



Tid Bits

Size does matter and apparently so does breed

A new pet policy in New York City's 178,000 public housing apartments has made the fur fly. The policy bans Rottweilers, Doberman pinschers, full or mixed breed Pit Bulls or dogs expected to weigh more than 25 pounds (11+ kilos). The policy has stirred passions among dog owners and others at some of the city's 340 public housing complexes.

Some residents say the ban is a kind of dog profiling that unfairly singles out three entire breeds and treats owners of those dogs as potential problem tenants. Others support the ban, saying that other tenants fail to control big dogs both inside and outside the buildings and encourage aggressive behavior in their pets. The ban applies only to new tenants and not to existing canine residents. You've got wonder how the general public would react if there was a blanket ban on Chihuahuas, Pomeranians and Maltese Terriers.

Not the breed but the deed

A new study by the University of Córdoba has found that breed has little to do with a dog's aggressive behaviour. The study has found that bad training is the key ingredient to an aggressive dog.

The Spanish researchers studied 711 dogs (354 males and 357 females) of which 594 were purebred and 117 were half-breed dogs older than one year of age. Among the breeds observed were the Bull Terrier, the American Pit Bull Terrier, German Shepherd, the Boxer, the Rottweiler, the Doberman, as well as apparently more docile breeds such as the Dalmatian, the Irish Setter, the Golden Retriever, the Labrador Retriever, the Miniature Poodle, the Chihuahua, the Pekinese, or the French Bulldog, which also exhibit dominant behaviour.

According to the Spanish study, certain breeds, male sex, a small size, or an age of between 5-7 years old are 'the dog-dependent factors associated with greater dominance aggression'. Nevertheless, these factors have 'minimal effect' on whether the dog behaves aggressively. Factors linked to the owner's actions are more influential.

The study found that some of the factors that cause aggressiveness in dogs are: first-time dog ownership; failure to subject the dog to basic obedience training; spoiling or pampering the dog; buying a dog as a present, as a guard dog or on impulse; leaving the dog with a constant supply of food, or spending very little time with the dog in general and minimal exercise.

Fly friendly Fido & Fluffy Skies

Pet Airways, an airline designed just for pets, is scheduled to start operation in the US on July 14. Aircraft have been remodelled to accommodate 50 pet carriers all in the main cabin and not in the cargo hold. The pet clients have attendants delivering fresh water and making sure all creature comforts are on hand.

The airline will be flying to and from five cities (Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Denver and Chicago) and all flights are in the evening when skies and pets are calmer. Unlike other commercial carriers, Pet Airways give their passengers regular potty breaks. Their passengers are also given a chance to toilet on arrival before being collected.

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warning about what may be labelled as 'Breeder Pack' or generic plain bags of kibbles. While some pet food suppliers may sell short-dated food at a discount or damaged bags still within long dating cheaper, a practise by some unscrupulous merchants has come to light.

In the past when premium or super-premium dry pet foods of major brands reached their use-by or best-by dates, stores could return the portion of the packaging with the date to the manufacturers for credit without returning the actual food, supposedly disposing of it. As confirmed to us by consumers and two former employees of a major chain, the product was sometimes taken and mixed with other foods into what were called 'Breeder Packs' in clear plastic bags or other containers and sold at a discount. This would mean that the buyer could often be stuck with rancid, spoiled or otherwise mixed foods of questionable origin. This can be spotted by mixed types of kibble within the container and no manufacturer or nutritional information. Consumers are urged not to buy these and to report this practice to the PIAA and to the Fair Trading authorities.

A new role for working dogs—grief therapy

A handful of funeral homes in the US employ very specialised and qualified staff members—dogs for grief therapy. Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs is a non-profit organisation which evaluates, tests, trains, qualifies and supports therapy dogs for the purpose of giving loving and empathic support in nursing homes, hospitals, psychiatric wards and other facilities where emotional service dogs are indispensable. These funeral homes employ specially trained dogs as they offer empathy and comfort to friends and relatives who have gathered say goodbye to a loved one. Many of the funeral homes that use the services of these kind souls, believe that the calm presence and sweet demeanor brings a smile at a time where nothing else can.

Another new role for dogs – stress relief for cramming students

The University of Wisconsin brings dogs to the school to help ease the stress of students preparing for final exams. The school has 'counseling canines' on hand to help bust stress. Students are invited to pat and play with the dogs during study breaks.

Fish fight 'Green Pools' sprouting from foreclosures

In the arid Southwest of America, houses abandoned due to foreclosures are breeding environmental hazards. Their once gleaming backyard pools have become breeding grounds for algae and mosquitoes. Environmental health specialists in Nevada district have been swamped by complaints and so are using fish to combat the growing problem.

The backyard pool was once the status symbol of the middle class and now they're fetid reminders of all that's been lost. These soupy, algae cesspools create the perfect environment for millions of mosquitos. California, Arizona and Florida rely on Gambusia affinis, or mosquito fish. The inches-long creatures can survive for months in stagnant water, and to them, a batch of larvae is a prime-rib buffet. Mosquito fish, which are not native to the area, are bred up to 2 million a year. About 50 fish are needed to rid a 350 square metre area.

Zoos help in the fight against pandemics

Zoos are being drafted by the US government to track the spread of avian influenza. But there seem to be no plans yet to use the zoo network to track the swine flu virus – even though some experts believe zoos could easily do the job. With state-of-the-art veterinary labs and expert staff available to look after all kinds of animal species, zoos are well placed to track diseases that move quickly among animal populations.

Zoos are careful in monitoring their exotic animals and even analyse any death of wild birds on their grounds. Little is currently known about the transmission of the swine flu virus between different species or its evolutionary origins and such a system could help detect the virus mutating or hopping between hosts. It is believed that their systems could also help track and monitor the spread of swine influenza too.



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