

What's in Your Wallet?

Christmas wish list

By Laura Tyler

All I want for Christmas is.....

The dog gear industry is booming, even in these difficult economic times. I've made a list of a few gift ideas for the family dog; or the family who has a dog. I can tell you that most of them can be found in local stores that carry pet supplies, so shop locally whenever you can. Book recommendations can be googled online.

I would suggest a comfortable warm coat for any single coated dog. The smaller the dog the more they need that extra protection in our climate. It is much easier to teach your dog to wear a coat if you start when he's a puppy. For older dogs, I would begin by teaching him to wear a harness. Then I would put the coat on under the harness and get him out for a walk right away. That way he isn't quite so focused on what's covering his body. Dog booties are also great for our sub-zero days, but it takes more time to acclimate the dog to wearing them.

Check out interactive food dispensing toys. Busy buddies, Kong and Kong bones are great. You should remember that treat dispensing toys don't come with directions that the dog can read. It's important to teach your pup how to play with these toys. They have to be able to get the treats out by rolling the toy on the floor. A sit down session where you place one or two treats in the toy at a time and make it really easy to get the food out is a great way to start. Over time as you build the attraction to that toy, you can begin to make it a bit more difficult to get the treats out by smearing some peanut butter or squeeze cheese inside with the kibble. There are other interactive toys that you can play with together and its quality time spent teaching and training!

For those who like to read here's my list of book gifts for the dog owner. Yes, they are all about behavior or training. I'll leave the stories about bad dogs and heart ache to someone else. Each of these authors actually work in the training or behavior industry and they all come with great credentials. These books also live in my library and are recommended by me. So here you go:

How to Behave So Your Dog Behaves, by Dr. Sophia Yin DVM
Love Has No Age Limit, by Dr. Patricia McConnell
Living with Kids and Dogs, by Colleen Pelar
Terrier-Centric Dog Training, by Dawn Antoniak-Mitchell
The Puppy Primer, by Dr. Patricia McConnell and Brenda Scidmore

Put aside a bit of time to invest in a well run training program designed for families. By next summer you'll be looking for special events for the family where you can include your well trained and very social canine buddy.

Remember your dogs during the hectic holiday season. Make special arrangements to care for them when you have a house full of company. The holiday season can really take a toll on a very sensitive dog that is not used to having all the noise and turmoil of large family gatherings or parties.

Laura Tyler is a certified professional dog trainer with 25+ years of experience and has earned associate certification through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. She owns Total Teamwork Training LLC here in Northwest Colorado.

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