



Tribune photo by MARK GUSS

Shelagh Inglesby and Jim Gisondi have four dogs, including Baxter, left, and Jacob, and two cats that they rescued from being euthanized.



Photo by MIKE SLAUGHTER

Leslie Mann, coordinator of Florida Animal Friend, has adopted several abused or neglected animals and currently lives with 15 dogs and cats.

## Fur Flies As Animal Lovers Split Over License Plate

### COMPETITION MAY DOOM ALL EFFORTS

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**ST. PETERSBURG** — A statewide coalition working to create an animal-friendly license plate in Florida has splintered, threatening to unravel efforts to slow the tide of unwanted cats and dogs being put to death in large numbers.

Animal protection groups and state Rep. Nan Rich, D-Weston, banded together in January to lay the groundwork for the specialty plate, which would raise revenue for sterilization programs that could drastically reduce pet overpopulation.

The broad coalition — including the Humane Society of the United States, the Florida Animal Control Association and the Florida Veterinary Medical

Association — spent months working to meet a Dec. 1 state deadline to collect 15,000 signed surveys from motorists and \$89,000 to cover the auto tag's production and other costs.

But in mid-September, two representatives of Tampa-based Florida Voices for Animals abruptly decided to leave the coalition and run the "Florida Plate for Paws" campaign on their own — with the money and signatures they had been collecting on the coalition's behalf.

The remaining coalition members, meanwhile, have launched a new specialty license plate campaign they call "Florida Animal Friend."

Both groups are trying to beat the clock and each other to establish the \$25 "Animal Friend" plate, which could generate millions of dollars each year

See **SPECIALTY PLATE**, Page 6 ►  
Both groups have prepared bills.

Fur flies as animal lovers split over license plate

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