

What are some fun gift ideas to help spoil my pet this Christmas?

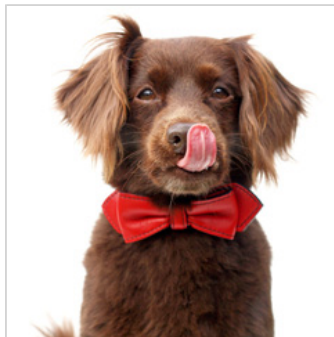
If beige carpet cat towers and dull dog toys make you cringe, check out these items worthy of any stylish pet's wish list.

By **Morieka Johnson**

Wed,
Nov
16
2011
at
8:11
AM
EST

Q: *Our family just got a dog, and we plan to spoil him this Christmas. I don't want the typical stuff. What are some fun gift ideas to help spoil my pooch this Christmas?*

A: Sixty-two percent of U.S. households have pets, according to a 2011 survey by the American Pet Products Association (APPA). For many of those furry friends, life is quite good. As the "Dog Whisperer" Cesar Millan likes to say, pets in the United States get to see Santa — along with dermatologists, physical therapists and even pet sitters.



Several of those furry friends also will get a little something extra under the tree this Christmas, bolstering an estimated \$50 billion pet industry. That means pet store buyers across the country are hard at work stocking their shelves with gear, treats and toys that will stand out from the crowd.

"With more [people] owning pets — and pets living longer — it is kind of unavoidable that there will be more money spent in the pet category," says Janene Zakrajsek, owner of [Pussy and Pooch](#) pet stores in California. Each year, Zakrajsek and her team unveil a gift list called "Twelve Holiday Gift Ideas for the Pet Lover." Selections this year range from \$8 tuna sushi for cats to \$295 for a limited-edition pet lounge. If you are ready to fill your pet's stocking with cool gear, here are a few fun trends heading to a store near you.

Products with a purpose — and a personality

"Products I select for my store need to fit the criteria of being stylish and functional," Zakrajsek says. "Some things I pass up because they may be stylish but not necessarily functional. Some are super functional but not necessarily stylish. It has to hit that sweet spot and be both."

WORLD mnn SHARES

TOP MEMBERS [Join Now](#)

poland.jr	18575 points
ecomainegirl	8317 points
LauraB	5049 points
travelguidelines	3777 points
jmayhue1611	3770 points
All members	

ADVERTISEMENT

MNN'S ADVICE TEAM

- Matt Hickman** (Mondays)
Eco-friendly blogger.
- Morieka Johnson** (Wednesdays)
Beauty and pets aficionado.
- Chanie Kirschner** (Fridays)
Smart and funny maven.
- Best of MNN**
Some of our favorite Q&As.
- Vanessa Vadim**
Eco-activist and consultant.
- Lazy Environmentalist**
Author and television host.

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

Enter email address [SIGN UP](#)

Daily Weekly

CONNECT WITH MNN

Follow [@twitterapi](#) [Tumblr](#) [Google+](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

EDITORS' PICKS



Photos: Green services that have gone mainstream



No more books: How the iSchool initiative was born



5 tax articles to read before Dec. 31



Meet Keri Rosebraugh, an artist 'inspired' by trash



How can I get rid of fruit flies?

MNN ORIGINALS



Win a free organic garden!

For Zakrajsek's clients, that means providing a mix of mostly U.S.-made products along with unique local designers. Zakrajsek points to bedding, gear and toys from [Planet Dog](#) and [West Paw Design](#) as examples that deliver on both fronts. Planet Dog manufactures nontoxic toys, treats and grooming supplies, donating 2 percent of each purchase to programs that train and place service dogs. West Paw products incorporate recycled materials — and my dog Lulu can report that their super-tough [Hurley bones](#) (right) are nearly indestructible. The company also pays it forward by supporting local pet charities, such as Pussy and Pooch's donation drives for local shelters.



Zakrajsek, who counts three rescued cats and a Jack Russell terrier as part of her in-house product testing committee, also looks for products with a little personality, such as a motion-activated cat laser toy shaped like a blue bird (right). "It doesn't look like a standard laser toy," she says. "It looks like decorative object."



That same theory applies to gear. A \$65 leather bowtie dog collar (top photo) from a California-based pet design company called [LuxeMutt](#) made it onto Zakrajsek's gift list this year. The stylish collar is certainly cute enough to see the inside of my Lulu's stocking — if she can manage to behave for the next 30 days.

Materials matter

That Palm Springs Lounge (right) Zakrajsek selected for her gift list includes two cushions covered in removable fabric for easy cleaning, powder-coated steel latticework and birch plywood at the base. Thanks to the smart addition of feet, Fido's or Fifi's furniture is less likely to scratch your glossy hardwood floors.



