

# Here Boy!

We fetch the facts on the business end of Fido **BY KATE BARKER**

**THE END** The dog's only flaw is that he doesn't live long enough – about 10 to 15 years on average. So how do you pay everlasting respect? Perhaps with an \$875 birch coffin or a \$248 hand-carved-spruce, dog-shaped urn followed by burial at one of Canada's 11 members of the International Association of Pet Cemeteries. Devonshire Pet Memorial Services in Newfoundland, for example, offers complete burial for \$415 to \$525. One bereaved woman had a grave marker inscribed with a poem she had written for her 15-year-old mutt. Most, however, opt for the standard: "Forever loved, never forgotten."

**WAG THE DOG** If you think your dog's job is to stand manfully by in your absence and guard the house, think again. He'd rather get out and play. Last year, Caley Morris of Toronto's Metro Dogstop grossed between \$75,000 and \$80,000 by catering to those in need of doggie day care and other services. For \$21 a day, your pet can ramble through ravines and interact with others. Another possibility: camp. For \$30 a day, your dog can attend Happy Tails of Huntsville, Ont. Activities include supervised swims, hikes and even crafts, so you can proudly hang that pawprint painting on the fridge.

**TOP DOGS** Canada has 3,640,000 dogs, with over 73,000 registered with the Canadian Kennel Club in 1999 alone. The most popular breed that year was the Labrador Retriever (10,129), followed by the Golden Retriever (6,916), German Shepherd (5,016), Poodle (3,008) and Shetland Sheepdog (2,969). Prices: \$500 to \$1,500 for purebreds, \$40 to \$150 for local humane society strays. Most popular names? Sam, then Max. This Siberian Husky goes by Misha.



**HEART ATTACK** Hundreds of thousands of U.S. dogs disappear every year, reports *The Atlantic*, and are sold to, among others, medical-research labs, which often ask few questions about origin. Particularly prized – and often commanding a US\$800 pricetag – are the same breeds that Canadian families love: retrievers and shepherds. The attraction? Large chests, which make them ideal for cardiovascular research. This is just one reason – overbreeding of popular purebreds like Chihuahuas (courtesy Taco Bell) and Jack Russell Terriers (*Frasier*) is another – why dog “rescue” groups have started up. According to the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 70% of all dogs don't stay at their first home. Enter breed rescue groups, like ADOPT-A-GREYHOUND and Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport, which, for donations of \$300 and \$175 respectively, will give you an animal grateful to have landed in a safe home.

**DRESSED TO THE CANINES** Dogs and humans have lived together for 14,000 years, but it was only recently that we realized they too had fashion needs. While you can spend \$5 to \$10 for the standard collar, you can also move up to a US\$24 faux-diamond-encrusted number from Pet Jewelry Beverly Hills in Phoenix, Arizona. If you want to marry fashion and function, the Abolstop anti-bark collar, \$250.99, can be set up to squirt your dog's face with citronella if he woofs too much. Or how about a personal fragrance, say, CK9, at \$15 a bottle? As for a hair style, expect to pay \$40 to \$60, or up to \$450 for a show groom for a long-haired pure-bred prize winner. Such luxury would have amazed the handlers of the unadorned parapups, a crack unit of World War II doggie parachutists who were sent floating down into captured territories to serve as sentries for advancing Allied troops.



**CHOW** When a puppy slurps your face, he's not saying I love you. Rather, he's hungry and hoping you'll do what his mother does: upchuck dinner, bulimic-style, so he can eat. Feeding older dogs is no less earthy. Just look at what goes into packaged meals, a major chunk of Canada's \$750-million pet-food industry. Economy offerings, like Purina Dog Chow (\$11 per 8-kg bag), have enough preservatives to maintain "freshness" for two years and contain ground yellow corn, soybean meal, meat and bone meal, beef tallow with vitamin E and corn gluten meal. Premium brands, like Nutro's Natural Choice Lamb and Rice formula (\$24 per 8-kg bag), have a shelf life of one year and contain lamb meal, ground rice, rice bran, rice flour and sunflower oil with vitamin E. As for all-natural "super premiums" like Nature's Finest (\$35.95 per 7.5-kg bag), they won't spoil for six months and are packed with cuts of meat – like turkey necks and backs – that are supposedly suitable for humans. Between-meal snacks from specialty stores offer even more variety. Consider: Growlin' Bones treats (p-mutt butter, beef, vegetable, chicken, yappy apple or carob crunch) or chicken-, beef- or turkey-flavoured birthday cakes.

**HEAL!** There are around 8,000 vets in the country, and pet owners pay them an average \$250 a year. Sample costs: spaying and neutering, \$50 to \$200; basic check-up and vaccination, \$55; gastro-intestinal complaints, \$250; cancer treatments, \$1,000; hip replacement, \$1,500 to \$2,000. If your animal is terrified by thunder, it may be time to hit the couch. Dr. Gary Landsberg of Thornhill, Ont., is an animal behaviourist – a.k.a. dog psychologist – and hears many complaints. Most common? Aggression, but separation anxiety, excessive fear and manic behaviour are also high on the list. Dr. Landsberg charges a first-time consultation fee of \$71 per half-hour, though most clients need a full two hours. Further treatment can last months. If that sounds a bit much, you might consider a simple distraction to get rid of aggression, like a squeaky toy, perhaps the \$8.49 Peek-A-Boo-Chick, an elaborate cracked egg that reveals the face of a yellow baby bird when bitten.