

Gifts for Pampered Pets

Here's what to stock for the pet who has everything.

By Sandy Robins

Santa Paws is going to need a really good back massage after delivering some of the amazing gifts to pampered pets this holiday season. Imagination is very much alive and well, and manufacturers have excelled with new and unusual ideas.

It seems that more pet parents are designating their fur kids their own bedrooms or special place in the home, and trendy furnishing ideas are on top of every furry wish list.

"This year, there's greater emphasis on decorating for your pet than ever before," says Phillip Emigh of Tails in the City boutique in downtown Chicago. "It's a natural progression for pet parents who want to spoil their fur kids beyond stylish

feeders and matching treat jars."

So what do you carry in your store for the pampered pup that has everything?

How about a romantic French country-style armoire that holds clothes, accessories, toys, blankets and grooming products?

"Pets have a lot of stuff these days," says Michelle Aspeci of Bella Cottage Pets in North Hills, Calif. "It's not only practical to keep everything in one place in an attractive item of furniture, but it also makes good decorating sense."

Aspeci, who started off designing and manufacturing human furniture, answered numerous requests from clients by introducing her pet line, which includes matching armoires, beds and feeders as well as litter box covers.

"A new bed is always a nice holiday gift for a pampered pet," says Jared Clingo of Ruffles and

Bark in Pleasant Grove, Utah. The company also started out making standard furniture. Clingo says that children's furniture, such as double bunk beds, is suitable for dogs and cats.

"We've made every attempt to be eco-friendly by using fallen pieces of quaking aspen wood to produce our rustic designs," Clingo says. "Wood is selected for its natural crooks and curves. A clear finish allows the natural beauty of the timber to shine through, highlighting the trails of the worms that bore beneath the bark of the tree. I think pet parents who have the financial means to pamper their pets appreciate originality."

Other manufacturers are also following different decorating trends. There's everything from romantic canopied four-poster creations to minimalist designs in smoke-colored acrylic with chrome finishes that give dog

and cat beds, litter box covers and even scratching posts an ultramodern look. But looks aren't everything; there's also enormous focus on concealed storage space, like hidden drawers.

Have Pet, Will Travel

"Because so many pet parents take their pets with them when they travel, there's a huge demand for products for the jet-set pooch and kitty," says Amy Osete, vice president of marketing at Bamboo in North Hills, Calif. "The idea is to provide products that could pamper a pet while also adapting to the pet owner's lifestyle, such as pet sleeping bags that roll up for convenience but also provide all the comforts of home."

"Other travel items, such as fold-up bowl sets and grooming kits, are also practical and stylish gifts," says Melissa LeWeck, owner of Something to Chew On in Laguna Niguel, Calif. "Pet beds that convert into huge comfy car seats, like the BedPal line, which allow pampered pets to travel in the lap of luxury, are definitely a must-have item to carry for pet trendsetters."

Other suggestions for the pet on the go include carryall bags that feature numerous accessories to make life on the road a breeze for pet parents.

Some designs include collapsible food bowls, waste bag dispensers, cooling pockets with removable freezable gel inserts, cell phone pockets, wallet sections for travel papers and much more.

"Between them, pet parents and their pets carry a lot of things, so it makes sense to combine their paraphernalia," says designer



Jamye Hickman of Ribbons and Bow-wows in East Point, Ga.

Holiday Bling

"No holiday season would be complete without lots of party outfits, in velvet and tulle and lots of froth," Emigh says. "And, of course, no pampered pet or pet parent can ever have too much bling."

This year, many jewelry manufacturers are providing retailers with special display cabinets and stands.

"It's a good idea for retailers to pre-wrap certain items in gift boxes to ease the burden as it gets closer to Christmas," says Lisa Steinmeyer of Phoebe's Fashions of Tulsa, Okla. "Pink and gray pearls are hot and paw-print charms are going to be popular again this year."

To ensure that pet parents don't feel left out, it would be a good idea for retailers to stock high-end jewelry items that pet parents can wear to coordinate with their pets.



A single carry-all for pets and their parents makes a great gift.



"Breed-specific jewelry is very trendy," says jewelry designer Andrea Levine of Wilmington, Del., who uses pavé diamond charms of individual breeds to adorn her new line of matching collars and leashes. "Pet parents can wear them on neck chains and bracelets or on a belt."

Bone-shaped charms that celebrate different astrological signs are once again going to grab the attention of doggie fashionistas.

"This season they are going to look best worn on black," says Tracie Annase of Birth Bones in

year manufacturers have produced a wonderful selection of gift baskets and gift packs. The lines focus beyond dogs and cats to critters and even horses. This is always a wonderful way for retailers to introduce people and their pets to new products so that they will consider buying the products during the rest of the year. These items can also be gift-wrapped in advance to make it easy for employees during peak shopping times.

Pampered pups love designer-inspired plush toys. These are great items, along with small flashing tags and catnip toys, to



Palm City, Fla. "Velvet chokers for pet parents and black leather for pets. They clip easily onto a standard pet collar."

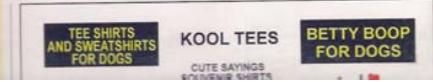
"Tiaras are a must-have for the festive season," says jewelry designer Dorothy Bauer of Dorothy Bauer Designs in Berkeley, Calif. "A mesh collar heavily encrusted with Swarovski crystals will make a nice addition to a collar collection."

From Spa Products to Beer
Spa products and treats always make great gifts, and this

display near the register for last-minute stocking stuffers.

Finally, what better way to bring an end to the old year than by drinking a toast to the new year? Now Fido can join in, too. Happy Tail Ale is a nonalcoholic drink made from malted barley with a beef flavor. The manufacturers, Dog Star Brewing Co. in Napa Valley, Calif., are packaging their canine ale in a standard six-pack. No liquor license needed.

Here's to party animals everywhere. Cheers!



Ribbons & Bow-wows and the E.B.D Carry-all is featured in the December 2006 issue of *Pet Product News International*, pg. 46-47!