Pets win prizes

Dogs dancing to La Bolero and jumping through hoops, Peter Purves getting over-excited at the Best in Show trophy… it can only be Crufts. From March 6th-9th almost 28,000 dogs and their owners will descend on Birmingham’s NEC to celebrate all things canine. In honour of these fine pouches, The Snippet is dedicating this issue to all of our four-legged furry friends. Read on to learn about some of the unusual pets past US presidents have had installed in the White House, why mediaeval cats were burned at the stake and how to tackle the delicate issue of friends’ whiffy dogs.

BACK IN THE DAY

Mediaeval cats needed all of their nine lives! In 1484, Pope Innocent VII decreed that all cat-worshippers be burned as witches, believing that Satan-worshipping witches took on the form of cats. Cats’ habit of prowling at night further connected them to witchcraft. Any cat seen with an old woman was assumed to be a witch’s companion. The Inquisition was instructed to try all cat owners as witches. Hundreds of cats and owners burned to death. The lives of cats didn’t improve much until the 17th century when they became mousers on ships. Thankfully, by Victorian times, cats had gained acceptance as household pets.

First Puppy

Now I know I should be more concerned with matters of foreign policy, the environment and the global economy, but I have a confession. Speculation surrounding a potential new White House puppy was the only issue to have fully grabbed my attention during the latest U.S presidential campaign.

You see, it’s not just the British who are crazy about pets. American presidents have a soft spot for our fluffy friends too. Scarcely has a presidential term gone by without a number of pets making the Oval Office their home, and I’m pleased to report that Barack Obama is no exception. In his victory speech, Obama promised his daughters Sasha, 7, and Malia, 10, a puppy to take with them to the White House. Excited as they may have been about Dad’s presidential win, the girls had another good reason to celebrate. A First Puppy in the White House? Now that’s exciting!

Past Presidents brought many interesting animals to live with them at the White House. The wife of John Quincy Adams, the sixth President, kept silkworms. Herbert Hoover, the 31st President, had a possum. But top trumps go to Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President, who had a raccoon named Rebecca whom he walked on a lead!

Some of the more unusual presidential pets have been gifts from other world leaders. James Buchanan, the 15th President, received a herd of elephants from the King of Siam (now Thailand). Not to be outdone, the Sultan of Oman gave Martin Van Buren, the eighth President, a pair of tiger cubs.

But let’s return to the here and now and to an issue of global significance. What breed of dog will Barack Obama choose for his daughters? We await news with bated breath. The only clues we have are Obama’s stated preference to adopt a dog from a rescue centre – where he joked there are plenty of “mutts like me” – and the issue of Malia’s allergies, which might result in the selection of a short-haired breed. President Obama has admitted to CBS that the family has been deluged with advice and information: “We’re getting a lot of suggestions. And we’re taking it all under advisement.”

Who will replace the most recent canine incumbent, the Bush family’s Scottish terriers, Barney and Miss Beazley? It’s one issue that’s certainly got tongues wagging...

GLOBAL ALL-TIME TOP 10

Furry Fiends – Top 10 Most Destructive Dog Breeds:

1. Great Danes
2. Chihuahuas
3. Whippets
4. Mastiffs
5. English Setters
6. Daschunds
7. Boxers
8. Bulldogs
9. Beagles
10. Basset Hounds
Anthony Robbins is regarded worldwide as the NUMBER ONE personal development speaker, author and success coach. His clients have included B.B. Clinton, Andre Agassi and C.E.O’s of Fortune 500.

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The Snippet • Friday, March 13, 2009 • Area SW
DISH OF THE WEEK

**Melted hot dog wrap**

Try out this naughty but nice snack – a delicious tortilla-wrapped hot dog with melting Monterey cheese.

Cooking time: 20 minutes. Serves: 1

- 1 flour tortilla wrap
- 3 tbsp tomato salsa
- 1 frankfurter
- 1 tbsp mustard, preferably American-style
- 50g grated cheese, such as Monterey, Cheddar or Emmenthal

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas 4.

Spread the tortilla with the spicy tomato salsa.

Place a frankfurter sausage on top, add a squirt of American-style mustard and sprinkle over the grated cheese. Fold the tortilla over the sausage, place on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10 minutes until the tortilla is hot and crispy. Serve at once, preferably with a nice cold beer.

WEB OF WONDER

Guaranteed to raise a laugh on even the most wretched winter’s day, Talking Pets invites you to upload a photo of your favourite cat or dog, choose from one of a range of voices, add some accessories (such as sunglasses, hats, bow tie) and type in a short sentence. Then some mysterious internet magic will animate your pet’s mouth, and you’ll see and hear him or her speaking the words that you have just typed in. Don’t worry if you haven’t got a pet – you can choose from a selection of mutts and moggies on the site. Forget the dog talk growing ‘sausages’ at Esther Rantzen on That’s Life. This is the real deal. You can email the results to your mates or just enjoy the show for yourself. Let’s face it, this is the closest we’ll ever get to an appearance on The Nation’s Most Talented Pets. www.talkingpets.org.

A LADY ALWAYS TELLS

**Household tip**

How to tell a friend that their pet is too smelly...

