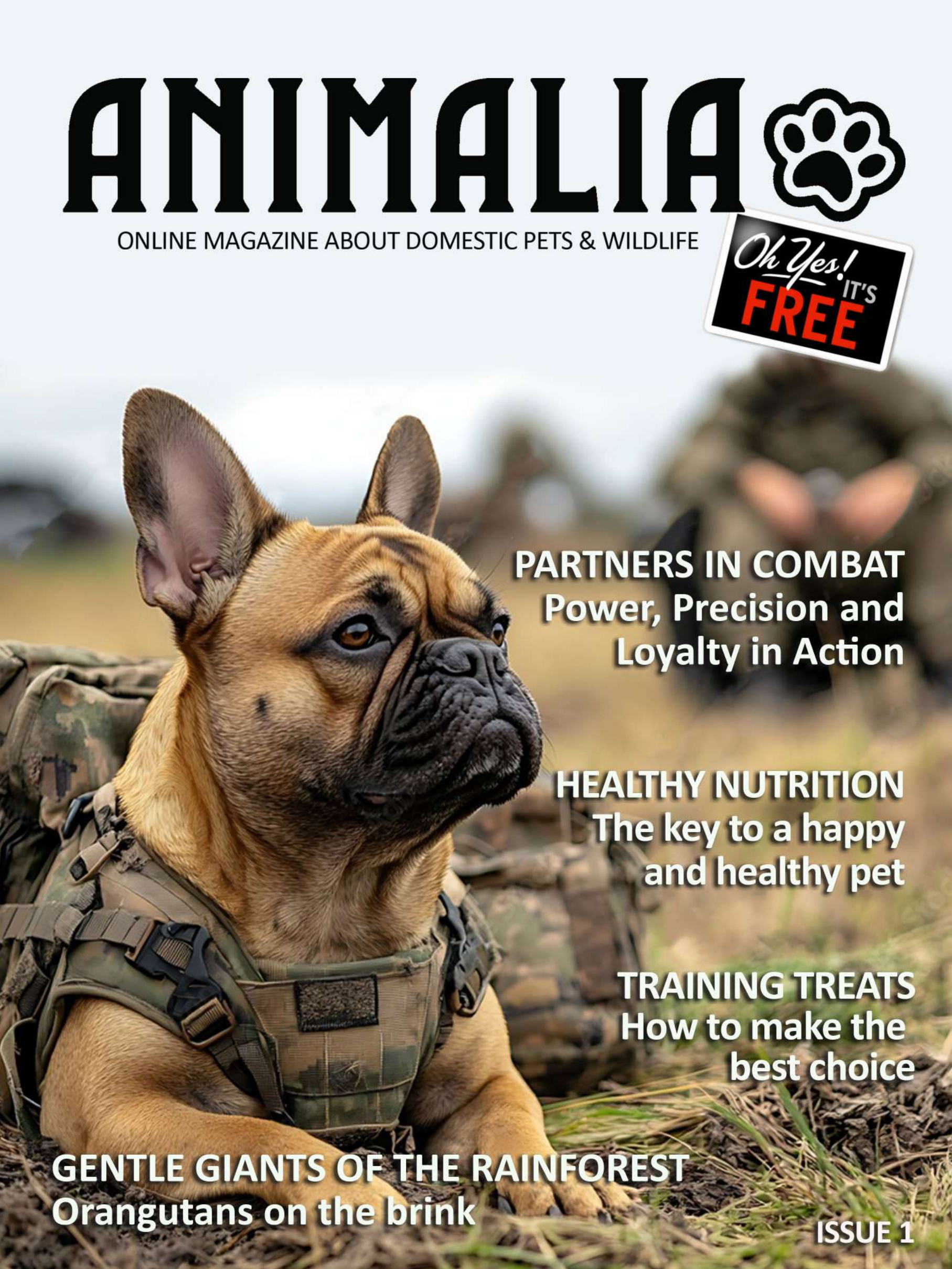


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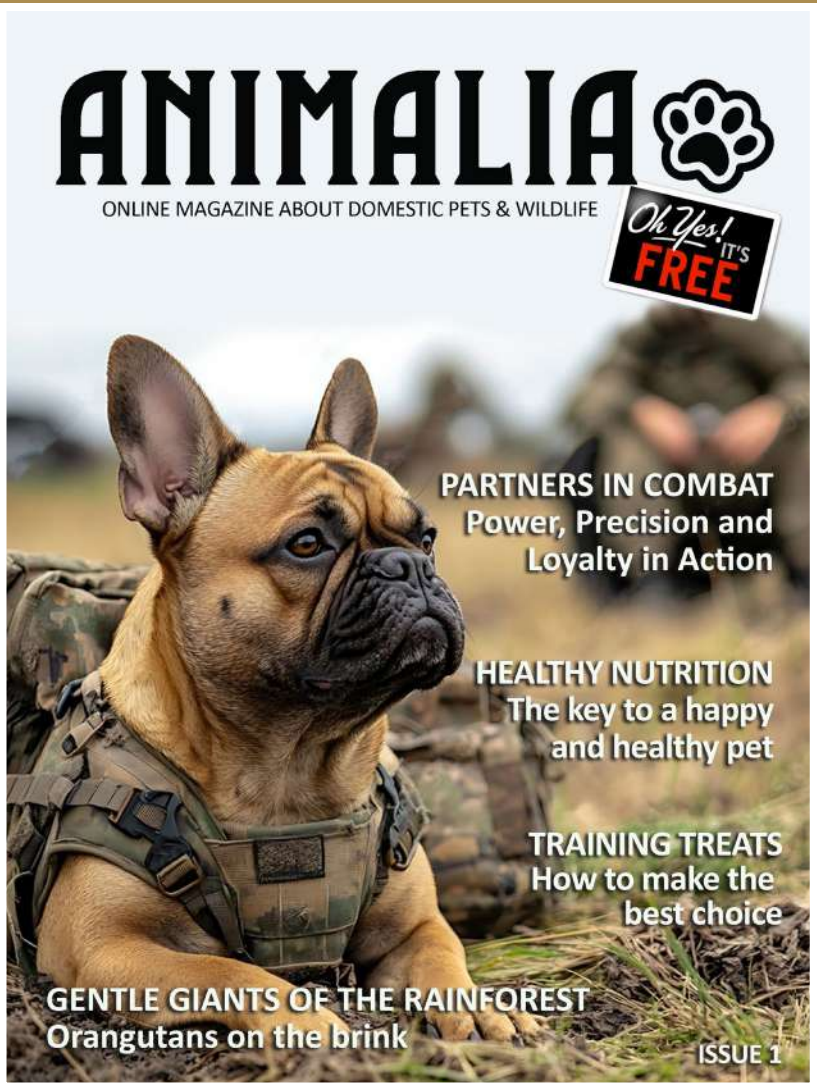
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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of ANIMALIA, a magazine born from an unwavering passion for the creatures that share our planet and enrich our lives. As publishers, we are thrilled to present a collection of stories that celebrate the beauty, resilience, and wonder of the animal kingdom—from the domesticated companions who greet us at the door to the wild souls thriving in distant ecosystems.

In these pages, you will discover practical guidance on dressing your pet for winter’s chill and ensuring feral cats find warmth and safety through the cold months; marvel at the intelligent orangutans swinging through rainforest canopies; trace the storied legacy of the Siberian Husky and the disciplined bravery of military dogs in combat; explore the surprising world of ostrich farming and the vibrant responsibilities of parrot ownership; and learn essential tips for maintaining your pet’s dental health, among many other captivating features.

ANIMALIA is more than a publication—it is an invitation to deepen our connection with nature and nurture compassion for all living beings. Best of all, this magazine is entirely free to download and share with friends, family, and fellow animal lovers, because knowledge and inspiration should flow as freely as the wind across open plains. We hope these stories spark curiosity, encourage stewardship, and remind us that every creature, great or small, plays a vital role in the tapestry of life.

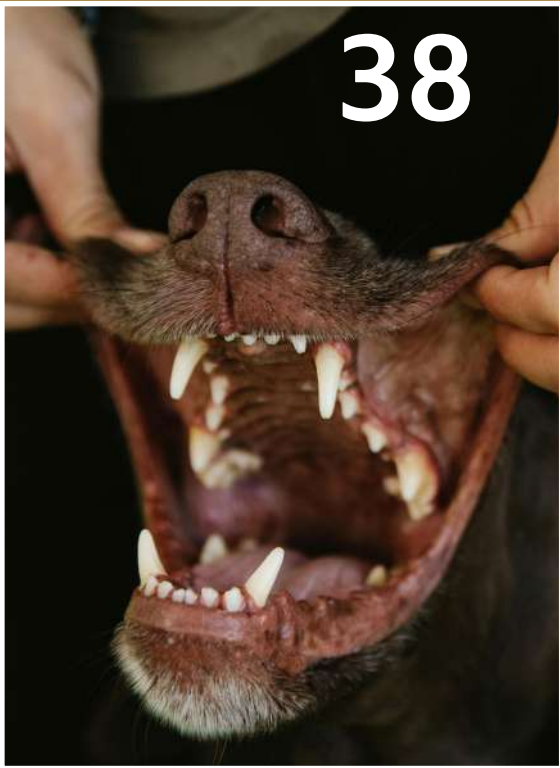
Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, let us champion the wild and the wonderful. Be kind.

Warmly,

Carien & Alwyn Marais
The Publishers
ANIMALIA

Note from the Publishers

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Huskies - A lifestyle choice

The Siberian Husky: A look at this magnificent breed

By Alwyn P. Marais

With their striking blue eyes, wolf-like appearance, and thick double coat, Siberian Huskies capture hearts wherever they go. Originally bred by the Chukchi people of northeastern Asia to pull sleds across vast frozen expanses, these dogs have evolved from working animals into beloved family companions. However, the transition from sled dog to household pet reveals both remarkable qualities and significant challenges that potential owners must carefully consider. Understanding both the good and bad attributes of this breed is essential for determining whether a Husky is the right fit for your lifestyle.

The Good: Exceptional Qualities of the Husky Remarkable Companionship

Huskies are fundamentally pack animals, bred to work closely with both humans and other dogs in harsh Arctic conditions. This heritage translates into dogs that genuinely enjoy being part of a family unit. They're friendly, affectionate, and typically love spending time with their human companions. Unlike some breeds that bond primarily with one person, Huskies usually form

making them excellent dogs for households with multiple people. Their sociable nature extends beyond the immediate family. Huskies are generally friendly with strangers, greeting visitors with enthusiasm rather than suspicion. This open, welcoming personality makes them delightful companions in social settings and ensures that guests feel comfortable in your home. Many Husky owners report that their dogs seem to genuinely smile, with their expressive faces radiating joy during playtime and interactions.



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Outstanding with Children

One of the Husky's most celebrated attributes is their typically gentle and patient nature with children. Their pack mentality means they often view children as members of their family group, tolerating the sometimes rough handling that young children may inadvertently inflict. Huskies generally have high energy levels that match well with active children, making them excellent playmates for outdoor adventures, games, and exercise.

Their size - medium to large, typically weighing 35-60 pounds—is substantial enough to handle enthusiastic play without being so large as to accidentally overwhelm small children. Combined with their typically non-aggressive temperament, this makes them wonderful family dogs in households with kids of various ages.

Exceptional Endurance and Athletic Ability

For active individuals and families, the Husky's legendary stamina is a tremendous asset. These dogs were bred to pull sleds for hours across frozen tundra, and that endurance remains deeply ingrained in the breed. A Husky can easily accompany you on long runs, extensive hikes, bikejoring sessions, or any outdoor adventure you can imagine. This athletic prowess makes them ideal companions for people who enjoy outdoor activities and want a four-legged partner to share their adventures. Their love of exercise means they're always ready for the next activity, whether it's a morning jog, an afternoon hike, or a weekend camping trip. For fitness enthusiasts, a Husky provides built-in motivation to stay active.

Intelligence and Problem-Solving

Huskies are highly intelligent dogs capable of learning commands, solving problems, and figuring out complex situations. This intelligence manifests in various ways, from quickly mastering basic obedience to finding creative solutions to obstacles. Many Husky owners are amazed by their dog's ability to manipulate latches, open doors, and navigate challenges that would stump less clever breeds. This cognitive ability means that with proper training, Huskies can learn an impressive array of commands and tricks. They're capable of understanding nuanced communication and responding to subtle cues from their owners.

Minimal Aggression and Excellent with Other Dogs

One of the Husky's most positive traits is their typically low aggression toward both humans and other dogs. They were bred to work in teams, requiring cooperative, non-aggressive



temperaments. This history means modern Huskies usually get along well with other dogs, enjoying canine companionship and playmates. Their lack of territorial aggression extends to strangers and new situations. Unlike guard breeds that may view unfamiliar people with suspicion, Huskies typically greet everyone as a potential friend. This friendly disposition reduces many behavioral concerns that plague more aggressive or reactive breeds.

Clean and Relatively Odor-Free

Despite their thick coats, Huskies are remarkably clean dogs. They're often compared to cats in their self-grooming habits, spending time cleaning themselves and maintaining their coats. Unlike some breeds that develop strong "dog odor," Huskies typically have minimal smell, even when their coats are wet. Additionally, Huskies are generally easy to housetrain and maintain good bathroom habits once properly trained. Their cleanliness extends to their eating habits as well, as many Huskies are surprisingly neat eaters compared to other breeds.

The Bad: Significant Challenges of Husky Ownership Complete Lack of Protection and Guard Dog Abilities

Perhaps the most significant disappointment for those seeking a protective companion is the Husky's complete lack of guard dog instincts. Despite their wolf-like appearance that might suggest fierce protection, Huskies are notoriously poor guard dogs. Their friendly nature toward strangers means they're more likely to greet an intruder with tail wags and requests

for pets than with any protective behavior. Huskies typically don't bark at suspicious sounds or alert owners to unusual occurrences. They lack the territorial instincts that drive many breeds to protect their homes and families. If home security or personal protection is a priority, a Husky is definitively the wrong choice. They might look intimidating to those unfamiliar with the breed, but any actual threat would likely be met with friendly curiosity rather than defensive behavior.

Extreme Independence and Stubbornness

The intelligence that makes Huskies capable learners also manifests as profound stubbornness. These dogs are independent thinkers, bred to make decisions while pulling sleds across Arctic expanses where blind obedience could be dangerous. This independence translates into dogs that question commands, ignore instructions they find unreasonable, and generally operate on their own agenda. Training a Husky requires exceptional patience, consistency, and often professional assistance. Even well-trained Huskies may choose not to obey commands if they don't see the point or if something more interesting catches their attention. Off-leash reliability is nearly impossible to achieve with this breed, as their prey drive and independent nature can override even the best training when they spot something worth chasing.

Escape Artists and Wandering Tendencies

Huskies are legendary escape artists, using their intelligence and physical abilities to breach virtually any containment system. They can jump six-foot fences, dig under barriers



Photo Credit: Павел Гавриков / Pexels

in minutes, chew through materials, manipulate gates and latches, and find weak points in any enclosure. Their strong prey drive and desire to run mean that once free, they may travel miles from home, putting themselves at risk of injury, getting lost, or causing traffic accidents.

This escape tendency requires significant investment in secure fencing (typically at least six feet high with buried barriers to prevent digging), constant vigilance, and acceptance that your Husky may never be trustworthy off-leash in unfenced areas. Many Husky owners live with persistent anxiety about their dog’s safety, knowing that a single momentary lapse in security could result in an escaped dog.

Extreme Exercise Requirements

While the Husky’s endurance is an asset for active owners, it becomes a serious liability for those unprepared for the breed’s extreme exercise needs. A Husky requires at least one to two hours of vigorous exercise daily—not a casual walk around the block, but running, hiking, or other intense physical activity. Without adequate exercise, Huskies become destructive, hyperactive, and difficult to manage. This requirement doesn’t diminish with age as quickly as in other breeds, and it persists regardless of weather, your schedule, or your energy levels. For people with demanding jobs, physical limitations, or preferences for sedentary lifestyles, meeting a Husky’s exercise needs can become an exhausting daily burden rather than an enjoyable activity.



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Destructive Behavior

Under-exercised or bored Huskies are incredibly destructive. They can destroy furniture, chew through walls, shred belongings, dig up yards, and cause thousands of dollars in damage. Their intelligence means they can open containers, access supposedly secure areas, and find creative ways to occupy themselves when left alone—usually with expensive consequences. Even well-exercised Huskies may exhibit destructive behaviors, particularly during their first few years. Separation anxiety and boredom combine with strong jaws and problem-solving abilities to create perfect storms of household destruction. Many Husky owners return home to scenes of chaos that would be comical if they weren’t so costly.

Excessive Shedding

Huskies have thick double coats that shed heavily year-round and “blow” their undercoats twice annually in spectacular fashion. During shedding season, you can fill garbage bags with fur daily while still finding hair on every surface of your home. Furniture, clothing, food, and every corner accumulate fur despite regular vacuuming and grooming. This shedding requires constant maintenance, including regular brushing (daily during heavy shedding periods), frequent vacuuming, and acceptance that your home and belongings will always have dog hair on them. For people who value pristine homes or have allergies, the shedding alone can make Husky ownership untenable.



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Vocalization and Noise

Huskies are famously vocal, though they bark less than many breeds. Instead, they howl, “talk,” whine, and make various vocalizations that can be loud, persistent, and annoying to neighbors. Their howling can trigger noise complaints, particularly in apartments or neighborhoods with close quarters. While some owners find the “talking” charming, others find it excessive and difficult to manage, especially when the dog decides to vocalize at inconvenient times.

