

Smart Gadgets for Pets

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
November 2016

Gear that works and won't break the budget



It's no secret that the pet industry is booming. In 2015, according to the American Pet Products Association (APPA), spending for pets reached a record high of \$60.28 billion. Spending for pet supplies and over-the-counter medications alone that year was \$14.28 billion and is expected to hit \$15 billion in 2016.

Next to food sales, supplies are the second most lucrative area of the pet industry and support the growth of large retail corporations like PetSmart, Petco, and 1-800-PetMeds.

House pets -- dogs, cats, birds, rodents, fish, and reptiles -- have basic needs if they're to live comfortably under our roofs. Every year Americans reach into their pockets for money to spend on toys, bedding, cages, aquariums, training and grooming tools, and more, making their purchases at local pet stores, as well as online. Big-box retailers like Wal-Mart and Target all have pet sections, as do grocery and department store chains. Even convenience and drug stores have a few shelves offering in-demand pet items.

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Among the abundance of available pet stuff are a few, fairly inexpensive standout items that can help you to get a handle on certain problems with your pets. Prices mentioned here are those listed in the October 2016 catalogue of Ryan's Pet Supplies.

Most dogs like to eat; some like to eat so much so that when a meal is served, they gulp it down. This behavior can lead to digestive issues like regurgitation or worse. Bloat (gastric dilatation volvulus, or GDV) is a condition where a dog's stomach swells from an abnormal amount of swallowed air, food, and/or fluid. The stomach can twist, trapping the contents inside. Low blood pressure, shock, and organ damage can follow. Purdue University studies (1997) indicated that bloat is the second leading cause of death after cancer in large- and giant-breed dogs, although it can occur in any breed of dog.

The slow feeder bowl is designed to slow down a dog's fast eating patterns. Standard scooped-out plastic bowls have been re-engineered to include topographical-like features of buttes, fiords, and mazes to force eaters to safely forage for individual kibble nuggets rather than ravenously inhaling the entire serving at once. It is an important addition to a dog owner's bloat prevention regimen. Slo-Bowl has a wide assortment of styles, with prices ranging from \$4 to \$22.

If ants getting into the dog or cat food is your problem, look into the Sharper Image Motion Sensor Activated Pet Bowl for \$14. The bowl's lid automatically opens as the pet approaches. The battery-operated motion detector senses when the animal walks away and closes the lid. For finicky eaters, this bowl can keep food fresh and clean until your pet is ready to eat.

Housebreaking is something all dogs have to go through in order to fit into the human family lifestyle. Pee accidents that occur can be difficult to detect, especially if a home has carpeting. Left untreated, though, urine can continue to attract the animal or other house pets to that spot. Simple Solution has, well -- the simple solution. Its Spot Spotter HD is an ultraviolet urine detector. The battery-operated, hand-held device flashes ultraviolet light, making accidents glow in the dark. For \$19, it can be included in your puppy housebreaking tool chest.

Traveling with your pets can be fun if you can safely keep them away from the steering wheel and in the back seat of your vehicle. When seat restraints and wieldy metal barriers aren't options, try the new Pop & Go Barriers by Petmate. The flexible spring-wire panels compactly

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store and pop open to fit behind the front seat gap, keeping dogs in the back and allowing you to focus on the road. This handy hurricane evacuation product costs \$18 to \$36, depending on size.

Living with both dogs and cats in your home? Is the litter box being raided by the canines? Even with a hooded litter box, with the opening facing the wall, my dogs used to find a way to barge in there for “treats.” Now I’ve placed the litter box on the other side of a Carlson Walk-Thru Gate that has a tiny pet door. Small pets like cats can pass through, where larger dogs can’t. The gate mounts in a doorway and has a one-touch release handle that allows humans to open it. This cost me \$60 plus \$20 shipping, but it saved me a world of worry.

Daylight Saving Time ends November 6, and many dog owners will be arriving home from work after dark. That shouldn’t stop you from playing ball in the backyard with your best buddy. The Nite Ize GlowStreak LED ball has motion-activated lights inside for illuminated evening exercise for under \$13. Go fetch!

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