Most dogs operate on the principle that it’s their duty to get as dirty and smelly as they can, whenever possible, by a range of foul methods including rolling in deer, rabbit and horse poo. However, there’s the normal ‘doggy’ smell and then there’s the extreme, offensive, gut-wrenchingly bad doggy smell. And if it’s got to the stage where you’re avoiding going to a friend’s home because of their fetid dog, then it’s time to take action. So how can you delicately raise the issue of a malodorous hound without causing offence or embarrassment to the owner?

Very, very brave souls could try a simple “I noticed that the dog is getting smelly and I thought you might want to know.” If you try this approach, be prepared for your friend to feel embarrassed or hurt and perhaps even not invite you over to the house again. For the slightly less brave majority, there’s always the good old hint-dropping option. The next time you are at their house, a helpful but seemingly innocent comment, such as, “I found this really cute pot of organic dog shampoo at a country fair last week...” might help the penny to drop. Of course, the proper etiquette would be to smile and say nothing, and bathe yourself in boiling water and domestos for several hours when you get home.

**Letters**

For Valentine’s Day this year, my wife decided to adopt a large rescue dog from a local animal shelter as a surprise present for us, but without consulting with me first. The dog has major separation anxiety issues, is destructive and extremely needy. I’m not anti-dog but I just can’t deal with all the mess and disruption. I’ve tried raising it with my wife, but she’s become incredibly attached to the dog already and says if he goes, she goes. I don’t think she’s joking. I’d appreciate some advice.

Stressed of Sevenoaks

Dear Stressed,

Quite frankly, I’d rather eat a mange-ridden dog than own one. Your mutt could have been to a Swiss finishing school, speak several languages, make a mean curry and be a dab hand at cleaning the loo and ironing shirts, but I still wouldn’t want to let him into my lovely, clean house.

If getting rid of the dog isn’t an option, then you need to get him on side. Now I’m no dog expert, but I’m guessing that this dog could be bribed. Stock up on treats and toys, and make sure that you’re the hero who hands them out. Be brave – offer to walk the dog on your own, and hopefully you’ll form a bond. You never know, the dog might be able to sense that you’re fed up with him and is acting out in response. If you pretend for long enough that you love him, pretending might eventually become reality, and then everyone will be happy.

Free every single week—pass it on!
Man About Town

I want a dog. A man’s dog. A great big, slobbering, playful beast. Unfortunately, the lady in my life has her heart set on a Shih Tzu, one of those little white fluffy girly dogs. Hell will freeze over before I’m going to be seen walking one of those in the park. I’m a firm believer that your choice of pet says a lot about you, and I’m backed up by the experts.

Lynn Hoover, President of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants suggests that “If you have a ferret, you may be telling the world, ’I’m a non-conformist.’ If you have a Labradoodle, you’re saying, ’I’m as fashionable as my dog breed.’ Anyway, that’s the message others perceive, and you intentionally -- or at least subconsciously -- want to communicate it.”

Apparently, people who tend to be social butterflies and prefer group settings own Golden Retrievers, while Chihuahua owners are often mischievous, taking after their high-energy, high-maintenance canine. God only knows what Shih Tzu owners are meant to be like! Regrettably for my missus, we are not about to find out.

GADGET OF THE WEEK

Attention all cat owners! Sick and tired of the neighbour’s moggy coming into your house uninvited? Is your cat being bullied? Are other cats stealing your cat’s food? Wouldn’t it be great if you could put a lock on the cat flap, and somehow give your cat the only key? The Pet Porte Microchip Cat Flap gives you this option. It works by identifying your cat by its microchip implant and will only open when it detects that particular microchip number. Designed by a vet, it can automatically detect light levels and can keep your cat in at night. Pet Porte: www.petporte.com.

See and Be Seen

CHISWICK PIER TRUSTS MOTHERS DAY CRUISE

Treat your mum to a relaxing cruise from Chiswick Pier to Westminster and back. The boat will leave at 2pm so be ready to embark at 1.30pm. If you really want to make her day, we’ve also arranged a three course meal at Pissarro’s when we get back. Combined cruise and meal tickets cost £25 for adults and £20 for children under 12.

(The boat will start and finish at Chiswick Pier - it will not stop anywhere on route.)

22 March www.chiswickpier.org.uk

HEAD OF THE RIVER RACE

The annual “Head of the River Race” from Mortlake to Putney Bridge is one of the big races on the rowing calendar — a warm up for the Oxford vs. Cambridge Boat Race which follows the same course backwards. The big difference between the Head of the River Race and its more famous counterpart is the fact that this one has 420 crews, instead of just two — meaning you can spend all afternoon watching the race backwards. The big difference between the Head of the River Race and its more famous counterpart is the fact that this one has 420 crews, instead of just two — meaning you can spend all afternoon watching the race backwards.

THE ANNUAL BLUEBELL WALK TAKES PLACE SUNDAY 26TH APRIL

Walkers are invited to enjoy the glorious surroundings of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew and help raise money for Cancer Research UK. The 5km (three-mile) sponsored event is a great opportunity for all the family. There will be cafés en route serving a variety of food and drink, and there are plenty of children’s activities within the gardens. The event, now in its twelfth year, has raised more than £210,000 for Cancer Research UK. Join us this year and help us raise even more! please note we are unable to register children and concessions online. Children and Friends of Kew can register and pay on the day of the event.  We are very grateful to Kew for once again generously supporting the walk.

www.supportus.cancerresearchuk.org/Events/Charity_walks/112

NETWORK YOUR WAY OUT OF THE DOWNTURN!

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