Conclusion: Know What You’re Getting

The Siberian Husky is a magnificent breed with remarkable qualities—wonderful companionship, excellent temperament with children and other dogs, impressive athletic abilities, and striking beauty. However, these positives come packaged with significant challenges that make Huskies unsuitable for many households. They offer no protection or guard dog capabilities despite their imposing appearance. Their independence and stubbornness make training frustrating. Their escape artistry and exercise requirements demand constant vigilance and time commitment. Their destructive potential and shedding create ongoing management challenges. Huskies thrive with active, patient owners who have secure properties, time for extensive daily exercise, tolerance for shedding and vocalization, and no need for protective instincts. They’re poor choices for first-time dog owners, apartment dwellers without significant exercise options, people wanting guard dogs, or anyone unable to commit to their demanding requirements.

If you can meet their needs and accept their limitations, a Husky provides unparalleled companionship and joy. If you cannot, choosing a different breed will result in a happier outcome for both you and the dog. The key to successful Husky ownership lies not in managing their challenging traits but in honestly assessing whether your lifestyle truly accommodates this remarkable but demanding breed.



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Water is a lifeline

Paws & Hydration: Why fresh water is your pet's lifeline

By Carien Marais

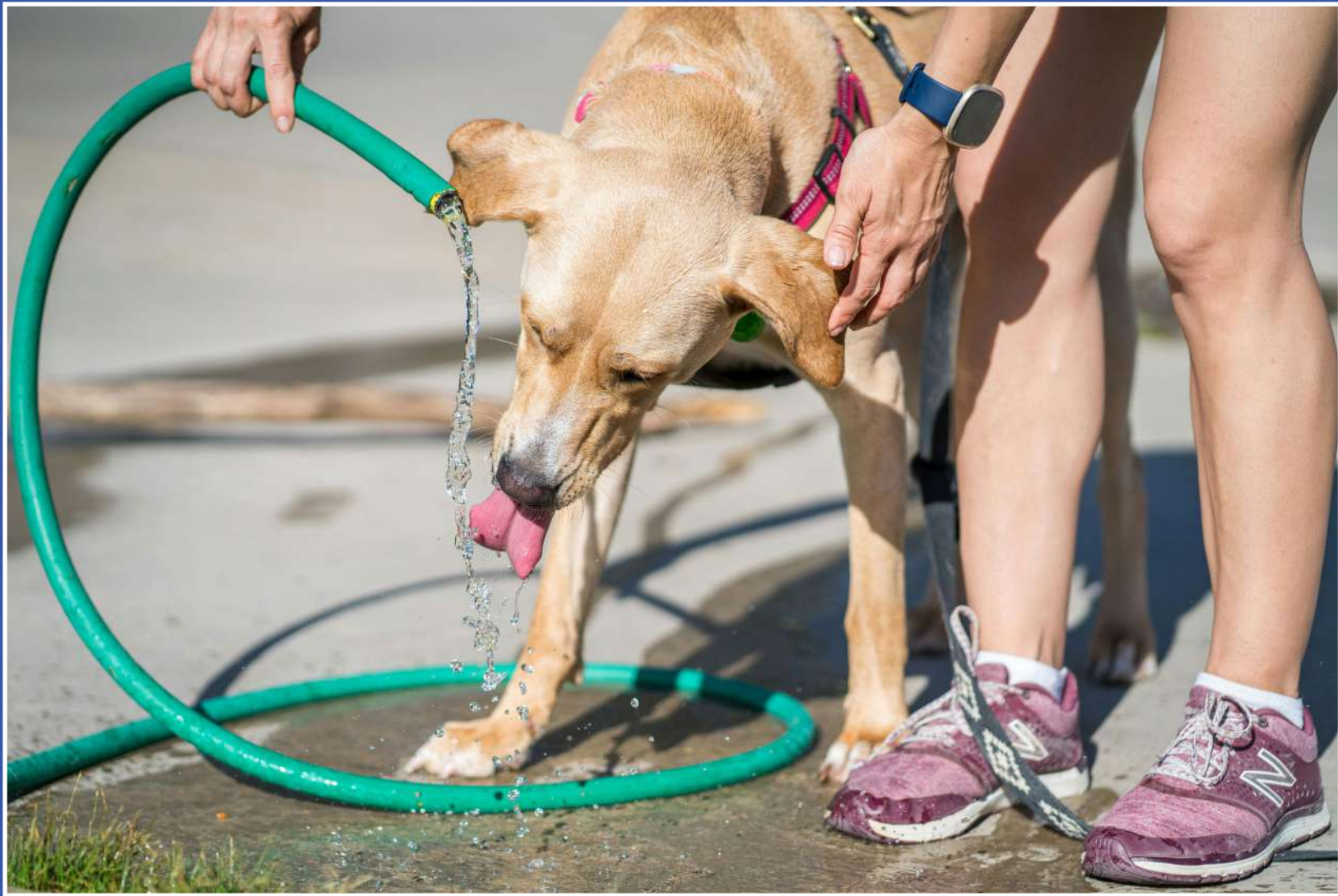
Imagine sprinting a marathon with zero water breaks. That's what even mild dehydration feels like to your dog or cat—except they can't raid the cooler. We lavish them with gourmet kibble and squeaky toys, yet the one thing their bodies crave most, fresh, clean water available around the clock, often sits stagnant in a corner bowl. A dog's body is eighty percent water; a cat's is seventy.

Every heartbeat, every playful pounce, every midnight zoomie relies on it. Skimp on hydration and you're not just making them thirsty—you're stressing organs from brain to kidneys in mere hours. A twenty-pound pup needs fourteen to twenty ounces daily (one ounce per pound, plus extra for heat or hijinks); a ten-pound feline demands eight to ten. Double those numbers when the thermostat climbs or the kibble bag says "crunchy." Pets are masters of disguise. By the time a dog pants like a steam engine or a cat retreats to the coolest tile, they've already lost five to ten percent of their body water. Early clues hide in plain sight: gums that feel tacky and refill slowly when pressed, skin that tents and lingers when pinched at the scruff, eyes that sink like setting suns, energy that fizzles mid-zoomie, urine the color of strong tea. Perform the scruff test daily—if the skin snaps back in under a second, cheers; longer than two and you're racing the vet clock. Stale water is a bacteria rave waiting to happen. Dogs slurp one to two ounces per lap; cats sip like royalty. Either way, yesterday's bowl is today's science experiment. Dump and refill morning and night, then scrub with hot, soapy water weekly—dishwashers can't scour the biofilm hiding in ceramic pores. Elevate the experience with running fountains (cats treat moving water like reality TV), multiple stations on every floor (far from litter and kibble to dodge



contamination), and stainless steel or glass bowls—plastic scratches turn into microbial motels. On scorching days, toss in ice cubes; big breeds gulp less and stay cooler. Dry kibble delivers a measly ten percent moisture; canned food gushes seventy-eight. Swap even one meal and you've gifted fifty to a hundred extra milliliters of hydration. For cats prone to urinary crystals, wet food isn't optional - it's armor. Blend a can of low-sodium tuna in its juice with warm water, freeze in cubes, and watch picky princes lap luxury. Meet Max, a six-year-old Golden who crumpled post-hike. Bloodwork screamed hemoconcentration; two days of IV fluids revived him. His human? "I filled the bowl every morning..."—in blazing sun. Then there's Luna, an indoor cat who quit eating. Bladder stones traced to one grimy bowl. A twelve-dollar fountain and wet food erased crystals in six months. Make it routine: two bowls minimum, refreshed twice daily, scrubbed weekly with vinegar, intake tracked with a sharpie line on the bowl, weight monitored at every vet visit—three percent drop is an ambulance siren.





Hydration Hacks That'll Make Your Pet Beg for Water

Senior pets are hydration rock stars who forgot the encore. Past seven, kidneys slack and thirst signals fade; a twelve-year-old Lab may drink thirty percent less yet need more to flush meds and waste. Arthritis turns a floor bowl into Everest; dementia hides the water dish in plain sight. Serve lukewarm water (eighty-five degrees mimics body temp and boosts intake twenty-five percent), elevate bowls to hip height with foam risers, spike with a tablespoon of low-sodium broth (kidney check first), and scatter three-ounce shot glasses in every nap nook. Ammonia-scented urine? Kidney red alert—book the blood panel. Road-trips are dehydration conspiracies: cortisol from stress, dry AC blast, motion sickness spewing precious fluids. Pack a collapsible silicone bowl, a frozen solid water bottle (ice pack by morning, drink by lunch), unflavored Pedialyte (one teaspoon per eight ounces, vet-approved), and enforce sip stops every ninety minutes on pee-pad islands. Flying? Freeze a bowl overnight—TSA waves solid ice through; it melts into twelve ounces mid-flight.

Cats wage psychological warfare on water. Too deep and whiskers revolt; too still and its suspect; chlorine whiff and they ghost. Offer wide, shallow pie plates, filter tap through a Brita, tempt with a single drop of tuna juice, and install motion-sensor fountains—prey drive plus twenty percent more intake, per Cornell. One in three indoor cats battles crystals; your fountain is cheaper than surgery. Panic mode: skin tent dangling like wet laundry, eyes raisin-dry. Skip the bowl—risk choking. Offer ice chips, learn sub-Q fluids from

your vet (one hundred milliliters under skin equals two safe bowls), and never touch sports drinks—xylitol courts liver failure. Pin this calendar to the fridge: January, flip half the meals to wet food for sixty bonus milliliters daily; April, drop a second fountain upstairs and slash UTI odds forty percent; July, freeze broth into licky mats to conquer heat waves; October, pair senior bloodwork with a water diary to snag kidney decline early. Water isn't mundane—it's the plot twist that turns survival into swagger. One sparkling bowl, one clever hack, one vigilant glance: that's the margin between vet panic and victory laps. Overfill it, splash it, celebrate it. Your pet's been thirst-trapping you forever. Swipe right on hydration and watch the tail wags write the sequel.



Joy in Every Sip

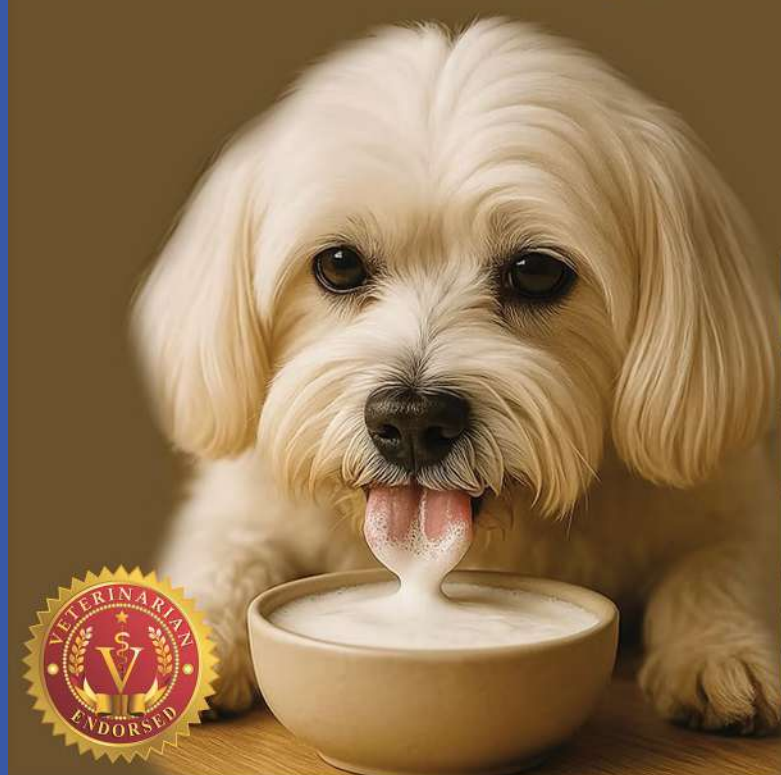
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Winter Warriors: Safeguarding feral cats in the frost

By Carien Marais

As autumn fades into the biting chill of winter, streets and alleys worldwide become battlegrounds for unsung survivors: feral cats. These elusive felines - descendants of once-domesticated pets or born wild - face plummeting temperatures, icy winds, and snow-covered grounds that turn survival into a daily ordeal. Yet, with a few thoughtful actions, even the most casual observer can become a lifeline. Small gestures - providing shelter, food, or water - can mean the difference between life and a frozen end. This winter, let's explore how to care for these independent spirits without disrupting their wild nature.

Understanding the Harsh Reality

Feral cats are not stray pets longing for a home; they are adept survivors adapted to outdoor life. However, winters with temperatures dipping below freezing pose severe threats. Hypothermia sets in quickly for undernourished cats, while wet fur from rain or snow exacerbates the cold. Food becomes scarce as rodents burrow deeper, and water sources freeze solid. Kittens and elderly cats are especially vulnerable, with survival rates dropping sharply in sub-zero conditions. Spotting a feral cat is often fleeting—a shadow darting from a dumpster or a pair of glowing eyes in the headlights. But when you do see them, intervention doesn't require capture or adoption. The key is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs, which humanely control populations while allowing cats to remain in their territories. Animal welfare organizations around the world promote TNR, and individual efforts complement these initiatives beautifully.

Building Simple Shelters: A Cozy Haven from the Cold

One of the most impactful gestures is creating insulated shelters. Feral cats seek warmth instinctively, but urban and rural environments offer little protection. A DIY shelter can be assembled in under an hour with everyday materials, providing a dry, windproof space that raises their body temperature by several degrees. Start with a large plastic storage bin (at least 2x2x2 ft / 60x40x40 cm for multiple cats). Cut a 6-inch (15 cm) diameter hole in one side, about 4 inches (10 cm) from the bottom, to prevent drafts. Line the interior with straw—not hay, which molds—or Mylar blankets for insulation. Place another bin inside for double-wall protection, and elevate the whole structure on bricks or wood to avoid flooding. Camouflage it with leaves or position it in quiet spots like under porches, behind sheds, or in alleyways where cats already congregate. In snowy regions, ensure the entrance faces away from prevailing winds. Community cat colonies thrive with 2-3 shelters per group, spaced to reduce territorial fights. Volunteers in cities from New York to Tokyo have reported colonies surviving -10°C / 14°F nights thanks to these setups. Remember: no blankets or towels inside—they absorb moisture and freeze.

Nourishing Bodies Against the Bite

Hunger amplifies winter’s cruelty. Feral cats burn extra calories just to stay warm, needing up to 50% more food than in summer. Dry kibble is ideal—it’s less likely to freeze than wet food—and should be placed in sheltered areas to stay dry. Feed at consistent times, ideally dusk or dawn when cats are active, to avoid attracting pests. A simple automated feeder with a timer can dispense portions if you’re away. In icy conditions, scatter food on elevated surfaces to prevent snow burial.

Water is equally critical; use heated bowls (solar-powered ones are affordable and widely available online) or add a ping-pong ball to non-heated bowls to prevent full freezing by creating movement. Check local regulations on feeding feral cats—many areas encourage humane care but may have guidelines. Pair feeding with TNR to prevent overpopulation; neutered cats focus energy on survival rather than reproduction.

Health Checks and Emergency Aid

When you spot a feral cat, observe from afar. Signs of distress include limping, excessive sneezing, or matted fur, indicating injury or illness. Frostbite appears as pale ears or tails; if safe, provide extra fatty foods like tuna in oil for quick energy. For hands-on help, contact local animal rescues or vets offering low-cost TNR. Never attempt to handle ferals yourself—stress can harm them more than the cold, and rabies risk, though low, exists in some regions. Small gestures extend to clearing ice from feeding areas or leaving garage doors cracked for temporary refuge (with an escape route). During extreme weather events—like blizzards or polar vortexes—community networks save hundreds by coordinating shelters.

The Ripple Effect of Compassion

Caring for feral cats isn’t about taming the wild—it’s about coexistence. Research from universities worldwide shows that well-fed, sheltered colonies reduce nuisance behaviors like yowling or scavenging. Your actions inspire neighbors; one shelter project in a single neighborhood can grow into a city-wide movement. This winter, as snow falls on city skylines or frost glazes rural fields, remember: a feral cat’s glance might be gratitude. With straw-stuffed bins, timely meals, and vigilant eyes, we ease their burden. In a season of harshness, our small kindnesses forge unbreakable bonds with nature’s resilient roamers.



Photo Credit: Kalaw Myanmar -Burmese feral cat near the flames, Village life in the Shan Hills



Photo Credit: Farfalina / Pexels



Photo Credit: Hakan Kayahan / Pexels



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Parrot ownership: Discovering the advantages of these remarkable companions

By Alwyn P. Marais

For centuries, parrots have fascinated humans with their brilliant colors, captivating personalities, and extraordinary cognitive abilities. From the majestic Macaws of South America to the charming Budgerigars of Australia, these avian companions offer a pet ownership experience unlike any other. While parrots require significant commitment and specialized care, they provide rewards that extend far beyond what traditional pets can offer. This comprehensive exploration reveals why parrots have become beloved members of countless households worldwide and why they might be the perfect addition to your family.

Unparalleled Intelligence and Cognitive Abilities
When discussing the advantages of parrot ownership, their remarkable intelligence stands at the forefront. Parrots rank among the most intelligent creatures in the animal kingdom, with cognitive abilities that rival and sometimes exceed those of great apes and cetaceans.

