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**The Gifts We Give Our Dogs**

**By Carolyn Schweitzer**

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Whoever coined the phrase, "It's a Dog's Life" wasn't familiar with 21st century dogs. Time was when the average canine slept outside, ate whatever scraps of food were tossed his way, and if he was lucky, was thrown the occasional bone. He was even expected to earn his keep!

Times have changed. As the world has grown more affluent, so have our pets. We're obsessed with keeping our canine companions happy, healthy, and properly accessorized. So much so that many of us worry about our own welfare less than that of our dog. This didn't happen overnight— the trend started decades ago.

Take, for example, my grandmother Rose. During the 60's and 70's, Rose and Henry discovered cruise vacations. On every cruise, whenever they pulled into port to "shop", Rosie made it her mission to find stray dogs and feed them. She'd head straight for the butcher, buy a few pounds of fresh meat, and comb the islands for the hungry and homeless. She would exclaim, "It's a crime the way these animals live!"— in spite of the fact that the people of those islands were desperately poor!

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not passing judgment on Grandma, or anyone else. I spoil my pets as much as the next guy or gal, and take immense pleasure in it. Truth be told, I'd rather hang out with my dog than with a whole lot of people I know. We share a special bond, my best friend and I. Hey, admit it... lots of you feel the same way!

The fact is, man has always had a close relationship with animals, and has enjoyed having pets around for companionship. Having a pet can bring great pleasure into our lives, and is believed to have a therapeutic effect on the owner. For empty nesters and those who've delayed or opted out of having kids, pets almost take the place of children. We bond with our pets especially because they don't judge us. Dogs in particular offer the kind of unconditional love we all crave. They're always thrilled to have us around!

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So, how do we spoil our pets?

Probably in much the same way that we spoil our children! Aside from all of the care attention lavished on America's pets, a tremendous amount of money is spent providing goods and services that were once deemed a luxury— but are now considered essential.

Today's dog sees the vet for regular checkups. She eats premium dog food and munches on gourmet doggie treats, is enrolled in obedience classes, and runs agility courses. She has her own collections of toys, clothing, and possibly even dog jewelry and canine cologne. She sleeps indoors on a luxury orthopedic bed and takes shelter outdoors in her cedar dog house. She wears a safety harness when riding in the family car, a reflective vest on hunting trips, and rain gear in foul weather. She can even dodge UV rays with a pair of doggie sunglasses. Her responsibilities are few.

I could go on (don't worry, at some point I will!). But one of the most notable signs that we regard our

dogs as members of our family is the fact that we buy them gifts. A dog gift for the holidays, a dog gift for a special occasion, or a dog gift to show our appreciation for how much our dogs appreciate us. Any reason will do. Heck, we even wrap our dog gifts!

Here are some very interesting statistics regarding gifts for pets: More than half of U.S. households have pets, and many of them are including their "best friends" in holiday plans. According to a survey conducted by the Pet Supplies "Plus" chain, 97% of its customers will buy gifts for their animals this Yuletide season. 28% of owners will spend more on their pets than on their spouses when buying gifts. 47% will spend more on their pets than on relatives other than their spouse. 54% will spend more on their pets than on their in-laws. 83% will wrap their pets' gifts. 68% claim that their pets will unwrap presents themselves with their paws. 71% will buy something practical for them.

Buying gifts for our pets is only the half it. If someone we know is a pet lover, we often show our support by giving the person a pet-related gift. And, since the saying goes, "love me, love my dog", there's often pressure to throw in a little dog gift for Spike too. For a casual dog-loving acquaintance, our dog lover gift might be a simple coffee mug with a picture of their favorite dog breed. A set of plush doggie-themed golf club covers could make an amusing gift for a colleague. Maybe Aunt Janine has a collection of dog figurines we can add to. Or, at the other end of the spectrum, one could splurge on a diamond-studded doggie themed bracelet for the wife (although I wouldn't recommend this as an anniversary gift. Unless you're verrry sure.) and a new house for Spike.

The good news is, there's no shortage of goods and services to inspire even the most rabid of dog lovers and dog gift shoppers. And dog lover gift shoppers. Whether the names on your gift list are human or canine, you'll never run out of things to buy and places to shop. If you're one of those gifted gift givers who's never at a loss for what to get and where to find it I envy you. If you're more like the rest of us, and you need a little help, you'll find plenty of ideas online (Ahem!). You can also look for future articles in this series, in which I'll hone in on various ways you can pamper and reward the dogs and dog lovers in your life.

So go ahead, spoil your furry friends. Celebrate your love for your dog, and your sister in law's love for

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her dog. Shower them with goodies and gifts. It's a dog's life. And if I get to come back for another round, I want it to be as one of those lucky dogs!!

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Lifelong dog-lover, power-shopper, and former family dentist Carolyn Schweitzer is owner and editor of

. The site offers a wide range of choices for dog gift shoppers, plus

shopping and gift-giving tips. (Plus advise on care and feeding.) She's always looking for new dog gift ideas and dog stories to share with her readers. You can reach her by email at [netbrainer@verizon.net](mailto:netbrainer@verizon.net)

### Gifts For Dog Lovers

**By Robert Davis**

Our passion for dogs can sometimes go to the extreme. We treat our pet like it was our own baby, not to mention the love we feel for newly born puppies. Is this just a case of "man's best friend"? Or is it something greater?

We'll let you be the judge of that.

Dogs are just so cute that some dog owners go to the extent of calling their pets "sweetie". Others call their dogs their "kids," or "babies."

Dog lovers are limitless in the terms of affection they can come up with for their pets. It is even common to see pets that look like their owners, and vice versa. This is probably just another sign of our love for them.

Dogs give unconditional love to their owners. This is a characteristic of all dog breeds. A lot of dog lovers return this love in the form of dog gifts. And the selection of dog gifts appear in all shapes, varieties, and sizes.

There is a wide selections of dog gifts. There are dog baskets, dog books, dog collars, dog crates, dog clothes, food, dog accessories, medicines, vitamin supplements, just to name a few.

Dog gifts can be any dog related item, from dog toys to dog supplies and to a program in dog training. Whatever the giver can imagine.

A common misconception among gift givers is that dog gifts are gifts for pet lovers or the owners themselves. In most instances, they are not. They are for the dog. But in a way, they benefit the dog owner by saving him or her from the expenses he/she would have incurred buying the items.

Dog books are great gifts, generally given to new pet owners. Normally, they contain details pertaining to dog breeds, guidelines in taking care of dogs, nutritional details on the specific breed, methods of dog grooming, tips, and everything in between.

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Dog toys may be given as gifts as well. Like children, dogs are fond of playing. In fact, quite a number of breeds are recognized for their playfulness — some are born ball chasers.

Obviously, in giving toys as dog gifts, you must be careful not to get a toy that could potentially harm the pet. It is wise that you choose those toys that are primarily made of vinyl or latex materials.

Also, avoid those that can be torn in smaller pieces, as they may stick in the dog's throat. One toy you can get is cheap tube of balls, but they must be large enough that they won't fit into the animal's mouth. Or it can be an old sack, or better yet, the sneakers that he likes to chew.

As these examples show, you need not always buy a gift made specifically for dogs. But if you choose to, there are many dog websites that can provide you with a good selection of products. Furthermore, you can also buy from a local pet shop.

Moreover, if you cannot choose a dog gift yourself you have the option of giving the dog owner a gift certificate. This is an ideal way of giving a gift, because in this way you are giving the owner the chance to decide on the gift he thinks would be best for his pet.

Robert Davis writes for several web sites, such as

and

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