"Pet furniture is getting smarter and smarter; there's a lot more ingenuity with regard to pet stairs, platform beds, and end tables that function as crates," she says. "Even in the choice of wood tone, you are seeing things that have more of a laminate slick veneer, a lot of stainless steel."

Since debuting this summer, online pet supply company [Wag.com](#) also has noticed shoppers flock to products designed for furry family members. A sister site to [Diapers.com](#), virtually every category that exists for babies also exists for pets, says [Wag.com](#) buyer Sara Okin.

"It goes back to the humanization of the whole industry," she says. "People look at pets as family — and they look for ways to keep them comfortable."

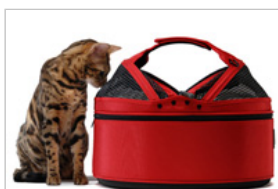
In addition to [funky retractable leashes](#) from 26 Bars and a Band, upscale furniture options have [Wag.com](#) shoppers purring. A \$129.99 [cat condo](#) (right) from Modern Cat Designs ranks No. 16 among cat furniture options on the site.



"Owners are selecting modern things that fit in their living room without feeling out of place," Okin says, noting that even food and water bowls get designer treatment for pets. Among her favorite gift ideas for the holidays, Okin points to [French-themed placemats](#) (\$4.99) and decorative white [ceramic bowls](#) (\$10.99 to \$11.99) from ORE Pet as examples of how a well-behaved "Petit Chasseur" (little hunter) should be feted this Christmas. "It's not a just plastic bowl; it's something that fits into the decor of the home and is unique."

Pets travel in style

Pet travel gear also has undergone a stylish makeover. Okin recommends the [Sleepypod bed and carrier](#) (\$159.99) for pint-size pets bound for the open road this holiday season. Available in four colors, it features a domed lid that can be zipped closed.



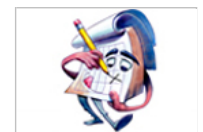
Arctic Special Series



MNN Eco-Glossary



Mixed Greens:
Leading voices in
sustainability



This Day in History



MNN polls



Infographics

Okin and Zakrajsek also stress the importance of grooming aids during the holidays. No one wants furry friends to smell less than winter-fresh when cuddling up for photos with Santa. Okin recommends Earthbath's Green Tea travel wipes (below) as stocking stuffers for dogs and cats.

"This is one time of the year when pet owners generally don't scrimp on grooming," says Zakrajsek, who offers grooming services at both Pussy and Pooch locations. "With holiday parties and holiday photos, people want pets looking their best. We typically have specials, such as custom-blended shampoo and fragrance with essential oils."



Last year, the APAA reports that 53 percent of dog owners purchased Christmas gifts for their pets. So perhaps there *is* something to Andy Rooney's famous quote: "There's no doubt about it. Dogs are nicer than people."

If that's the case in your home, then your dog should have plenty of goodies to choose from this holiday season.

— [Morieka Johnson](#)

Follow [Morieka](#) on [Twitter @soulpup](#) and get the latest pet trends — or just read about her dog Lulu's latest exploits.

Got a question? You can submit your [questions to Mother Nature](#). One of our experts will track down the answer. **Plus:** Visit our [advice archives](#) to see if your question has already been tackled.

[+](#) **Click for photo credits**

Bowtie collar: [LuxeMutt](#)
Bones: [West Paw Design](#)
Bird laser toy, two-story lounge, wipes: [Pussy and Pooch](#)
Condo, carrier: [Wag.com](#)
MNN homepage photo: [Shutterstock](#)

20 **Earn Points** What's this?
[Email](#) [Twitter](#) [Stumble](#) [Digg](#) [Share](#)

Related Links

- [How to care for a live Christmas tree](#)
- [9 things that could ruin your Christmas](#)
- [Christmas at home in Colorado](#)
- [Top photos: Polar bear antics, fairy penguins and more](#)
- [How to make your own wreath](#)

Related Topics

- [Christmas](#)
- [Gift Ideas](#)

Comments

[Follow this conversation](#)

View:

[Add your comment](#)

ADD YOUR COMMENT

Sign in with one of these accounts or just add your comment below.

[mnn](#) Log in or create an account [Connect](#)

Enter your name

Enter your comments

Enter your comments

Follow this conversation

















Notify me with an email when other people comment on this article.

The posting of advertisement, profanity or personal attacks is prohibited.
Click here to review our [Terms of Use](#)

POST COMMENT

COPYRIGHT © 2011 MNN HOLDINGS, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. WEBSITE BY GLICK INTERACTIVE | POWERED BY CIRRACORE

SPONSORS

 Energy	 Beverages	 Computers	 Gadgets & Electronics	 Research & Innovations
 Green Workplace	 Healthy Spaces	 Healthy Eating	 Animals	 Responsible Living
 At Home	 Protection & Safety	 Family Activities	 Personal Finance	 CEO Series
 Mercedes-Benz Transportation				