Problem-Solving Masters

Parrots demonstrate exceptional problem-solving skills that continually amaze researchers and owners alike. They can figure out complex puzzles, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and even use tools to achieve their goals. Studies have shown that parrots can solve multi-step problems, requiring them to complete several actions in



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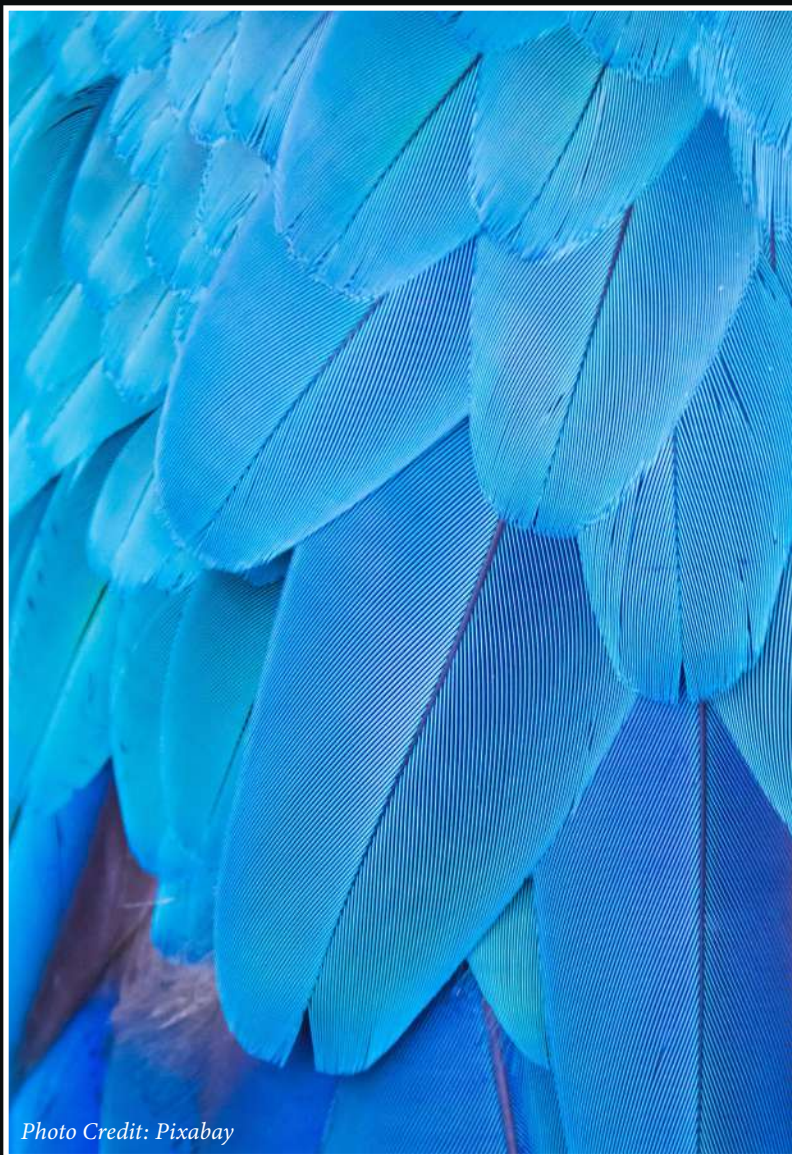


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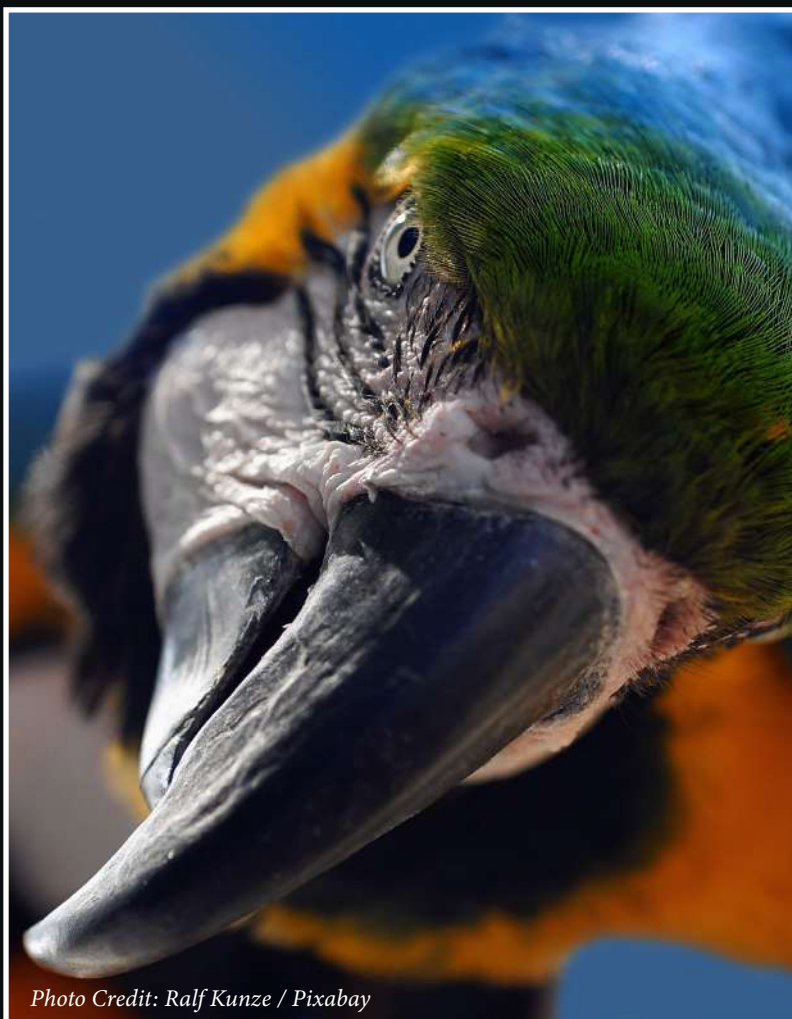


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sequence to obtain a reward. This intelligence translates into engaging daily interactions where your parrot learns to open cage latches, manipulate puzzle toys, and navigate obstacle courses you create for enrichment.

Language Acquisition and Communication

Perhaps the most celebrated aspect of parrot intelligence is their ability to mimic and use human language. While not all species are equally talkative, many parrots can learn extensive vocabularies ranging from dozens to hundreds of words and phrases. African Grey Parrots, in particular, have demonstrated vocabulary sizes exceeding 1,000 words, with some famous individuals like Alex (studied by Dr. Irene Pepperberg) showing the ability to understand concepts like color, shape, number, and even zero. What makes this truly special is that parrots don't merely mimic—they can learn to use words contextually. Your parrot might say "hello" when you enter the room, request specific foods by name, or tell you "goodnight" at bedtime. This creates a unique form of communication that bridges the species divide in ways that few other pets can achieve.

Emotional Intelligence

Beyond cognitive prowess, parrots possess remarkable emotional intelligence. They can read human body language and facial expressions, sensing when you're happy, sad, or stressed. Many parrot owners report that their birds offer comfort during difficult times, becoming quieter and more affectionate when their human companions are upset. This empathetic quality creates deep emotional bonds that enrich both parties' lives.

Extraordinary Longevity: A Lifetime Partnership

One of the most distinctive advantages of parrot ownership is their exceptional lifespan. Unlike hamsters, rabbits, or even cats and dogs, parrots can live for decades, with some species potentially outliving their owners.

Long-Term Companionship

Small parrot species like Budgerigars and Cockatiels typically live 10-20 years with proper care, while medium-sized parrots such as Conures and African Greys can live 20-50 years. Large parrots, including Macaws and Cockatoos, can survive 50-80 years or more. This longevity means that a parrot you bring home as a young adult might still be with you when you retire, sharing in decades of life changes, celebrations, and everyday moments. This extended companionship allows for the development of exceptionally deep bonds. Over years and decades, your parrot learns your routines, preferences, and personality quirks just as thoroughly as you learn theirs. The relationship evolves and matures in ways that shorter-lived pets simply cannot replicate.

Multi-Generational Family Members

For families, a parrot can become a true multi-generational companion. Children might grow up with the same parrot, introducing the bird to their own children years later. This creates unique family traditions and shared histories, with the



Photo Credit: Wilbert Rodriguez / Pixabay

parrot serving as a living connection between generations. Stories, inside jokes, and cherished memories accumulate over the decades, making the parrot an irreplaceable part of family identity.

Distinct Personalities and Individual Characters

Every parrot is a unique individual with their own personality, preferences, quirks, and temperament. This individuality ensures that the parrot ownership experience is never monotonous or predictable.

Complex Behavioral Repertoires

Parrots exhibit incredibly diverse behaviors that reflect their complex inner lives. Some parrots are bold and outgoing, immediately approaching new people and situations with confidence. Others are shy and reserved, preferring quiet time with their trusted humans. Some are comedians, constantly seeking laughs through silly antics and playful behavior. Others are more serious and dignified, approaching life with measured consideration. Your parrot will develop preferences for specific activities, foods, toys, music genres, and even particular people. One parrot might love dancing to rock music, while another prefers classical compositions. Some enjoy being held and cuddled, while others prefer sitting near you without direct contact. Discovering these preferences and respecting your parrot's individuality creates a relationship based on mutual understanding and respect.

Entertainment and Joy

Parrots are natural entertainers who bring daily doses of laughter and joy. They'll bob their heads to music, perform acrobatic displays, play with toys in inventive ways, and engage in behaviors that seem designed purely for your amusement. Many parrots develop signature moves or routines that become beloved household traditions. Their curiosity about the world around them means they're constantly investigating objects, experimenting with sounds, and discovering new ways to interact with their environment. Watching a parrot explore, play, and express themselves provides endless entertainment and reinforces the sense that you're living with a vibrant, sentient being rather than simply caring for a pet.

Allergy-Friendly Alternative to Furry Pets

For individuals and families dealing with pet allergies, parrots offer a viable and rewarding alternative to traditional furry companions.

Reduced Allergenic Properties

Unlike cats and dogs, parrots don't produce the same type of dander that triggers most pet allergies. While some parrot species (particularly Cockatoos and African Greys) produce powder down—a fine dust that can affect sensitive individuals—many species produce minimal dust and pose significantly fewer allergic concerns than mammals.



Photo Credit: Adam / Pixabay

Parrots don't shed fur that collects on furniture, clothing, and carpets. Their droppings are relatively odorless and easy to clean, especially compared to cat litter boxes or dog waste. For allergy sufferers who still crave the companionship of an intelligent pet, certain parrot species like Macaws, Eclectus Parrots, or Pionus Parrots offer excellent low-allergen options.

Clean and Manageable

Parrots are naturally clean animals that spend considerable time preening and maintaining their feathers. Unlike dogs that require regular bathing or cats that shed constantly, parrots manage most of their grooming independently. Most parrots enjoy regular misting with water or bathing opportunities, which they handle themselves once you provide the means.

Space-Efficient Living

While parrots need appropriately sized cages and dedicated out-of-cage time, they're remarkably well-suited to various living situations, including apartments and homes without outdoor space.

No Outdoor Requirements

Unlike dogs that need daily walks regardless of weather or your schedule, parrots thrive entirely indoors. This eliminates concerns about yard space, outdoor exercise areas, or dealing with inclement weather. You'll never need to walk your parrot in the rain, shovel snow to create bathroom space, or rush home to let them outside. This indoor lifestyle also means your parrot is protected from predators, parasites, and environmental dangers that outdoor pets face. There's no risk of your parrot running away, getting hit by a car, or encountering aggressive animals. The controlled indoor environment allows you to optimize conditions for your parrot's health and happiness.

Apartment-Appropriate

Many parrot species adapt well to apartment living, provided they receive adequate attention and enrichment. Smaller species like Budgerigars, Cockatiels, and Parrotlets require relatively modest cage space and can live comfortably in apartments. Even some larger species can thrive in apartment settings with proper accommodation. While noise can be a consideration (some species are quite vocal), many parrots can be trained to moderate their volume during quiet hours. Additionally, numerous parrot species are naturally quieter, making them suitable for close-quarters living.

Social Bonds and Emotional Connection

The bonds formed between parrots and their humans are profound, complex, and deeply rewarding. These connections go far beyond simple pet-owner relationships, evolving into genuine friendships.

Recognition and Attachment

Parrots form strong attachments to their caregivers, recognizing not just faces but voices, gaits, and even the sound of specific cars pulling into the driveway. Many parrots become visibly excited when their favorite person arrives home, greeting them with enthusiastic calls, wing displays, and obvious joy. This recognition extends to understanding family structures and social dynamics. Your parrot will learn who lives in the household, which family members provide food, who gives the best head scratches, and who's most likely to share treats. They become genuinely integrated into your family's social fabric.

Mutual Companionship

The relationship between parrot and human is genuinely reciprocal. While you provide food, shelter, and care, your

parrot offers companionship, entertainment, affection, and emotional support. Many parrot owners describe their birds as confidants—creatures they talk to during daily routines, share thoughts with while cooking dinner, or simply enjoy silent companionship with while reading or working. Parrots often seek out their humans for comfort when frightened, for play when energized, and for quiet togetherness when content. This mutual seeking creates a relationship dynamic that feels more like friendship than pet ownership.

Learning and Training Opportunities

Training a parrot provides rewarding challenges for both bird and owner, offering mental stimulation and strengthening bonds through positive interaction.

Trick Training

Parrots can learn an impressive array of tricks and behaviors through positive reinforcement training. From basic commands like "step up" and "wave" to complex sequences like retrieving objects, sorting colors, or playing basketball with miniature hoops, parrots enjoy learning and showing off their skills. This training process benefits both parties. For you, it provides the satisfaction of teaching and the joy of watching your parrot master new abilities. For your parrot, training offers mental stimulation, physical activity, and quality time with their favorite person. The process strengthens communication and deepens mutual understanding.

Behavioral Management

Training also allows you to shape desirable behaviors and manage problematic ones. Through consistent, positive reinforcement, you can teach your parrot to vocalize at

appropriate times, play independently with toys, accept handling for health checks, and navigate household rules. This transforms potential challenges into opportunities for growth and learning.

Low Maintenance Compared to Traditional Pets

While parrots certainly require daily care and attention, certain aspects of parrot ownership are actually less demanding than caring for cats or dogs.

No Veterinary Emergencies from Outdoor Hazards

Indoor living eliminates many common veterinary emergencies. Your parrot won't get into fights with other animals, consume toxic plants from the yard, contract parasites from outdoor environments, or suffer injuries from traffic. This typically results in fewer emergency veterinary visits and lower associated costs.

Minimal Grooming Requirements

Parrots handle most grooming independently. Unlike dogs requiring regular baths, haircuts, and professional grooming, or cats needing brushing and occasional baths, parrots maintain their feathers through natural preening. Their nails may need occasional trimming (which can often be managed through appropriate perch selection), and wing clipping is optional based on owner preference. Some species benefit from regular showers or misting, but they generally perform the actual cleaning themselves.

Routine-Friendly Care

Once established in a routine, daily parrot care becomes straightforward. Fresh food and water, cleaning food dishes,



Photo Credit: Benita Welter / Pixabay

removing uneaten perishables, and spot-cleaning the cage take perhaps 20-30 minutes daily. Weekly or biweekly deep-cleaning sessions require more time but remain manageable. Unlike dogs requiring multiple daily walks or cats needing regular litter box maintenance, parrot care consolidates into predictable routines.

Dietary Simplicity and Variety

Feeding parrots offers both simplicity and opportunities for variety, allowing you to provide optimal nutrition while enjoying the process of discovering your parrot’s preferences.

Nutritionally Complete Pellets

High-quality pelleted diets provide complete nutrition as a dietary foundation, similar to dry pet food for cats and dogs. Once you’ve established a pellet base, you’ve addressed the majority of your parrot’s nutritional needs with minimal effort.

Fresh Food Enrichment

Beyond pellets, parrots benefit from fresh fruits, vegetables, and occasional other foods. This variety doesn’t just provide nutrition—it offers enrichment through different textures, flavors, and foraging opportunities. Preparing food for your parrot becomes a shared experience as they watch eagerly, anticipating which treats you’ll provide. Many parrots enjoy sharing meals with their humans, sampling (appropriate) foods from your plate and feeling included in family dining. This creates bonding opportunities and allows your parrot to experience the social aspects of eating that are important to these naturally flock-oriented creatures.



Photo Credit: Magee / Pixabay

Social and Community Connections

Parrot ownership often opens doors to vibrant communities of fellow enthusiasts, creating opportunities for friendship, learning, and support.

Conclusion: A Rewarding Choice for Committed Owners

Parrot ownership offers remarkable advantages that make these intelligent, charismatic birds exceptional companions. Their cognitive abilities create genuine two-way communication and interaction. Their longevity provides decades of companionship and ever-deepening bonds. Their distinct personalities ensure every day brings new discoveries and delights. For those with allergies or limited space, parrots offer practical advantages over traditional pets. The emotional connections they form, the training opportunities they provide, and the communities they connect you with enrich life in countless ways. However, these advantages come with responsibilities. Parrots require daily interaction, mental stimulation, proper nutrition, veterinary care, and long-term commitment.

They can be noisy, messy, and demanding. They need years—often decades—of consistent care and attention. For individuals and families prepared to meet these needs, parrots offer a pet ownership experience of unparalleled depth and reward. They’re not merely pets to be cared for—they’re intelligent companions to be understood, respected, and cherished. The advantages they bring transform houses into homes and daily routines into adventures shared with a remarkable feathered friend who will hold a special place in your heart for years to come.



Photo Credit: David Clode / Pixabay





Photo Credit: AP Photo -/ Kirsty Wigglesworth

MILITARY DOGS

Partners in combat: Power, precision, and loyalty in action

By Alwyn P. Marais

In the shadowed valleys of Afghanistan's Helmand Province, where dust swirls like smoke from an unseen fire, a Belgian Malinois named Cairo moves ahead of his U.S. Navy SEAL handler. The year is 2011, and the mission is the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Cairo's nose, capable of detecting explosives at concentrations as low as parts per trillion, clears rooms faster than any human could with a handheld detector. His presence allows the team to advance with confidence, knowing that hidden threats—improvised explosive devices (IEDs) buried in the earth or wired into doorframes—will not go unnoticed.

