



Pampered pets

TOP SELLERS FOR OUR FURRY FRIENDS INCLUDE FACIALS, MANICURES AND DESIGNER OUTFITS

by Laura Layden

A cheetah print stroller with pink trim for \$265.

A plush blanket handmade in Miami for \$50.

An ultra-suede harness with a Swarovski-bedazzled flower for \$100.

These are just a few of the top sellers for “man’s best friend” at the Pucci & Catana Luxury Pet Boutique in downtown Naples.

When it comes to pets, especially dogs, some owners will spare almost no expense to pamper them. In Naples, well-to-do dogs feast on gourmet dinners from boutique pet stores, show off designer collars, wear enviable outfits, wind down with massages, get their hair and nails done, pose for photo shoots and invite friends to their parties.

Pernille Albrechtsen, a Naples designer and

eventmaker, has offered doggy parties for about three years through her company P-Nani.

“My puppy showers and doggie events are getting more and more popular. People are spending more and more money on their beloved pets. It has become a new lifestyle,” she said.

The parties started with her own pup, Yuppy, when the little princess from Russia turned 4. It went so well, Albrechtsen decided to make a business out of it, charging anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 for a two- to three-hour event for pets — and their owners.

At home, Yuppy, a Russian toy terrier weighing just 2-1/2 pounds, has her own walk-in closet, brimming with bows, sunglasses, hats, designer outfits and Halloween costumes. Her mom is a frequent shopper at Pucci & Catana. The dog’s wardrobe includes everything from a bikini to a fur coat. The most expensive outfit, a fine dress, cost \$700.

“I put bracelets around her neck sometimes. That’s just for fun,” Albrechtsen said.

She makes sure she buys big enough purses to fit Yuppy in. The priciest one, made by luxury designer Jimmy Choo, cost \$1,500. Besides hosting dog parties, Albrechtsen produces “Dogue” magazine covers that mimic the look of celebrities appearing on the front of “Vogue.” The price for one ranges from \$49.99 to \$99.99.

For those wanting a full photo spread of their “babies,” Michelle Wood recently opened Paws & Prints Pet Photography in Naples. “It can be any animal,” she said.

The creative fee for a 90-minute session is \$250. Products range in price from \$69 to \$2,800 for an elaborate collection of canvas prints to make a wall display. On average, customers have spent \$500.

At Groomingdales of Naples, add-on services include blueberry facials, feather extensions and Soft Claws, colorful vinyl caps that glue on to your dog’s nails, making them less sharp and giving them a manicured look. (The caps can be used on cats, too).

Owner Tink Bechtol said she tries to keep up with the latest trends and may soon offer crayon drawings that can be stenciled on dogs’ coats.

The longtime groomer added a pet boutique about two years ago, and clothes are a top seller. A black-and-white polka dot dress by Doggie Design is cute as a button, with a scalloped collar, floral buttons and a tulle underskirt that gives it a more formal look. It goes for \$32.50.

Cha-Cha Couture is the store’s most popular designer. Its offerings include festive party dresses and fashionable harnesses for boys and girls. A pink gingham harness vest with colorful buttons and daisies and white lace accents sells for \$22 and includes a matching leash.

Also in high



demand at the boutique are the FabuLeashes, which promise to “put a little catwalk in your dog walk.” A pink beaded one sells for \$20.

Eight-ounce jars of coconut oil, which also go for \$20, are popular, promising better health and a softer coat.

The store sells a variety of collars, too, including leather ones that can be customized with a wide choice of conchos to choose from. The cost can easily reach \$100, with five or more jewels, some of which go for \$20 or more apiece.

Groomingdales sells a limited number of the same collar, so owners aren’t likely to see the same one on their neighbor’s dog. “You know how it is when you go to a party and you see someone with the same dress as you. They don’t want the same collar,” Bechtol said of her wealthy, discriminating clients.

One of the store’s most expensive items is an extra-large plush purple-and-black bed by Bessie and Bernie, with a price tag of \$200. Valheriee Royce, owner of DipidyDawg in the Coconut Point mall in Estero, said pet owners are paying a lot more attention to what they’re feeding their animals these days, purchasing more holistic and organic foods.

Her business started out as an organic bakery but now also offers pet grooming and gear, including bowties for special occasions and goggles for swimming.

Grooming visits are booked like appointments at a doctor’s office, one at a time, instead of having 40 to 50 dogs arriving in the morning and staying all day.

The store sells dresses and harnesses that are handmade locally, as well as offering designer label outfits. Hip Doggie soft leather harnesses with Swarovski crystals range in price from \$25 to \$50. Customers can also order Flexi tape leads encrusted with Swarovski crystals, going for \$180 to \$250.

Just like their human friends, dogs can suffer from pain and stress and can benefit from acupuncture and massage.

Kris Whipple, owner of Dharma Dog LLC in Naples, said her doggy clients usually fall into four categories. She sees senior dogs struggling to get around, dogs suffering from separation anxiety, competition dogs and dogs recovering from surgery or dealing with chronic spinal challenges.

“I don’t diagnose, treat or give medication,” Whipple said. “I work with veterinarians to enhance whatever they are doing.”

On average, she charges \$55 per session, which lasts for 45 minutes to an hour depending on the dog’s size.

“I have dogs that lay down before I even get in the building,” Whipple said. “Most of them get used to it very quickly.”

Can you blame them?



Black and White Dresses by Doggie Design

