

## How Much Is That Dog Dress in the Window?

By Stan Cox, AlterNet. Posted November 22, 2006.

### Honorary humans

**Trixie + Peanut** is cashing in big on that desire and passion. Sweaters like those modeled by doggie mannequins in the window average about \$50, or \$129 for an upgrade to cashmere. Christmas shoppers can find a leash (\$69), a monogrammed collar (\$54), a leather pet carrier (\$170 to \$850), booties (\$35 for the two pair), "hound hiking boots" (\$79), or a "Furrari" bed designed like a sports car (why chase one if you can sleep in one? -- \$249).

For the hungry canine, there are frozen steaks, Hannuka carob-chip dog bones, "Pup-pies" (dutch apple, raspberry truffle, and banana creme), and Oreo-style carob cookies (five cookies for \$10), all to be [followed by Fresh Breath Care drops with peppermint and cinnamon](#). For other needs, Trixie + Peanut can provide "nail pawlish," hair detangler, and dog-poop pickup gloves made with "Oxo-Biodegradable, d2w technology."

And for that sad day when it's time to say your final farewell, there's the "In Loving Memory Keepsake Urn" (\$155 for a small dog's ashes, \$175 for a big one's) and a Pet Sympathy Coin (\$25).

The password to success in pet marketing these days is "humanization": convincing that demographic group now known as "pet parents" that they should buy the same kinds of products for Buster or Taffy that they'd buy for themselves or their (human) kids.

As part of the humanization trend, says the American Pet Products Manufacturing Association (APPMA), pet-friendly hotels are offering dog massages and "plush doggie robes"; pet boutiques carry faux mink coats, feathered French day beds, botanical fragrances, "cleaning cloths for muddy paws that mimic traditional baby wipes," touch-activated toys, "hipster lumberjack vests," and Halloween costumes; and pet-safe cars are equipped with seat-belt systems and motion-sickness aids. High-tech health care facilities are extending the lives (and driving up the costs) of aging pets, and the pet health insurance market is growing at 25 percent per year.

Pet showers can now be incorporated into the design of upscale bathrooms, for \$4,000 tacked onto the price. And, inevitably, there are dog jacuzzis.

In a March press release, APPMA president Bob Vetere said the industry that supplies the nation's 74 million dogs, 90 million cats, and tens of millions of other assorted pets continues to show a 7 percent per-year growth rate -- double the pace of growth in the economy as a whole. He predicted that growth will be sustained by the humanization of four-legged companions by childless baby boomers and young professionals: "With these families' higher-than average disposable incomes, their pets are enjoying elaborate high-end and high-tech products."

APPMA also sees a boom in pet services, partly because "it is becoming socially unacceptable in some areas to leave your dog home alone during the day or your cat alone for the weekend." PetsMart, for example, now offers "PetsHotels" and "Doggie Day Camps" to ease pet parents' minds on that score.