This is not a story of a single dog but of a global partnership: from the frozen tundras of Norway to the humid jungles of Colombia, military working dogs and their handlers form a tandem that multiplies combat efficiency in ways no technology has yet replicated. The power of these animals lies first in their physiology. A typical military dog—usually a

German Shepherd, Dutch Shepherd, or Belgian Malinois—can run at 40 kilometers per hour, leap over obstacles two meters high, and bite with a force of 1,400 newtons, enough to crush bone. Yet brute strength is only the beginning. Their olfactory system contains up to 300 million scent receptors, compared to a human's six million, enabling them to discriminate between thousands of odor molecules in real time. In Iraq,



Photo Credit: US Military

between 2003 and 2011, the U.S. military credited dogs with detecting over 12,000 IEDs, preventing an estimated 3,000 casualties. In Mali, French forces deployed Malinois teams to screen convoys along the Gao–Ménaka road, reducing ambush losses by 60 percent in 2019 alone. These statistics are not anomalies; they reflect a consistent pattern across theaters where terrain, climate, and enemy tactics vary wildly. Precision, the second pillar, emerges from rigorous training and the unbreakable bond between dog and handler. Puppies enter programs as early as eight weeks old, selected for drive, focus, and resilience. In the Netherlands, the Royal Netherlands Air Force runs a 14-week basic course at Woensdrecht Air Base, followed by specialized modules in explosives detection, patrol, or search-and-rescue.

Handlers—often soldiers who have already proven themselves in combat—spend up to six months learning to read micro-expressions in their dogs: a slight ear twitch, a freeze in gait, the angle of a tail. This communication is bidirectional. In Colombia’s Caquetá region, where FARC dissidents plant anti-personnel mines in dense rainforest, a handler’s whispered “Busca” (search) sends the dog forward, but the dog’s alert—a sit or a stare—dictates the patrol’s next move. The result is a decision loop measured in seconds, not minutes, and with an accuracy rate that electronic sensors still struggle to match in humid, root-tangled environments.

Loyalty, the intangible force, binds the partnership. Dogs do not calculate risk; they act on instinct honed by trust. In 2018, during Operation Inherent Resolve, a U.S. Marine Corps dog named Lucca completed over 400 patrols in Iraq and Afghanistan without a single civilian casualty caused by her alerts. On her final mission, she located an IED but triggered a secondary device, losing her left leg. Her handler, Corporal Juan Rodriguez, carried her two kilometers to the medevac helicopter. Lucca retired to California, awarded the Dickin Medal—the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross. Similar stories echo globally: in India, a Labrador named Misa saved 14 soldiers during the 2020 Galwan Valley clash by detecting Chinese incursions; in Israel, an Oketz Unit dog named Django absorbed shrapnel meant for his handler during a Gaza tunnel operation in 2021. These acts are not programmed; they are the product of a relationship where the dog views the handler as pack leader and the handler views the dog as a sentient extension of his own senses.

The contribution to military efficiency is quantifiable across four domains: force protection, intelligence collection, psychological operations, and logistics. In force protection, dogs reduce the need for large cordon-and-search teams, allowing smaller units to cover more ground. A single dog-handler pair can screen a kilometer of road in 20 minutes—work that would require a squad of 12 soldiers with metal



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

detectors and two hours. In intelligence, dogs locate cache sites that satellite imagery misses; in Ukraine’s Donbas, Belgian Malinois teams attached to the 92nd Mechanized Brigade uncovered Russian ammunition depots hidden in civilian basements, enabling precision artillery strikes that destroyed millions of dollars in materiel. Psychologically, the mere presence of a military dog deters loitering and suicide attacks—insurgents know that a dog will detect explosives long before a checkpoint guard sees a bulge beneath clothing.

Finally, in logistics, dogs lighten the load: one Malinois replaces multiple electronic detection systems, each weighing 15 kilograms and requiring batteries that fail in extreme cold. Yet the partnership is not without cost. Dogs suffer from post-traumatic stress, heat exhaustion, and blast-wave injuries to lungs and ears. Handlers grieve when their partners are killed—often more acutely than for human comrades, because the bond defies rank or species. Retirement programs vary: the U.S. Military Working Dog Program adopts out 90 percent of its retirees to former handlers; in contrast, some nations euthanize dogs deemed unadoptable, a practice increasingly criticized. In 2023, Belgium became the first NATO member to mandate lifetime care for all military dogs, setting a precedent that Germany and Canada are now studying.

As warfare evolves—drones, cyber, hypersonics—the role of the military dog endures. No algorithm can replicate the fusion of scent, instinct, and loyalty that allows a 35-kilogram animal to turn the tide in a firefight. In the words of a French

Foreign Legion handler stationed in the Sahel: “My dog does not replace technology; he makes technology possible.” From the Arctic patrols of Norwegian Border Guard shepherds to the anti-poaching missions of South African trackers, the message is the same. Power, precision, and loyalty remain the triad that no battlefield innovation has yet surpassed.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock



Photo Credit: U.S. Army

Ostrich is the new Beef!

Ostrich farming: A model of low-impact, high-efficiency protein production

By Carien Marais

Ostrich farming has emerged as one of the most sustainable livestock systems in the world, producing high-quality protein with a fraction of the environmental impact associated with traditional meat sources like beef, pork, or chicken.

Unlike cattle, which require vast expanses of land for grazing, ostriches thrive in semi-arid environments on remarkably little space. A single hectare can sustainably support 80 to 100 ostriches compared to the 10 to 20 hectares needed for just one beef animal. This efficiency stems from the ostrich's natural browsing behavior; rather than grazing grass down to the root like cattle, ostriches feed on shrubs, succulents, and forbs—plants that are often

overlooked by other livestock. This selective diet prevents soil compaction, reduces erosion, and allows the land to be used for mixed purposes, including wildlife conservation and crop rotation. Water conservation is another area where ostrich farming shines. An adult ostrich consumes only 2 to 4 liters of water per day, even in temperatures exceeding 40°C, thanks to highly efficient kidneys that minimize water loss through concentrated urine. In contrast, a single beef cow may drink 40 to 100 liters daily. According to the Water

Footprint Network, producing one kilogram of ostrich meat requires approximately 1,200 liters of water—less than a thirtieth of the 15,400 liters needed for the same amount of beef. This low water footprint makes ostrich farming particularly viable in drought-prone regions like South Africa's Karoo, where water scarcity is a constant challenge.

Feed efficiency further underscores the sustainability of ostrich production. Ostriches achieve a feed conversion ratio of about 2.5:1—meaning 2.5 kilograms of feed produce 1 kilogram of live weight—surpassing broiler chickens and dramatically outperforming beef cattle, which require 6 to 10 kilograms of feed per kilogram of gain. Up to 70 percent of an ostrich's diet can consist of roughage such as lucerne, grass, or native shrubs, with only 30 percent needing concentrated pellets. Moreover, ostriches are rarely treated with routine antibiotics or growth hormones, thanks to their robust natural immunity, reducing the risk of antimicrobial resistance and chemical runoff into ecosystems. One of the most compelling aspects of ostrich farming is its near-zero methane emissions.

As non-ruminants, ostriches do not produce significant amounts of methane during digestion, unlike cattle, which release 70 to 120 kilograms of this potent greenhouse gas per animal annually. Their hindgut fermentation process generates minimal methane, aligning ostrich meat production with global goals to reduce agricultural carbon emissions. A 2024 lifecycle analysis by the Ostrich Business Chamber of South Africa reported a carbon footprint of just 2.9 kilograms of CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of ostrich meat—compared to 27 kilograms for beef, 7 kilograms for pork, and 6 kilograms for chicken.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of ostrich farming is its zero-waste model. Every part of the bird is utilized: the muscle meat becomes premium, low-fat, hypoallergenic protein (as seen in SOLNACKS treats); the skin yields durable, high-value leather (one hide covers 1.5 square meters and is stronger than cowhide); feathers are transformed into dusters, fashion accessories, or bedding; fat is rendered into cosmetics and joint supplements; bones and offal become pet food, collagen, or fertilizer; and even eggshells are ground into calcium powder or used in crafts. This comprehensive utilization eliminates the need for rendering plants or landfill disposal, creating a truly circular economy. On the land itself, ostrich farming supports regeneration rather than degradation. Farms employ rotational grazing to prevent overgrazing, allowing perennial grasses and shrubs to recover between cycles. Ostrich manure is dry, pelletized, and low in odor, making it an ideal compost material with minimal risk of nutrient runoff or water contamination. In the Karoo, where overgrazing by cattle has historically led to desertification, introducing ostriches has reversed soil degradation by giving the veld time to heal. Many farms now report increased plant diversity and improved soil carbon storage—effectively turning protein production into a form of land restoration. Ostrich farming also harmonizes with biodiversity. Unlike intensive poultry or pig operations that require complete



exclusion of wildlife, ostrich camps integrate seamlessly with native species. Springbok, meerkats, and birds of prey often share the landscape, as ostriches neither jump fences nor dig under them. Perimeter fencing is sufficient, reducing habitat fragmentation. In some regions, ostrich farms double as eco-tourism destinations, generating additional income while educating visitors about sustainable agriculture.

In essence, ostrich farming is not merely sustainable—it is regenerative. It delivers lean, iron-rich, allergen-friendly protein using a fraction of the land, water, and feed required by conventional livestock, while producing virtually no methane and leaving no waste behind. For environmentally conscious consumers—and for dogs enjoying treats like SOLNACKS—every bite of ostrich represents a meaningful step toward a lighter planetary footprint, proving that responsible protein production can be both innovative and deeply rooted in ecological wisdom.

Photo Credit: Alwyn P. Marais



SOLNACKS - Understanding your pet's nutritional needs

Choosing the best dry pet food for your dog or cat can be a challenge!

By Carien Marais

As pet owners, we want the best for our furry companions, and nutrition is at the heart of their health and happiness. With countless dry pet food options lining store shelves, choosing the right one can feel overwhelming. Dogs and cats have unique dietary needs, and selecting a high-quality dry food tailored to those needs can make a world of difference in their vitality, coat health, and longevity. This article will guide you through the key factors to consider when choosing dry pet food and explain why ostrich and lamb-based formulas stand out as the top choice for your pet's well-being.

Dogs and cats are carnivores by nature, though their specific requirements differ. Dogs are omnivorous carnivores, thriving on a diet rich in animal proteins but also benefiting from select plant-based ingredients. Cats, as obligate carnivores, require a diet predominantly composed of animal-

derived proteins and fats, with minimal carbohydrates. When evaluating dry pet food, prioritize formulas that align with these biological needs. Look for a food that lists a high-quality animal protein as the first ingredient, such as chicken, beef, fish, or, as we'll discuss later, ostrich or lamb. Avoid products where grains or fillers like corn, wheat, or soy dominate the

ingredient list, as these offer little nutritional value and can contribute to allergies or digestive issues in sensitive pets. Essential nutrients like taurine (crucial for cats), omega fatty acids, and a balance of vitamins and minerals should also be present to support overall health.

Evaluate Ingredient Quality

Not all proteins are created equal. The quality of ingredients directly impacts your pet's ability to digest and absorb nutrients. Opt for foods that use whole, named protein sources (e.g., "ostrich" or "lamb" rather than vague terms like "meat meal" or "poultry by-products"). High-quality dry foods avoid artificial preservatives (like BHA or BHT), artificial colors, and excessive fillers, which can harm long-term health. Novel proteins like ostrich and lamb are particularly beneficial for pets with food sensitivities or allergies, as they are less commonly used in pet foods compared to chicken or beef, reducing the likelihood of allergic reactions. These proteins are also highly digestible, ensuring your pet gets maximum nutrition from every bite.

Consider Your Pet's Life Stage and Health Needs

Puppies and kittens require higher levels of protein and fat to support growth, while adult pets need balanced nutrition to maintain energy and health. Senior pets may benefit from foods with joint-supporting ingredients like glucosamine or lower calorie content to prevent weight gain. If your pet has specific health concerns—such as skin allergies, digestive issues, or weight management—look for formulas tailored to those needs. For example, ostrich and lamb are lean proteins that are easier on the digestive system, making them ideal



for pets with sensitive stomachs. They also provide essential amino acids and nutrients to support muscle maintenance, skin health, and a shiny coat, regardless of life stage.

Check for Manufacturing Standards

The pet food industry is regulated, but standards vary. Choose brands that adhere to high manufacturing practices, such as those approved by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), which ensures the food meets nutritional standards for your pet's life stage. Reputable brands are transparent about their sourcing and production processes, often providing details on their websites or packaging. Foods made in facilities with rigorous quality control are less likely to be affected by recalls or contamination.

Balance Cost and Quality

While it's tempting to opt for budget-friendly options, cheap pet foods often cut corners with low-quality ingredients or excessive fillers, which can lead to health issues over time.



Photo Credit: Vlada Karpovich / Pexels

Photo Credit: Cottonbro / Pexels

A close-up photograph of an orange and white cat eating from a black bowl on a wooden surface. The cat's head is lowered into the bowl, and its eyes are focused on the food. The background is blurred, showing a wooden table and a wall. The lighting is warm and natural.





Photo Credit: Blue Bird / Pixabay

DENTAL CARE

A bright smile for a happier life: Mastering pet dental care

By Carien Marais

Beneath the playful licks and contented purrs of our beloved cats and dogs lies a hidden world that demands our attention: their teeth. Dental disease affects up to 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats over the age of three, according to the World Small Animal Veterinary Association, making it the most common health issue in pets worldwide.

From the bustling streets of Brussels to the quiet countryside of Wallonia, Belgian pet owners are increasingly recognizing that a healthy mouth is the gateway to overall well-being. Neglected teeth do not just cause bad breath; they become gateways for bacteria that travel through the bloodstream, potentially damaging the heart, liver, and kidneys. This silent epidemic begins with plaque—a sticky film of food particles and bacteria—that hardens into tartar within 48 hours if undisturbed. Left unchecked, it erodes gums, loosens teeth, and triggers pain that pets mask with remarkable stoicism, often continuing to eat despite abscesses or fractured jaws. The symptoms of dental distress are subtle yet telling, requiring owners to become keen observers of behavior. A



Photo Credit: Pixabay

dog that once crunched kibble with enthusiasm but now drops food or chews on one side may be signaling oral pain. Cats might exhibit “chattering” when attempting to eat or develop a preference for soft food over their usual dry diet. Red, swollen gums—gingivitis—are visible upon gentle lip-lifting, often accompanied by a yellowish-brown crust along the gumline. Excessive drooling, especially if tinged pink, points to bleeding; pawing at the mouth or face-rubbing against furniture suggests discomfort. Bad breath, while common, should never be dismissed as normal; healthy mouths smell neutral. In advanced stages, pets may lose weight, become irritable, or retreat from play, their vibrant personalities dulled by chronic pain. Belgian veterinarians report that rural dogs, often fed table scraps, show higher rates of periodontal disease than urban pets on balanced commercial diets, underscoring the role of diet in prevention.

Prevention begins at home and hinges on consistency rather than complexity. Daily toothbrushing remains the gold standard, using enzymatic pet toothpaste—never human varieties, which contain fluoride toxic to animals. A soft-bristled brush or finger cot, paired with flavors like poultry or malt, transforms the ritual into a bonding moment. For reluctant pets, start with gauze-wrapped fingers, gradually progressing to brushes over weeks. Veterinary dental wipes offer a gentle alternative, removing plaque while massaging gums. Water additives containing chlorhexidine or zinc gluconate reduce bacterial load with every lap from the bowl, an effortless supplement for multi-pet households. Professional cleanings under anesthesia, recommended annually for most adults and every six months for small breeds prone to crowding, allow scaling below the gumline where home care cannot reach. In Belgium, the Flemish Veterinary Association notes that pets receiving regular dental check-ups during vaccination visits experience 50 percent fewer extractions over their lifetimes. Pet treats, when chosen wisely, serve as powerful allies



in the fight against dental disease, combining enjoyment with mechanical cleansing. Dental chews approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) bear a seal guaranteeing plaque and tartar reduction through texture and shape. Products like rawhide-free chews with ridges scrape teeth as pets gnaw, while enzyme-coated treats actively break down bacterial biofilms. Belgian Shepherds and other high-energy breeds benefit from long-lasting antlers or rubber toys that satisfy chewing instincts without splintering risks. For cats, dental treats infused with seaweed-derived polyphosphates bind salivary calcium, preventing tartar crystallization. Timing matters: offering a dental treat after meals maximizes contact with food residue. Yet treats are adjuncts, not substitutes; over-reliance without brushing can lead to weight gain, particularly in less active indoor cats. A balanced approach—treats comprising no more than 10 percent of daily calories—ensures dental benefits without nutritional compromise. The consequences of inaction ripple beyond discomfort. A 2023 study from Liège University found that dogs with untreated periodontal disease had a 30 percent higher incidence of heart valve abnormalities, while cats faced

elevated risks of feline chronic gingivostomatitis, a painful immune-mediated condition. Early intervention reverses gingivitis within two weeks of diligent care, but advanced bone loss requires surgical extraction—costly and stressful for both pet and owner. In Belgium, where veterinary costs average €450 for a full dental procedure, prevention saves thousands over a pet’s lifetime. Mobile veterinary units in rural areas now offer subsidized dental screenings, reflecting growing awareness that oral health is inseparable from quality of life. Ultimately, dental care is an act of love made visible. Each brushstroke, each thoughtfully chosen treat, affirms the pact between human and animal. In the golden glow of a Brussels apartment or beneath the ancient oaks of the Ardennes, a pet’s bright smile reflects not just health but the depth of devotion. By understanding symptoms, committing to daily routines, and harnessing the preventive power of treats, owners transform potential suffering into vitality. The next time your dog greets you with eager tail-wags or your cat curls contentedly on your lap, lift a lip and look closely. A clean, pain-free mouth is the quiet foundation of every joyful moment shared.



