teenage girls favour a Yorkshire terrier. On the other hand, "now we have problems with fierce dogs such as dobermans, schnauzers, bull mastiffs and rottweilers," Signor Fantini says. "Every year about 4,500 bitings are reported. Most of them take place in the over-populated and crime-ridden urban ghetto areas where people buy these dogs as a violent status symbol, instead of buying a gun."

● Reporting by: Alan Tillier in Paris, James Bone in New York, Geraldine Ranson in London, Joe Joseph in Tokyo and Paul Bompard in Rome.