

PRETEND PETS

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Toy "pets" are becoming popular among people who would like to keep animals but, for a variety of reasons, such as busy schedules or housing regulations, cannot.

Toys, on the other hand, require no care, raise no objections and can even be a part of the interior decoration.

One such pet is manufactured by Masudaya Corp., headquartered in Tokyo. "Umi Monogatari" is a small aquarium in which swims a toy fish in a coral sea setting. The colorful fish appears to be alive, moved by powerful magnets. The sea pet is priced at ¥5,000.

A toy cat, "Mew," (¥12,000) by Takara Co. is also enjoying popularity. The cat, equipped with a sound sensor, meows and whisks its tail when its name is called. Takara also markets a bird, puppy and another cat that meows when it is patted on its back.

"Many workers have bought them not only for home enjoyment, but also for the office," says a Takara spokesman. "We think the pets appeal to people seeking a bit of warmth in a stressful society."