Photo Credit: Tom und Nicki Löschner / Pixabay

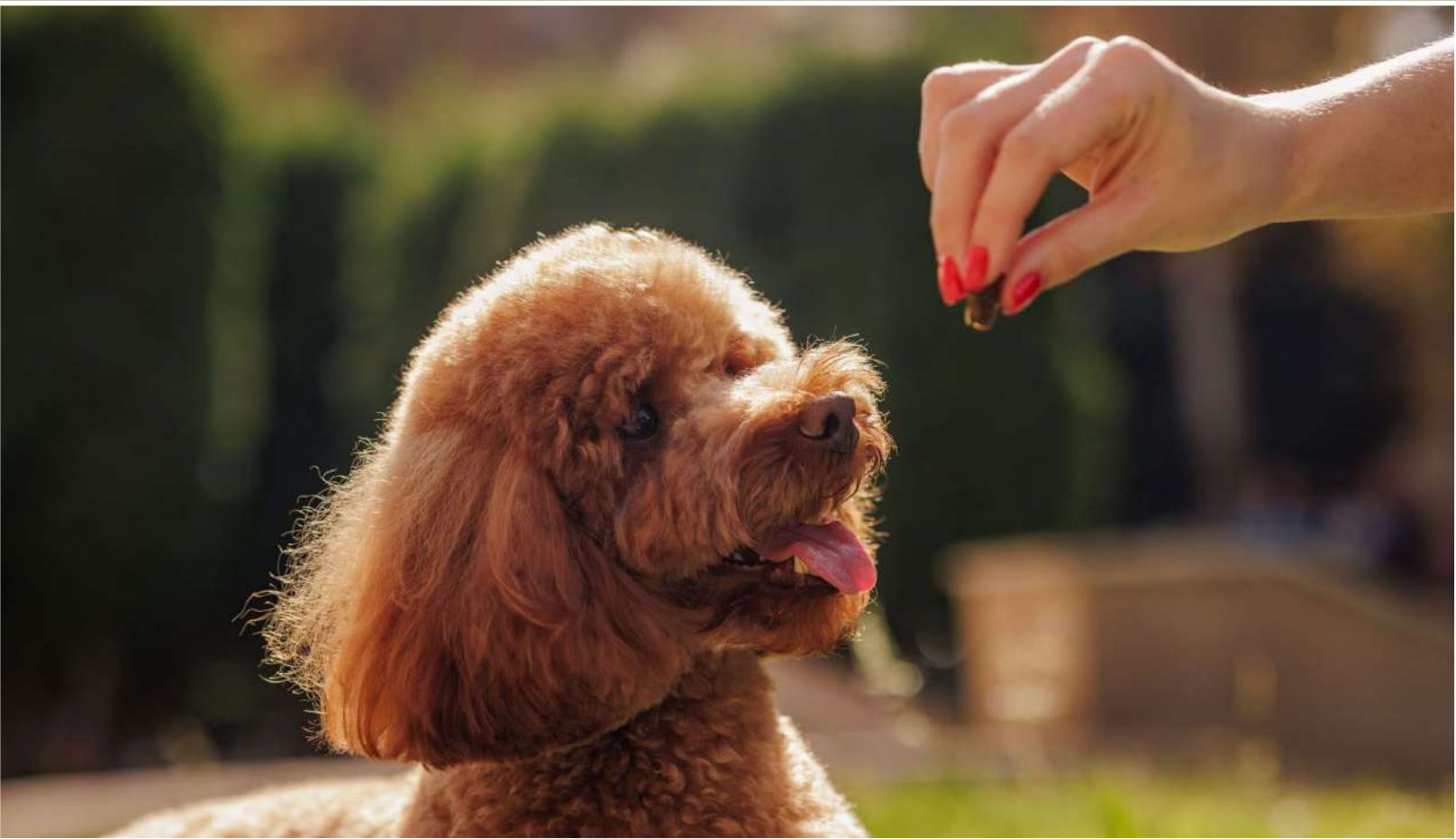
Superfood for your pet - Why Ostrich Treats are taking the world by storm

By Carien Marais

In a world where pet parents are increasingly discerning about what goes into their furry companions' bowls, a new contender has emerged from the vast savannas of Southern Africa to claim its spot in the global pet treat aisle: ostrich meat. Once considered an exotic delicacy reserved for human fine dining, ostrich is now revolutionizing the way we reward our dogs and cats.

Lightweight, nutrient-dense, and bursting with natural flavor, ostrich-based treats offer a compelling alternative to traditional chicken, beef, or lamb options. Among the standout products leading this trend is the SOLNACKS Grab&Go! Ostrich Pet Treats range - a delicious, all-natural, 100% ostrich meat between-meal snack packaged in a conveniently portable pack. These air-dried delights are not just a treat; they're a statement of love, health, and convenience for pet owners everywhere. The appeal of the ostrich as a pet treat

begins with its impressive nutritional profile. Ostrich meat is inherently lean, boasting significantly lower fat content than beef or pork—often less than 2% fat compared to 15-20% in many red meats. This makes it an ideal choice for pets prone to weight gain or those on calorie-controlled diets. Yet, leanness does not mean a compromise on protein; ostrich delivers a whopping 20-22 grams of high-quality protein per 100 grams, packed with essential amino acids that support muscle maintenance, immune function, and overall vitality. For active breeds like Border Collies or energetic felines such



as Bengals, these treats provide a quick energy boost without the crash associated with carbohydrate-heavy snacks. The SOLNACKS Grab&Go! packs exemplify this perfectly, offering delectable, energy-providing morsels that fuel adventures whether you're hiking in the Swiss Alps, strolling through Tokyo's pet-friendly parks, or simply bridging the gap between meals at home. One of the most celebrated advantages of ostrich treats is their hypoallergenic nature. In an era where food sensitivities affect up to 10% of dogs and cats worldwide, according to veterinary studies, finding a protein source that minimizes allergic reactions is paramount.

Ostrich is a novel protein, meaning most pets have never encountered it before, drastically reducing the likelihood of adverse responses. Free from common allergens like soy, MSG, and tartrazine, and with no preservatives or gluten, the SOLNACKS Grab&Go! range stands out as a haven for sensitive tummies. Pet owners in Europe, where strict regulations govern pet food ingredients, appreciate this purity; similarly, in North America, where holistic pet care is booming, these treats align seamlessly with grain-free and clean-label trends. Imagine a Siamese cat with a history of skin irritations finally enjoying a snack without itching—or a Labrador with poultry allergies thriving on a guilt-free reward. This hypoallergenic edge not only promotes digestive health but also fosters shinier coats and healthier skin, thanks to ostrich's rich stores of zinc, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids. Convenience

is another feather in Ostrich Treats' cap, particularly for the modern, on-the-move pet parent. The SOLNACKS Grab&Go! Ostrich Pet Treats are designed with portability in mind, coming in compact, resealable packs that slip easily into a pocket, backpack, or car glove compartment. Whether you're catching a flight from Sydney to London with your adventurous Australian Shepherd or navigating the bustling streets of New York with a pocket-sized Chihuahua, these snacks ensure your pet never goes without. Air-dried to perfection, they retain the meat's natural juices and flavors without the need for refrigeration, boasting an impressive 24-month shelf life. This method of preservation locks in nutrients while eliminating the risk of bacterial growth, making it a reliable choice for global travelers and busy urbanites alike. No more fumbling with bulky bags or worrying about spoilage during long walks in the park—these packs are the epitome of grab-and-go simplicity.

Beyond nutrition and practicality, ostrich treats tap into a growing demand for sustainable and ethical pet products. Ostrich farming is notably eco-friendly compared to traditional livestock. These birds require less water and land, produce lower methane emissions, and convert feed into protein more efficiently than cattle. In regions like South Africa, where ostrich ranching has been refined over decades, the industry supports local economies while adhering to high welfare standards. By choosing products like SOLNACKS Grab&Go!,

pet owners contribute to a more sustainable planet without sacrificing quality. This resonates deeply in markets like Scandinavia, known for environmental consciousness, and in Asia, where premium, ethically sourced pet foods are gaining traction among affluent consumers. Suitable for all breeds of dogs and cats, from towering Great Danes to dainty Persians, ostrich treats transcend size, age, and lifestyle barriers. They serve as more than just a snack; they're a versatile tool for training, a reward for good behavior, or a heartfelt way to say "I love you" after a vet visit.

Veterinarians worldwide are endorsing novel proteins like ostrich for their role in managing conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease or obesity. In Australia, where outdoor lifestyles dominate, these energy-providing packs keep working dogs fueled during sheep herding; in the UK, they're a staple for agility competitors needing quick, digestible boosts. The SOLNACKS Grab&Go! range, with its 100% ostrich composition, embodies the future of pet treats - pure, powerful, and portable. As pet humanization continues to blur the lines between family member and animal companion, opting for such premium, health-focused options reflects a deeper commitment to our pets' well-being.

Next time you reach for a treat, consider the ostrich: a bird that's not just flightless, but boundless in benefits. Your pet will thank you with wagging tails, contented purrs, and endless enthusiasm for life's adventures. In a global market saturated with options, ostrich stands tall—literally and figuratively—as the smart, sophisticated choice for discerning pet lovers everywhere.



A delicious, all-natural, 100% ostrich meat between-meal snack for your pet in a conveniently portable pack!

- 100% Ostrich Meat
- Source of Energy
- High in Protein
- Convenient Grab&Go!
- Low in Fat
- Rich in Iron
- High in Omega-3, 6, 9
- Hypoallergenic
- Grain-free & Gluten-free
- No Preservatives



www.solnacks.com

The story of a woman who turned an animal testing lab into a rehab sanctuary

In a striking turn of events, a site once known for animal testing has been reborn as a beacon of hope and rehabilitation for former lab animals. This transformation is the work of Shannon Keith, an Animal rights lawyer and founder of the Beagle Freedom Project. Established in 2010, the project is dedicated to rescuing and rehoming animals used in research, with a special focus on beagles, the most commonly used breed in testing. However, Keith's compassion extends to all animals in need.

The journey began with Keith's persistent outreach to animal testing labs across the country, a mission that for years seemed to echo into silence until John Riner, owner of Animal Health Innovations, responded. Moved by a combination of regulatory scrutiny and a personal epiphany about the fate of his lab animals, Riner chose a path of kindness, offering the animals to the Beagle Freedom Project instead of euthanizing them. This collaboration led to the rescue of approximately 3,400 animals, but Keith envisioned a grander purpose for the animals and the land they were on. When Riner expressed his intention to retire, an opportunity arose to transform his 30-acre testing facility in Oklahoma into a sanctuary. After negotiations, Keith acquired the property, named Freedom Fields, under the condition that Riner cease all animal testing activities. Freedom Fields is now undergoing renovation to become a rehabilitation site for animals that have endured the rigors of laboratory life. Plans include a senior dog center equipped with amenities designed to aid in physical recovery

and socialization, spaces dedicated to the needs of cats, and an education center aimed at raising public awareness about animal testing. Beagle Freedom Project's advocacy extends beyond rescues, pushing for legislative change with the Beagle Freedom Bill and developing resources like the Cruelty Cutter app to help consumers make ethical choices. With the passage of the FDA Modernization Act 2.0, there's hope for a reduction in animal testing, further supported by the sanctuary's mission. The transformation of a testing site into a haven for recovery highlights a significant shift in the dialogue around animal testing and welfare. As the sanctuary prepares to welcome the public and educate future generations, it stands as a testament to the possibility of change and the power of compassion. Through tireless effort and dedication, Freedom Fields is set to offer not just a second chance at life for its residents, but also a model for the future of animal rescue and advocacy.

Original Source: One Green Planet



Meghan, Prince Harry adopt beagle rescued from abuse at Virginia plant

By Noah Goldberg | Photography by Carolyn Cole

In less than two months, Mamma Mia the beagle went from rags to royalty. Her changed life began in July when federal authorities rescued her — along with 4,000 other beagles — from overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at the Envigo breeding and research plant in Virginia. Her new home is a sprawling estate in Montecito, where the 7-year-old dog will roam around a lush 7-acre property. Her new owners? The Duke and Duchess of Sussex.



“The duchess called me personally,” said Shannon Keith, an animal rights attorney who runs the Beagle Freedom Project out of the low-slung Valley Village house where she used to live. But Keith said that at first, she didn’t realize who the “VIP Donor” interested in a beagle adoption was. “She calls on my cell with no Caller ID and says, ‘Hey Shannon, this is Meghan,’” said Keith, whose nonprofit organization rescues beagles and other dogs as well as cats, pigs, horses, rabbits, goats and sheep, most of which

were used in laboratory testing. “We talked for 30 minutes, and I thought, ‘Is this Megan Fox?’” But it was Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, and her husband, Prince Harry, who made an after-hours visit to the unassuming San Fernando Valley house on Hartsook Street this month.

The royal couple’s spokeswoman confirmed the visit to The Times; neither commented on the adoption. It was a no-photos affair, with two security guards joining Meghan and Harry in their quest for a furry family member.



They played in the backyard with Mia, who had been transported with eight of her newborn puppies from Maryland, where the dogs had been taken after the Virginia rescue, to Valley Village. But they did not want a puppy. “The duchess is holding Mia and was like, ‘We’re adopting her,’” Keith said. “She was like ‘No, we don’t want a Christmas puppy. ... We want ones we can help who are older.’” Meghan has had a rescue beagle for many years, and when she saw the story about Envigo’s shutdown, she wanted to get involved, her spokeswoman told The Times. She knew puppies usually are easier to find homes for and wanted to help one of the older, more vulnerable canines. Mia’s storybook ending followed a life at the Envigo plant described by the Department of Justice as a house of horrors. In a lawsuit filed in federal court against the company in May, authorities say beagles were euthanized or left for dead by a meager staff that routinely violated the Animal Welfare Act. Investigators visiting the facility on numerous occasions in 2021 and 2022 found nightmarish conditions, including beagles with severe and untreated medical issues, insufficient food and housed in filthy conditions. The dogs were sometimes being fed moldy food, and on two occasions, inspectors found live maggots in their food, prosecutors said. Some animals had been euthanized without first receiving anesthesia, and hundreds were found dead at the facility, according to inspectors. In addition to the euthanized dogs, investigators discovered that 300 canines died at the plant over a seven-month period from “unknown causes.” Envigo, the second-largest producer of dogs for medical research, breeds roughly 25% of the beagles used in medical and drug research in the U.S. The company, purchased in November 2021 by Inotiv — an animal testing firm that also has come under scrutiny — has not denied allegations of noncompliance with the Animal Welfare Act. “There is actually very little that should remain in dispute in this case,” lawyers for Envigo said in court papers, adding that officials spent millions of dollars in the last year working to improve the facility. Envigo’s parent company, Inotiv, said it installed 1,200 new aluminum doors, upgraded and closed in flooring gaps, and installed cooling towers in the buildings.

But Keith said that for all the upgrades to the facility, the beagles were still being abused. “Basically, it’s a breeding prison,” she said of the Virginia plant. “Not only were the issues not corrected after inspectors went, but they were getting worse.” After the lawsuit was filed, Envigo agreed to release 4,000 beagles from the plant and shut down operations. The federal government and the company agreed to transfer the dogs to the Humane Society of the United States. The beagles are being moved to shelters or groups such as the Beagle Freedom Project, which places the dogs in foster homes for rehabilitation before finding their forever homes. Hundreds of beagles have made their way to Southern California. Priceless Pets, which has been working with Envigo and the Humane Society, has taken in nearly 1,000 beagles from the Virginia plant. Ashlee Sprague, who runs the Chino Hills no-kill shelter, said she had been to the Envigo facility and said she’s seen worse treatment of dogs at shelters in California. Although she was not authorized to give details about the out-of-state plant, she said it was no way for the beagles to live. She also said the rescued beagles represent only a fraction of all dogs that need adopting. “The beagle mission is like a tiny little drop in the bucket of our organization,” she said. “We’re in this for the animals, and being able to save those dogs from being euthanized is truly remarkable. “But I’m just so thankful for the attention because through all this ... we’ve been able to get so many other dogs adopted, and that’s remarkable,” Sprague said. The Beagle Freedom Project has taken in 25 of the rescued beagles. The puppies yipped and bit at one another, played with toys and doused their feet in a water bowl in the backyard of Keith’s home Monday as a few foster parents milled about. Mia’s 7-week-old puppies scrambled around the yard and between the legs of Keith’s massive but mindful Great Dane, Maya. The eight pups were apparently unaware their mother had recently been crowned Dog Duchess of Montecito. Five older puppies joined the mix in the yard. They’d been trucked from Cumberland, Va., to the Atlanta Humane Society, where Beagle Freedom Project transporter Malina Shirley scooped them up and drove them to Los Angeles. The older puppies had Envigo’s green, six-letter serial numbers tattooed on the insides of their ears. The youngest pups weren’t marked because they were born too close to the plant’s shutdown, Keith said. With about 1,000 people on the waitlist to adopt the beagles, Keith expects her nonprofit should have no trouble finding homes for the Virginia rescues. But she is focused on finding the perfect home for each one, a special match between owner and dog. As the Duke and Duchess prepared to leave the Valley Village house with the newest, four-legged member of the House of Windsor, Harry paused, Keith said. “He’s just like, ‘Well, we can’t leave yet because there’s something in that back house she needs. Does she have a favorite toy or something?’” Keith said. The royals made their way back and found a box filled with toys. They flipped it over, and Mia grabbed a fox toy she had played with during her cross-country trip from Maryland after leaving Envigo. And with that, the Duke, the Duchess and their dog left the Valley. “OK, now we can go home,” Harry said.

