

AROUND JAPAN

Snake, lizard pets becoming popular

Dogs and cats are not always convenient pets to keep in apartments because they cry and sometimes are too temperamental to be hugged or stroked.

Small animals that don't cry but that owners can enjoy touching are becoming increasingly popular among apartment dwellers.

In pet shops in Kochi on Shikoku, small Eurasian flying squirrels, which sell for about ¥30,000 apiece; "Peter Rabbits," a type of rabbit that does not grow too big; and lizards and iguanas are among the most popular animals.

Pet shop operators say these small "quiet" pets have started to sell well since the end of the economic speculative boom.

Green iguanas are selling especially well this year, although certain types of snakes that do not bite were last year's big sellers.