

MAY 13, 2005

Pampered Pets

By Stacy Perman

Putting on the Dog

Canine health insurance, \$900 Gucci bowls, paw pedicures are just some of the luxuries making tails wag — and savvy businesses grow

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SPECIAL FOODS One of the fastest-growing areas in the industry is the pet spa, with such offerings as pedicures, massages, and birthday parties. Formed just five years ago, the North American Dog Daycare Assn., based in Kitchener, Ontario, already has 746 members.

Outfits like Woofspa and Resort in Manhattan's trendy meatpacking district offer the kind of pampering one would expect at Canyon Ranch. For starters, a car service will pick up and drop off your favorite canine or feline. A full day-care program is provided. And grooming services include oatmeal baths and hot oil treatments. While boutique day-care facilities continue to sprout up, some companies, like the Milwaukee-based Central Bark, have found growth through franchising.

Pet beauty — care has also taken off. In 2003, San Francisco entrepreneur [Sharon Mueller](#) launched [Spa Dog Botanicals](#), an aromatherapy line of botanical pet care. Today, her catalog of 20 items, including \$6 glycerin soap bars and \$13 lavender healing spray, are sold online and attract customers from across the U.S. and as far away as Japan and Australia. "People are trying to find more interesting and better product for their pets," Mueller says. "That's how the market has changed -- people are more aware of what they are using."

And that extends to pet food, which has also come to mirror offerings available for those holding the leash. With pet obesity at an estimated 25%, low-carb and vegetarian pet foods have gained popularity. The Honest Kitchen, based in San Diego, features natural, high-protein, low-carb foods considered the Atkins diet of the dog world. According to the Organic Trade Assn., organic pet food is one of the fastest-growing segments of the market -- up 64.5% in 2004 and projected to grow an average of 17.4% a year until 2008. Small outfits like Montgomery City (Mo.)-based Spectrum Pet Foods have helped make it a \$14 million category.