Courtesy: The Los Angeles Times

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Owl who fell into concrete mixer finds hope at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary

By Michelle Sathe

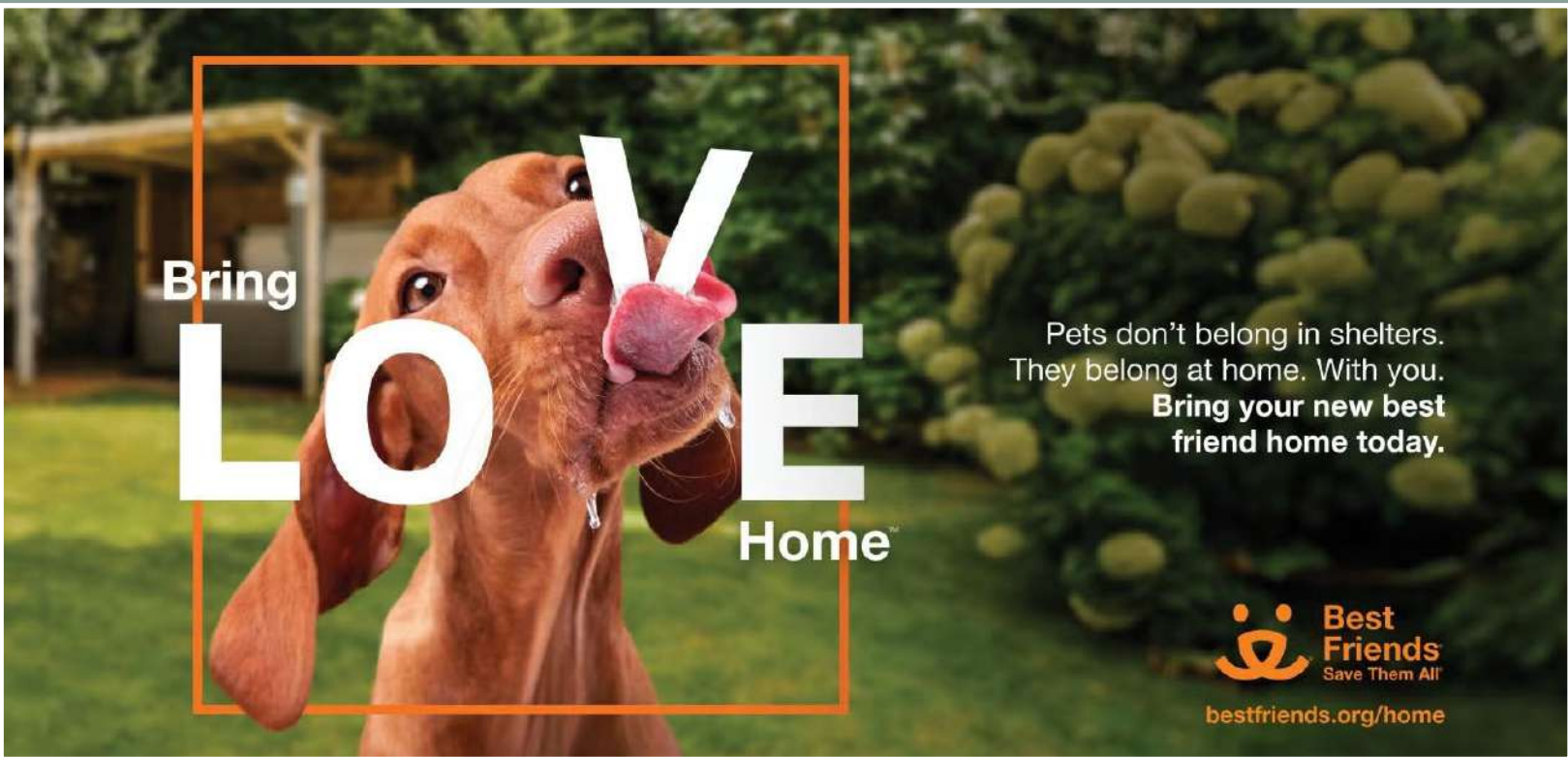
A great-horned owl that fell into a concrete mixer is slowly recovering at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary's Wild Friends certified rehabilitation center in Kanab, Utah, after recently coming into its care. With dried concrete covering approximately 25 percent of his two-pound body, it was the first time Best Friends' staff had seen a case like this in its 40-year history, according to Best Friends Animal Society's Wild Friends supervisor, Bart Richwalski.



Photo credit: Best Friends Animal Society

“We reached out to other wildlife rehabilitators and they had never heard of an owl falling into concrete before, either,” Richwalski said. “After doing some research, our team quickly came up with a plan to help the owl in the least invasive way possible.” That plan included a 20-minute daily bath while the owl was under anesthesia. Thankfully, after a series of concrete removals from the face, chest and right wing, the owl has been recovering well and has a positive prognosis. “This was a brand-new situation for the Wild Friends team and they really stepped up to the plate to do their best for this owl,” said Judah Battista, Best Friends Animal Society’s Chief Sanctuary Officer. “Their innovative approach and compassionate care is such a beautiful testament to Best Friends’ belief that every animal deserves a second chance.” Richwalski estimates that the owl is a juvenile male, born earlier this year. Initially, the owl was recovering indoors, residing in a medium-sized soft carrier that allowed staff to handle him more easily. Recently, the owl graduated to an outdoor enclosure where he has been able to ascend to a 6-foot perch, a sign that his recovery continues to go well. Still, the owl will need to stay in Best Friends’ care until the spring or summer, which is when molting is expected to occur and he can once again resume silent flight. After that, the owl can be released back into the wild, in a wooded area near where he was found. “He still has a long road ahead of him, but he’s a fighter,” Richwalski said.

This owl is just one of approximately 1,600 dogs, cats, horses, goats, pigs, bunnies, birds, and wildlife that have found refuge at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, the nation’s largest no-kill animal sanctuary and the headquarters of Best Friends Animal Society, which has a mission of making America a no-kill nation by partnering with more than 5,300 shelters and rescues across the country.



About Best Friends Animal Society

Best Friends Animal Society is a leading animal welfare organization dedicated to saving the lives of dogs and cats in America’s shelters and making the entire country no-kill. Founded in 1984, Best Friends runs lifesaving facilities and programs nationwide in partnership with more than 5,500 shelters and rescue organizations.

From our headquarters in Kanab, Utah, we also operate the nation’s largest no-kill animal sanctuary — a destination that brings our mission to life for thousands of visitors each year. We maintain the most comprehensive animal sheltering data in the country and make it accessible to the public — empowering communities with critical insights into the needs of their local shelters and how they can help. We believe every dog and cat deserves a home. And we believe that, by working together, we can Save Them All®.





The Ostrich revolution in functional dog treats

By Carien Marais

In a pet-food aisle crowded with the usual suspects—chicken jerky, beef bites, and pork chews—SOLNACKS Ostrich Functional Treats stand out like a rare bird in a flock of barnyard regulars. Made exclusively from ostrich muscle meat, these South African-inspired snacks deliver more than just a novel flavor. SOLNACKS offers two targeted formulas—Stress Relief for Dogs and Digestive Care for Dogs—each engineered to address common canine concerns while leveraging the inherent advantages of ostrich over traditional proteins. Packaged in a resealable ziplock bag that locks in freshness, SOLNACKS proves that functional nutrition can be both effective and convenient.

Why Ostrich? A Nutritional Powerhouse

Ostrich meat is leaner, richer in iron, and lower in fat than chicken, beef, or pork, making it an ideal base for health-focused treats. A 100-gram serving of cooked ostrich contains approximately 26 grams of protein, 120 calories, and just 2 grams of fat—compared to 165 calories and 7 grams of fat in the same portion of skinless chicken breast, 250 calories and 15 grams of fat in lean beef, or 290 calories and 21 grams in pork loin. Ostrich also boasts higher levels of bioavailable iron (3.5 mg vs. 1.1 mg in chicken) and zinc, nutrients essential for oxygen transport, immune function, and coat health. Crucially, ostrich is a true novel protein for most dogs. Unlike chicken, beef, and pork—which top the list of common allergens—ostrich rarely triggers food sensitivities. Veterinary dermatologists report that up to 20 percent of dogs with adverse food reactions experience significant improvement when switched to exotic proteins. SOLNACKS capitalizes on this hypoallergenic profile, allowing even the most sensitive pups to enjoy treats without digestive upset or itchy skin.

SOLNACKS Stress Relief: Calm in Every Bite

The SOLNACKS Stress Relief formula pairs ostrich muscle meat with a calming botanical blend proven to ease canine anxiety. Sweet potato and pea fiber provide low-glycemic carbohydrates and gentle fiber, while molasses adds a touch of natural sweetness dogs crave. The star players, however, are the herbal relaxants: chamomile, passion flower, and valerian root. Each has been used for centuries in human and veterinary herbalism, and modern studies confirm their efficacy. Chamomile contains apigenin, a flavonoid that binds to benzodiazepine receptors in the brain, producing a mild sedative effect without drowsiness. Passion flower

increases gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) levels, the neurotransmitter responsible for inhibiting overactive neural activity. Valerian root enhances GABA receptor function while reducing cortisol—the stress hormone that spikes during thunderstorms or separation anxiety. Kelp rounds out the mix with trace minerals that support thyroid function, often disrupted in chronically stressed dogs. Dog owners report noticeable differences within



days. “My rescue Shepherd used to pace and whine during fireworks,” says Cape Town trainer Liam Patel. “Two Stress Relief treats thirty minutes before the show, and he actually lay down and watched the sky with me.” The resealable ziplock ensures the delicate botanicals retain potency from first treat to last.

SOLNACKS Digestive Care: Gut Health, Ostrich Style
The Digestive Care variant targets the other end of the wellness spectrum - gastrointestinal harmony. Again, ostrich muscle meat forms the protein foundation, joined by sweet potato and pea fiber for prebiotic support. Molasses encourages chewing, which stimulates saliva production and begins the digestive process. The functional heavyweights here are Clostat, inulin, bromelain, milk thistle, and dandelion root. Clostat is a proprietary blend of Bacillus subtilis spores that crowds out pathogenic bacteria while promoting beneficial flora. Inulin, a fructo-oligosaccharide derived from chicory, feeds Bifidobacteria and Lactobacilli, increasing short-chain fatty acid production and strengthening the gut barrier. Bromelain - a proteolytic enzyme from pineapple - breaks down proteins in the stomach, reducing bloating and gas. Milk thistle provides silymarin, a potent antioxidant that protects liver cells from toxin damage, while dandelion root acts as a mild diuretic and bitter tonic to stimulate bile flow. Clinical observations mirror owner testimonials. A 2023 pilot study at the University of Pretoria’s Veterinary Faculty followed thirty dogs with

intermittent diarrhea. After four weeks on SOLNACKS Digestive Care, 83 percent showed firmer stools and reduced flatulence. “The difference in my Bulldog’s comfort is night and day,” notes Johannesburg breeder Sarah Mokoena. “No more 3 a.m. emergency yard runs.

“Convenience Meets Quality
Both SOLNACKS varieties come in a sturdy, matte-finish ziplock pouch that preserves aroma and prevents moisture intrusion. Each treat is uniformly sized - approximately 2 cm cubes - making portion control simple for toy breeds and giants alike. The absence of artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives aligns with the clean-label trend sweeping premium pet nutrition. Veterinarians appreciate the transparency. “I recommend SOLNACKS to clients rotating proteins or managing chronic conditions,” says Dr. Naledi Khumalo of Sandton Veterinary Clinic. “The ingredient deck is straightforward, and the ostrich base minimizes cross-reactivity with common allergens.

A treat with a conscience beyond health benefits, SOLNACKS supports sustainable farming. Ostriches require less water and land than cattle, and the birds are free-range, and never caged.

The Bottom Line
SOLNACKS Ostrich Functional Treats transform the humble dog snack into targeted therapy. Stress Relief calms anxious minds with time-tested botanicals; Digestive Care restores intestinal balance with prebiotics and liver protectants. Both deliver superior nutrition through hypoallergenic ostrich meat that outperforms chicken, beef, and pork in leanness, iron content, and allergen avoidance. Packaged for freshness and backed by science, SOLNACKS invites discerning dog parents to rethink what a treat can do. One ziplock bag at a time, ostrich is earning its place at the top of the treat jar.



Photo Credit: Pixabay



Photo Credit: Pixabay



Photo Credit: Pixabay



The Ultimate Functional Treats for Dogs!

With more than 40% real Ostrich Muscle Meat





ADVICE



Photo Credit: Pexels

Necessity or fashion?

Winter wardrobe for waggers: Do dogs really need jackets?

By Carien Marais

The first frost paints the park in silver, and suddenly every bench is occupied by owners debating the same question: Does Fido need a puffer? Social media overflows with pups in neon parkas, but veterinarians field the opposite worry—owners whose Arctic breeds shiver in fleece because “he looked cold.” Let’s strip away the cute overload and ask the evidence-based question: Is a jacket necessary, or is it just fashion?

The Built-In Overcoat: Breeds That Laugh at Snow

Evolution gave some dogs a wardrobe humans can only dream of. Double-coated Nordic breeds—Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Samoyeds, and Norwegian Elkhounds—possess an outer guard coat that repels water and an undercoat so dense it traps a layer of warm air next to the skin. Research from the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (2023) clocked a resting Husky’s surface temperature at 38°C / 100.4°F in -15 °C / 5°F air; the undercoat acted like Thinsulate. Add the

“snowshoe” breeds:

- Newfoundlands and Bernese Mountain Dogs carry 3–5 cm/1.5” of woolly undercoat.
- Great Pyrenees and Anatolian Shepherds were literally bred to sleep outside in sub-zero Pyrenean winters.
- Akita Inus and Shiba Inus manage with a slightly lighter but still functional double coat.

For these dogs, a jacket is not only unnecessary—it can be counterproductive. Trapped moisture under synthetic fabric leads to chilling when the dog stops moving, and compressed



undercoat loses loft, slashing insulation by up to 40 % (Journal of Thermal Biology, 2024). The rule of thumb: If the breed’s historical job description includes “haul sleds across tundra” or “guard sheep at 2,000m altitude,” skip the boutique. The Naked and the Shivering: Who Actually Needs Help Strip away the fluff—literally—and you expose the candidates for outerwear:

1. Short-coated & single-coated breeds

Greyhounds, Whippets, Italian Greyhounds, Chihuahuas, French Bulldogs, Boxers, and Dachshunds lack an undercoat entirely. Their skin temperature drops 2–3°C / 35.6°F faster than double-coated dogs at 0°C / 32°F (Canine Physiology Review, 2022). A 5kg/11 lbs Chihuahua loses 25 watts of heat per square meter of body surface—equivalent to a human in shorts.

2. Hairless breeds

Xoloitzcuintlis, Chinese Cresteds, and American Hairless Terriers are walking heat sinks. UV-protective summer shirts flip to insulated winter ones.

3. Toy & small dogs (< 7 kg/15.4lbs)

Physics is cruel: surface-area-to-volume ratio means a Pomeranian radiates heat like a baked potato. Even with a coat, wind chill below 0°C / 32°F can drop core temperature in under 30 minutes of inactivity.

**Beyond Breed: Age, Size, Health & Activity
Puppies & Seniors**

A 10-week-old puppy has immature thermoregulation; a 12-year-old Lab has a thinning coat and arthritis-stiff joints. Both groups drop core temperature 1.5 times faster than a healthy adult (AVMA Geriatric Canine Study, 2024).

Medical conditions

Hypothyroidism, Cushing’s disease, and heart failure impair circulation and fat deposition. A jacket becomes medical equipment, not an accessory.

Activity level

A Border Collie sprinting for 45 minutes generates enough metabolic heat to stay warm at -10°C / 14°F. The same dog standing tied outside a café needs coverage.

The 7-7-7 Decision Matrix (Vet-Approved)

Temp (°C)	Wind (km/h)	Dog Profile	Jacket?
> 7	Any	Any	No
0 – 7	< 20	Double-coated, healthy adult	No
0 – 7	< 20	Short coat/toy / senior/ill	Yes
< 0	> 20	Double-coated, active < 30 min	Yes
< -5	Any	Any dog outside > 15 min	Yes

Pro tip: If you need a coat, your 20kg+/44lbs double-coated dog probably does too when idle.

Fabric Science: Not All Jackets Are Equal

- Waterproof breathable shells (Gore-Tex canine equivalents) prevent wind chill without sweat buildup.



Photo Credit: Skyler Ewing / Pexels

Real-World Checklist Before You Zip

1. Feel the ears and groin—cold to the touch = dress them.
2. Watch for shivering, lifted paws, and hunched posture.
3. Limit exposure: 10–15 min potty breaks for vulnerable dogs; booties if salt or ice balls form between toes.
4. Dry immediately post-walk—towel + low-heat blower; never leave a wet jacket on.

The Bottom Line

A jacket is never mandatory for a healthy, double-coated adult in brief, active cold. It is essential medical gear for short-coated, small, young, senior, or ill dogs when temperatures dip below 7°C / 44.6°F or the wind exceeds 20 km/h. Treat it like pediatric winter wear—functional, fitted, and removed indoors. So, next time you scroll past a Malamute in a tutu onesie, smile, snap the pic, then keep walking. His ancestors are rolling in the snow, laughing.



Photo Credit: Igorejov / Pexels



HEROISM

Scarlett: The feline firefighter who ignited hearts worldwide

In the annals of animal heroism, few tales burn as brightly as that of Scarlett, the calico cat who, in 1996, became an emblem of maternal courage. Amid the chaos of a Brooklyn inferno, this unassuming stray mother dashed into flames not once, but five times, to save her helpless kittens. Her story—a raw testament to the fierce, instinctual love of pets—transcended headlines, inspiring books, awards, and a global outpouring of affection.

Nearly three decades later, as we navigate a world where pets are family, Scarlett's legacy reminds us why felines aren't just companions; they're quiet guardians of the extraordinary. Picture a frigid March night in 1996, the kind that bites through fur and bone. Brooklyn's streets, lined with weathered brownstones and forgotten corners, offered scant shelter for strays like Scarlett. Born around mid-1995, the young calico—her coat a patchwork of orange, black, and white—had recently given birth to five tiny kittens, each no larger than a fistful of fluff. Seeking refuge from the cold, she led her litter into an abandoned garage on Vanderbilt Avenue, a derelict spot rumored to be a haven for those battling addiction. Unbeknownst to Scarlett, tragedy lurked in the shadows. As the clock struck past midnight on March 30, a spark ignited—likely from a makeshift fire lit by crack users huddled against the chill. Flames erupted with ferocious speed, devouring the wooden beams and oily rags in a roar of orange fury. Smoke billowed like a toxic fog, choking the air and turning the garage into a hellscape. Alarms wailed, and the New York City Fire Department descended, hoses blasting water in a desperate bid to tame the blaze. It was amid this pandemonium that firefighter David Giannelli spotted something miraculous: a scorched cat, eyes swollen shut from blistering heat, limping across the street to a vacant lot. In her jaws dangled a kitten, mewling faintly. Over and over, Scarlett plunged back into the smoldering wreckage. Each time, she emerged with another precious bundle—gently gripping it by the scruff, her burned paws leaving bloody prints on the asphalt. Five harrowing trips, through walls of fire and suffocating smoke, until all her babies were safe in the open air. Giannelli, a seasoned rescuer with a soft spot for animals, watched in awe. "She was touching each one with her nose, making sure they were okay," he later recounted. Scarlett's eyes, raw and sightless from the burns, couldn't confirm their safety visually, but her maternal radar never faltered. Exhausted and collapsing from her wounds—ears charred, paws seared, fur singed to stubs—she had done the impossible. The firefighter scooped up the family and rushed them to the North Shore Animal League's veterinary clinic in Port Washington, Long Island, where a team of dedicated vets began the fight for their survival. Scarlett's injuries were grievous: third-degree burns

covered 40 percent of her body, her face a mask of agony with blistered corneas and melted whiskers. The kittens, though spared the worst, were frail and smoke-inhaled. For weeks, the clinic buzzed with round-the-clock care—IV fluids, antibiotics, and gentle grooming to soothe Scarlett's pain. Tragically, the smallest, a white-furred mite, succumbed a month later to a respiratory virus, a heartbreaking footnote to the triumph. But Scarlett rallied, her spirit unyielding. She nursed her four surviving kittens—named Safire, Smoke, Oreo, and Smokey—with a tenderness that melted even the hardest hearts. Word of the "fire cat" spread like wildfire itself.



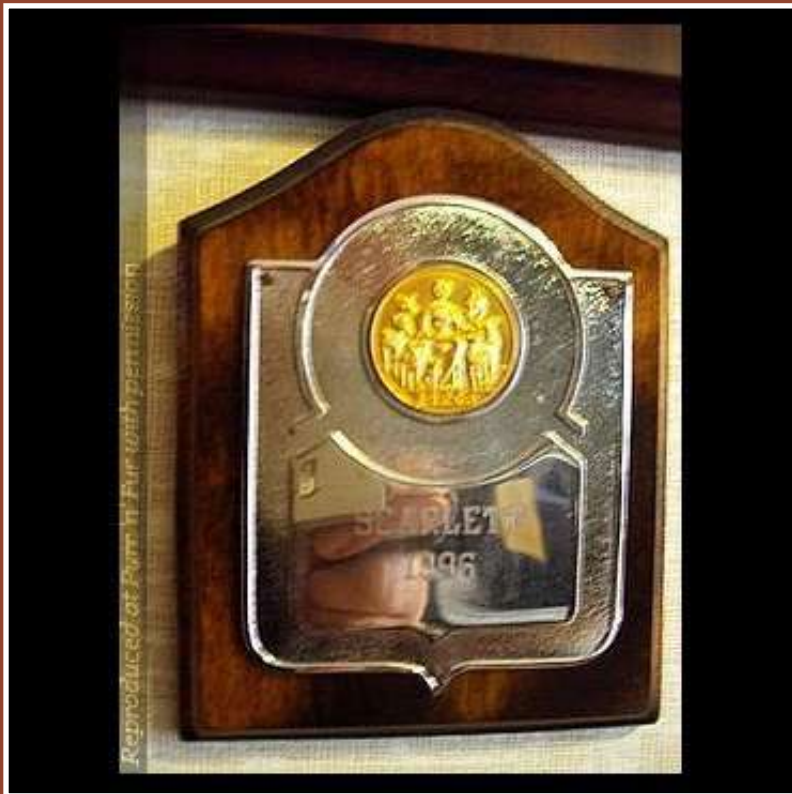
Local newsreels captured Scarlett's bandaged form cradling her litter, and soon, international media swarmed. Calls flooded the Animal League from Japan, the Netherlands, and South Africa; Mother's Day cards arrived by the thousands. Oprah Winfrey devoted airtime to the story, dubbing Scarlett "the bravest mom in America." Adoption inquiries topped 7,000, a deluge that underscored a universal truth: in pets, we see our own vulnerabilities reflected—and our capacity for heroism amplified. What elevated Scarlett beyond a feel-good anecdote was her embodiment of feline fortitude. Cats, often stereotyped as aloof independents, revealed their profound parental instincts. Mother cats like Scarlett are



Scarlett's baby kittens with fireman who brought them to Animal Hospital.



wired for self-sacrifice; oxytocin floods their systems post-birth, forging bonds that rival any human tie. Experts at the Animal League noted how her actions mirrored evolutionary survival strategies: a queen cat will forgo food, endure injury, even face predators to protect her young. In Scarlett's case, it was flames she braved, a trial that left her forever marked but unbreakable. Her tale rippled through pop culture and policy. Authors Jane Martin and J.C. Suares penned *Scarlett Saves Her Family* (1997), a illustrated chronicle that became a bestseller, complete with Giannelli's foreword. Children's books, like Nancy Loewen's *Scarlett the Cat to the Rescue* (2015), introduced new generations to her valor, pairing vivid, smoke-hazed illustrations with lessons in empathy.



The North Shore Animal League, already a powerhouse in no-kill advocacy, immortalized her with the Scarlett Award for Animal Heroism, bestowed annually on pets who've saved lives—from dogs alerting to seizures to birds aiding lost hikers. Yet, Scarlett's story isn't without its poignant close. After three months of recovery, she and her kittens found homes. The survivors thrived: Safire became a therapy cat, Smoke a beloved house pet. Scarlett herself was adopted in June 1996 by Karen Wellen, a Brooklyn woman recovering from her own trauma—a car accident that claimed her previous cat. “Scarlett taught me compassion anew,” Wellen shared. In her sunny apartment, the scarred heroine reigned as “top cat,” playful with toys and affectionate with laps, her battle wounds fading into badges of honor. She lived until October 11, 2008, succumbing at age 13 to complications from her old injuries and cancer. Wellen, ever the steward of her legacy, maintains the Scarlett the Cat Facebook page, a digital shrine where fans post tributes and adoptable strays find hope. Today, as global pet ownership surges—over 470 million cats worldwide, per recent FEDIAF stats—Scarlett's echo grows louder. She spotlights the plight of ferals: in urban jungles like 1990s Brooklyn, strays face eviction by



Scarlett with her adopted mother Karen Wellen.

fire, flood, or foe. Organizations like Alley Cat Allies credit her with boosting trap-neuter-return programs, curbing overpopulation humanely. For pet parents, she champions later adoptions: experts now recommend waiting 12 weeks before separating kittens from moms, allowing time for vital socialization. And in a divided world, Scarlett unites us—proof that bravery knows no species, only the pure pulse of love. As we curl up with our own furry sentinels this winter, let Scarlett's flame endure. She didn't just rescue kittens; she kindled faith in the wild, wondrous hearts of pets. In her honor, perhaps light a candle—not for fire, but for the light they bring.



BEHAVIOUR

How to stop dogs from digging: Practical solutions for a pristine yard

By Alwyn P. Marais

Dogs dig for a variety of instinctive and environmental reasons, turning your carefully manicured lawn into a patchwork of craters almost overnight. Whether it's a bored terrier channeling its ancestral hunting urges, a hot hound seeking cooler soil in summer, or a curious pup escaping confinement, understanding the root cause is the first step to curbing this behavior.

Breeds like Dachshunds, Jack Russell Terriers, and Siberian Huskies are particularly prone to digging due to their breeding histories for badger hunting, fox chasing, or endurance in harsh climates. By addressing boredom, providing alternatives, and implementing deterrents, you can redirect your dog's energy and restore peace to your garden without resorting to harsh punishments. The most effective strategy begins with enrichment and exercise to satisfy your dog's mental and physical needs. A tired dog is a well-behaved dog, so aim for at least 30 to 60 minutes of daily walks, playtime, or agility training, depending on the breed and age. Introduce interactive toys like puzzle feeders, Kongs stuffed with peanut butter and frozen treats, or flirt poles to mimic prey chase. Designate a specific “digging zone” in your yard—a sandbox or loose soil area filled with buried toys and treats—to give your dog a sanctioned outlet. Praise and reward them lavishly when they use it, reinforcing positive associations. For escape artists, reinforce fences with buried chicken wire or L-shaped footers extending inward underground to block tunneling attempts.

Environmental modifications can make unwanted digging spots less appealing. Sprinkle citrus peels, cayenne pepper, or commercial repellents like bitter apple spray around flower beds, as dogs dislike strong scents. Motion-activated sprinklers or ultrasonic devices provide a surprising but humane deterrent, startling diggers without harm. In extreme cases, cover vulnerable areas with large rocks, landscape fabric topped with mulch, or even chicken wire just below the surface to frustrate paws. If heat is the culprit, ensure ample shade, a kiddie pool for cooling off, or access to air-conditioned indoors during peak temperatures. Spaying or neutering can also reduce territorial digging driven by hormones, particularly in unaltered males marking their domain.

Training consistency is key to long-term success. Use positive reinforcement techniques: interrupt digging with a firm “no,”

then immediately redirect to an approved activity and reward compliance. Avoid yelling or physical corrections, which can increase anxiety and exacerbate the problem. For persistent offenders, consult a professional trainer or behaviorist to rule out underlying issues like separation anxiety or compulsive disorders. Tools like GPS collars with virtual boundaries can prevent yard escapes while allowing supervised freedom. With patience and proactive measures, most dogs learn to leave the lawn intact. Not only does this preserve your outdoor space, but it also strengthens the bond between you and your pet through mutual understanding. A little dirt under the nails is part of dog ownership, but strategic interventions ensure it stays in the right places—keeping both tails wagging and gardens thriving.

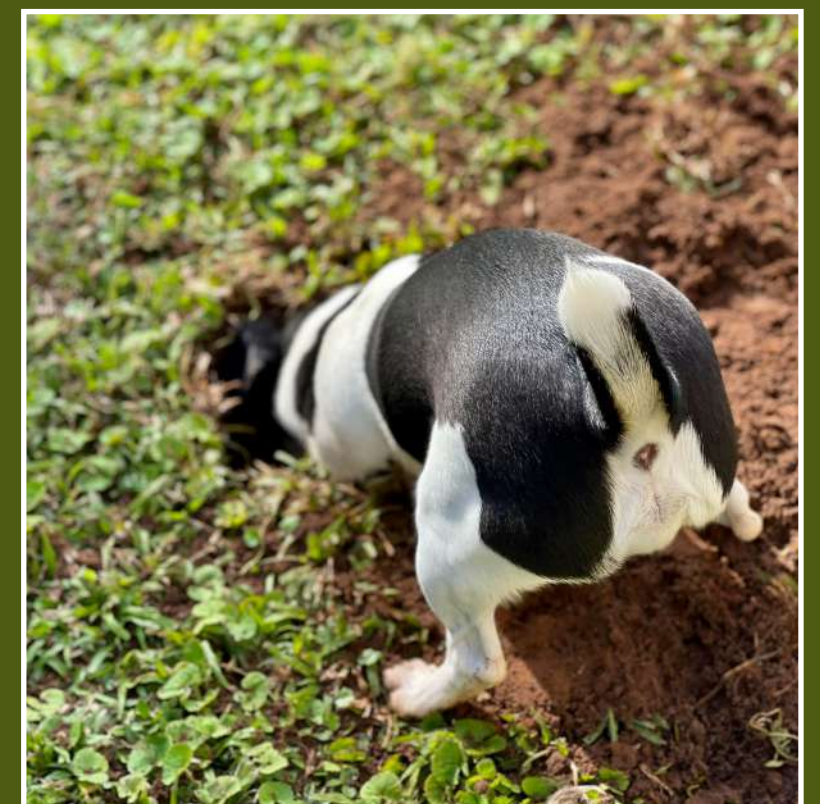




Photo Credit: The Orangutan Project

Person of the forest

The Gentle Giants of the Rainforest: Orangutans on the Brink

By Carien Marais Photos: The Orangutan Project

In the dense, emerald canopies of Borneo and Sumatra, a rust-colored figure swings gracefully from vine to vine, her infant clinging tightly to her fur. This is the orangutan - Malay for “person of the forest” - a creature so intelligent and human-like that it challenges our very definition of what it means to be primate.

With souls reflected in their expressive eyes and behaviors that mirror our own, orangutans are our closest living relatives in the Asian wild. Yet, these magnificent great apes teeter on the edge of extinction, victims of habitat destruction, poaching, and human encroachment. As we grapple with their plight, organizations like The Orangutan Project emerge as beacons of hope, leading the charge in conservation. But survival demands more than admiration; it requires action from us all.

Kinship in the Trees: Our Shared Legacy with Orangutans
Orangutans (genus Pongo) share an astonishing 97% of their DNA with humans, a genetic bond forged over 14 million years of evolutionary divergence from our common ancestor. This closeness manifests in profound ways. Like us, they are highly intelligent tool-users: wild orangutans fashion sticks to fish for termites, use leaves as umbrellas or gloves, and even craft whistles for communication. Mothers invest years in raising offspring, teaching them survival skills in a curriculum that rivals human parenting. Three species grace our planet: the Bornean (Pongo pygmaeus), Sumatran (Pongo abelii), and the recently identified Tapanuli (Pongo tapanuliensis), the rarest with fewer than 800 individuals.

Adult males boast impressive cheek pads and throat sacs that amplify their long calls, echoing up to a mile through the forest to establish territory. Females, more solitary, form deep bonds with their young, who remain dependent for up to eight years—the longest childhood of any land mammal outside humans. This relational depth extends to us. Rehabilitation centers, supported by groups like The Orangutan Project, have documented orphaned orangutans displaying grief, playfulness, and even humor akin to human children. Mirror self-recognition tests confirm their self-awareness, a trait shared with only a handful of species, including dolphins, elephants, and us. In folklore, indigenous Dayak people of Borneo view orangutans as reincarnated humans, a cultural reverence that underscores our intertwined fates.

Vanishing Homes: Habitat Loss and the Specter of Extinction The orangutan’s world is shrinking at an alarming rate. Once roaming across Southeast Asia, they are now confined to fragmented patches of lowland rainforests on Borneo and Sumatra - habitats rich in figs, durians, and the towering dipterocarp trees that form their arboreal highways.



Photo Credit: The Orangutan Project

Deforestation drives this crisis. Palm oil plantations, logging, mining, and agricultural expansion have razed over 50% of their habitat in the past two decades alone. Indonesia and Malaysia, key producers of palm oil—a ubiquitous ingredient in everything from snacks to cosmetics—clear forests at a pace equivalent to 300 football fields per hour. Fires, often set illegally to clear land, exacerbate the devastation, as seen in the 2015 haze crisis that killed thousands of orangutans through smoke inhalation and starvation. Poaching compounds the threat. Infants fetch high prices on the black market as pets, with mothers killed in the process—one orphan represents four to five adult deaths. Human-wildlife conflict arises as hungry orangutans raid crops, leading to retaliatory killings. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies all three species as Critically Endangered. Populations have plummeted: Bornean orangutans from 230,000 in the early 1900s to around 104,000 today; Sumatran from 14,000 to under 7,000; Tapanuli teetering on the brink. Without intervention, projections warn of extinction in the wild within 50 years. Climate change adds insult, altering fruit availability and increasing drought risks.

The Orangutan Project: A Lifeline in the Canopy

Amid this gloom shines The Orangutan Project (TOP), a non-profit powerhouse founded in 1998 and now a global leader in orangutan conservation. Operating under the banner of “saving orangutans one forest at a time,” TOP

has rescued over 2,000 orangutans, rehabilitated orphans, and protected vast swaths of habitat. Key initiatives include the Bukit Piton Forest Reserve in Borneo, a 16,000-acre sanctuary acquired and patrolled by TOP to prevent logging. Here, anti-poaching units—equipped with drones and local rangers—deter intruders. Rehabilitation centers like those in partnership with the International Animal Rescue teach orphaned orangutans essential skills before release into safe zones.



TOP’s holistic approach addresses root causes: community education programs empower locals with sustainable livelihoods, reducing reliance on destructive practices. Reforestation efforts have planted millions of trees, restoring corridors for orangutan movement. Scientific research,

including GPS tracking, informs protected area management. Notably, TOP collaborates with governments to enforce laws and advocates for “orangutan-friendly” palm oil through Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification. Their impact is tangible - release success rates exceed 70%, and protected populations are stabilizing in core areas. As TOP president Leif Cocks asserts, “Orangutans are ecosystem engineers; saving them saves entire rainforests, benefiting biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

“How We Can Help: Pathways to Survival

Ensuring orangutan survival is a collective imperative. Individuals hold power through daily choices and advocacy. Choose Sustainably: Opt for products certified by RSPO or Rainforest Alliance. Apps like “Scan4PalmOil” help identify orangutan-safe brands. Reduce, reuse, recycle to curb demand for virgin materials driving deforestation.

Donate and Volunteer: Support TOP directly via their website (theorangutanproject.org). Even small contributions fund rescues - \$50 feeds an orphan for a month. Volunteer opportunities include eco-tours or remote data analysis. Adopt Symbolically: TOP’s adoption program lets you “adopt” a specific orangutan, with updates on their progress fostering personal connection.

Advocate Loudly: Petition companies to go palm-oil free or sustainable. Support policies like the EU’s deforestation-free regulations. Share stories on social media to raise awareness - #SaveOrangutans has reached millions.

Educate and Engage: Schools and communities can host fundraisers or virtual talks with TOP experts. Tourism done right - visiting ethical sanctuaries - boosts local economies tied to conservation.

Corporations must commit: tech giants and food producers can audit supply chains. Governments need stronger enforcement and incentives for forest protection. In the end, orangutans remind us of our fragility and interconnectedness. By acting now—through The Orangutan Project and beyond—we secure not just their future, but a healthier planet. The forest people call to us; will we answer?





IT STARTS WITH YOU.

theorangutanproject.org

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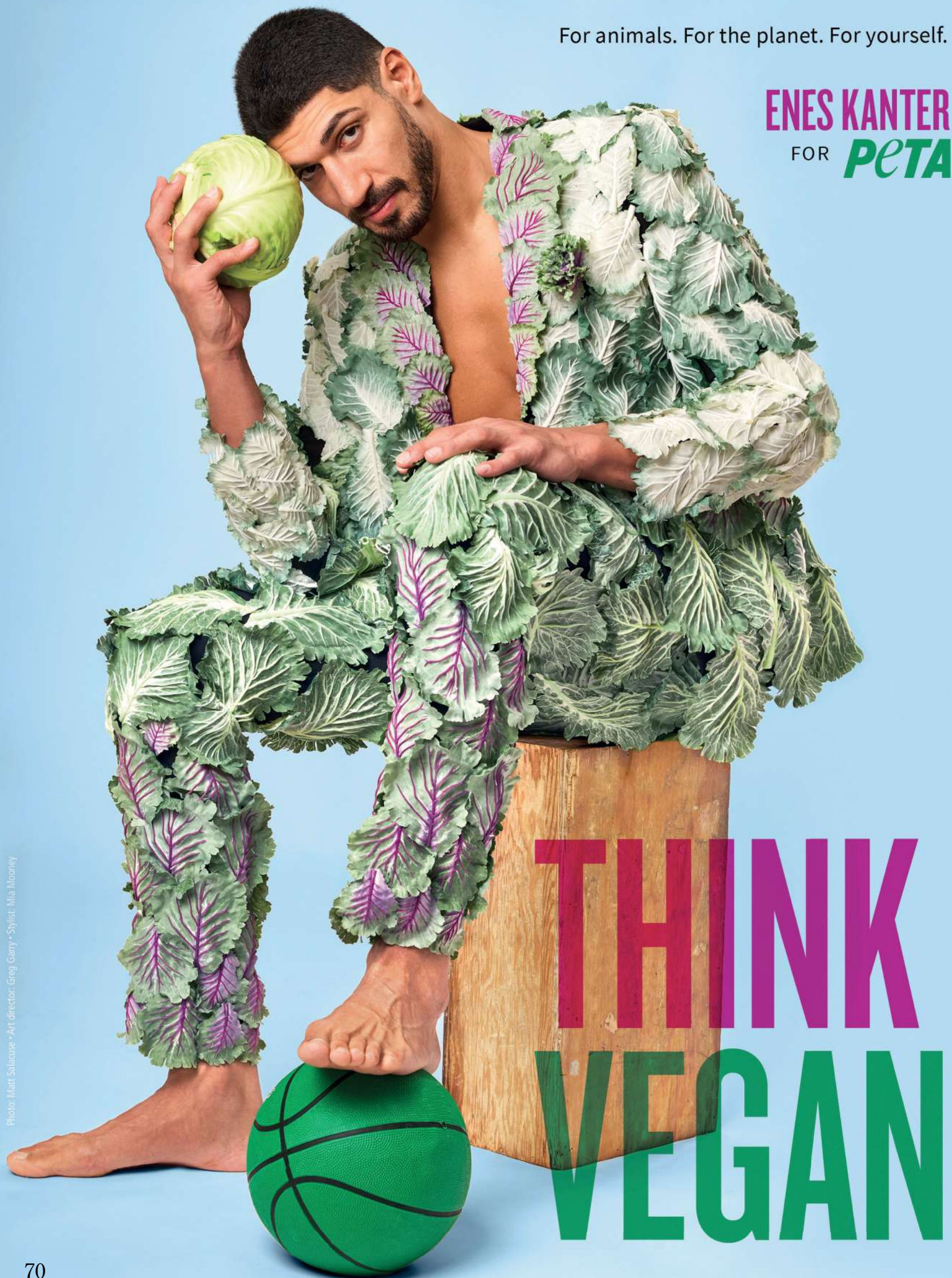


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ENES KANTER
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VEGAN

PANTHERA AFRICA BIG CAT SANCTUARY

How two lions' journey inspired a big cat sanctuary

We all have a special animal that has changed our lives. For some it's their childhood pet that refused to leave their side when they were sick. For others it's that special horse that seems to know what you think and feel. It's that special time you spend with that four-legged friend that always seems to sooth the soul or lift the spirits.

For Cathrine S. Nyquist and Lizaene Cornwall, founders of Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa, it was their bond with lions and the friendship and love they received from their lion friends, Obi and Oliver. When you think of an animal friend, a lion is definitely not the first image that comes to mind but for Cathrine and Lizaene there was no question that these animals were their soulmates.

Cathrine and Lizaene started their fascinating journey at a cub petting farm in South Africa. They were told that the cubs they were taking care of had been abandoned by their mothers and that they had to raise them. They formed a deep connection with Obi and Oliver, two half-brothers, and woke up every four hours to bottle feed them milk. The deep attachment with the two lions grew, and they started to sense each other's emotions and moods. The two women spent many nights in a small wooden house in the lions' enclosure, enjoying the presence of their pride under the African stars.

One day the two lions were sent away and Cathrine and Lizaene experienced a sadness they had never felt before. As time passed, they could somehow sense that their lions were not well, having formed a bond with them that now went beyond space and being physically close to each other. They received a distress signal from Obi and Oliver that they were not happy. Sometimes you just know that there is something wrong with your pet or horse, and so it was with the lions. They drove to the farm where Obi and Oliver were kept and saw the most awful sight – deformed lions due to inbreeding, a small cub in distress pacing in his small cage and crying for his mother. They realized with a sinking feeling that these lions were in a breeding facility and were going to be used to breed more cubs to be sold into the tourism industry.

There comes a point in anyone's life where you simply cannot go on as before. Some event or realization moves you so deeply that you break with the old and start a new way of being and living. This moment for Cathrine and Lizaene was when they saw and understood the inside of a breeding farm. They said to each other, someone has to do something to stop this.



Cathrine S. Nyquist and Lizaene Cornwall, founders of the Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa

While Cathrine was sitting with Oliver, she made a promise to him, One day I will come and get you and give you a new home. Oliver looked into her eyes, and something told her that he understood. She and Lizaene decided to rescue these big cats and start a sanctuary of their own, a daunting task, but one that they felt was their destiny.

Cathrine and Lizaene sat together at their kitchen table for many days and sometimes well into the night and started planning the concept – a non-profit sanctuary based on animal welfare where no breeding, trading or human interaction are allowed, as well as spreading awareness in order to stop all exploitation and suffering for the big cats. It was one thing to rescue their lions and make good on their promise, but how would they earn the income to take care of them? Days became weeks, and then months. It took just under two years for the business plans to be drawn up, a private bank loan in Norway to be established, the property to be bought, the enclosures to be built and all permits and approvals to be issued.

PANTHERA AFRICA

BIG CAT SANCTUARY

STANFORD, SOUTH AFRICA

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Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa is a non-profit sanctuary deeply affected by Covid-19 with the total loss of all tourism income.

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OBI BEFORE



OLIVER BEFORE

No one will come to your sanctuary. You have to breed, trade and offer interaction. But Cathrine and Lizaene forged ahead, knowing that they had a good plan and they had to try. They owed that much to Obi and Oliver. It took two years from the time they made the promise to the time they saw Obi and Oliver again. They were worried that the lions would not remember who they were, but they needn't have, because as soon as Cathrine called their names, a white lion head popped up in the distance where the pride was lying in the shade. Oliver trotted towards her and she was overwhelmed with emotion at seeing her precious lion again. But they were shocked to see their condition. Obi was emaciated and struggled to walk with his back legs giving out on him every couple of steps. Oliver, the once peaceful and majestic lion, had a hard look in his eyes. Neither of them had manes even though they had reached the age where the manes should have been fully developed. After a lot of hard work, perseverance and passion, Cathrine and Lizaene managed to bring their beloved Obi and Oliver to Panthera Africa, the new true sanctuary that they had created. It was different now. Obi and Oliver were no longer used and abused by the tourism industry, no longer petted by up to 50 tourists and volunteers a day, no longer used to breed more cubs, and escaped their planned death of being killed and the bones used for the bone trade once they had become too old for breeding.

Oliver and Obi were now able to live out the rest of their lives in peace, and with the special care and love that they deserve. They have been living at Panthera Africa for the last

six years, allowed to do whatever they please. Once or twice a day, depending on demand, tourists visit the sanctuary and are told Obi and Oliver's remarkable story. It's a story of hope and that no matter how desperate your situation seems, there is always the possibility that someone somewhere will help you in the most profound way and lift you out of the darkness and move you into the light. A week after all the animals were relocated to Panthera Africa an animal communicator was hired to check in with the pride. After her session she came to Cathrine and said, "I don't know if this means anything to you but Oliver says, Thank you for keeping your promise." There was no doubt in Cathrine's mind that Oliver had heard her when she sat at his camp two years ago and uttered the words, "One day I will bring you to a place of safety." Today Cathrine and Lizaene's bond with Obi and Oliver has strengthened even more. They now practice animal communication with them and all the sanctuary's big cats on a weekly, even daily basis. Animal communication is an ancient practice where humans go into a meditative state and connect with an animal. They can communicate with the animal directly, and gather information about the cats' welfare on all levels, including their physical, mental, emotional and energetic state. The animals' conditions and their peace and true happiness is deeply felt when visiting Panthera Africa. Just being in the animals' presence is a life changing experience for many and has already opened thousands of hearts.

Today Panthera Africa is home to 26 animals including lions, tigers, leopards, cheetah, caracals and jackal, and have seen



OBI AFTER RESCUE



OLIVER AFTER RESCUE



Cathrine and Lizaene practice animal communication with all the sanctuary's big cats on a weekly, even daily basis.

Photo credit: Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary

23,500 visitors on their educational visits, sharing the many rescue stories, and telling them about animal welfare and the cruelty of the Captive Lion Industry. They offer animal communication courses to all the volunteers who visit. Most importantly, they treat the big cats with dignity and respect and see them for who they are—not as commodities to be used for human entertainment and profit but as sentient beings who deserve respect. They have won the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Award in 2017 and the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence five years in a row, proving all those critics, who said you cannot have a successful sanctuary without interaction, wrong.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown has put Panthera Africa under severe strain. Since the lockdown started end of March 2020, they lost 90% of their normal income overnight. Tourists and volunteers could no longer visit the sanctuary and they had to find alternative ways of raising funds. In addition, without volunteers, the staff had to work extra hard in order to get through all the daily tasks.

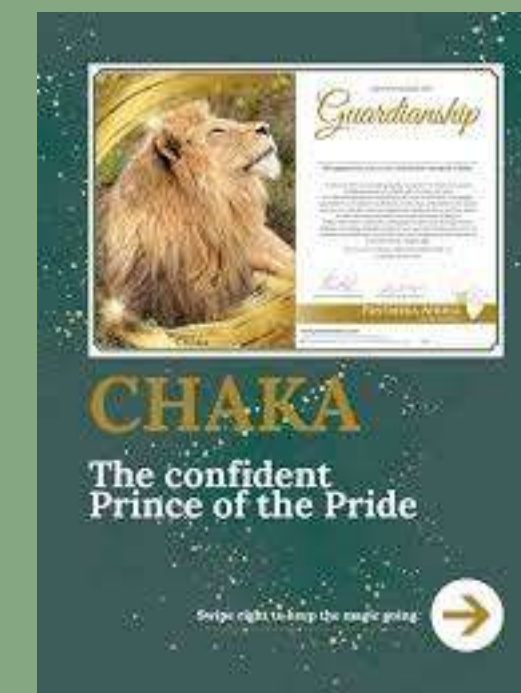
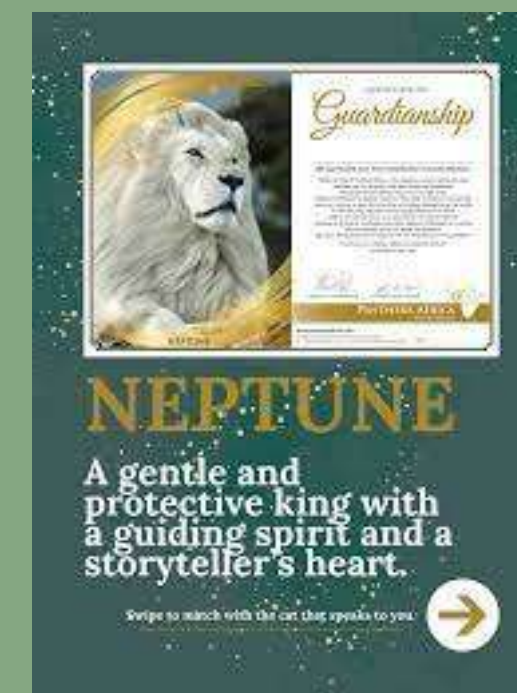
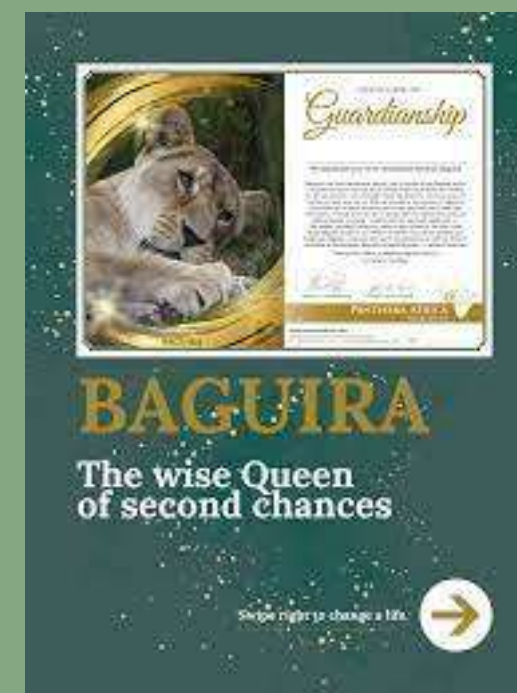
Cathrine and Lizaene continues to persevere through the aftermath of the pandemic and lockdown. Oliver, Obi and the rest of the pride continues to fuel them with love, faith and the knowingness that together they will make it through the storm. With the love and support of your pride or teammates, anything is possible.

Turning point in the captive lion industry?

As more people become aware of the negative effects of cub petting, walking with lions, and hunting of lions, the demand for these practices will decrease. Over 40 major international airlines have refused the cargo of lion trophies and a growing number of countries are banning trophy imports. Stories like Cecil the Lion being hunted have raised awareness about the exploitation lions face. On 2 May 2021 the South African Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Barbara Creecy, announced the departments recommendations to end all captive lion breeding, hunting, trade of lions and their derivatives, as well as ban all lion tourism interaction activities. This is a step in the right direction to bring an end to all cruelty and exploitation that has been detrimental to both the animals and South Africa's image within tourism and conservation. For the first time there is a substantial support from the government, and a significant unification of organizations, sanctuaries and activists that have the chance to transform the captive lion industry into a mutual beneficial partnership for all, including the animals, nature and humans.

Message from co-founders of Panthera Africa, Cathrine and Lizaene

We invite all of you that feel inspired by our story to join us in our work and become a supporter of Panthera Africa – whether as a voice, a service provider, a volunteer, a tourist, a sponsor or donor. Now more than ever we need your help; to ensure the safekeeping and care of our pride, as well as to enable us to support the government to end all exploitation and suffering of the captive lions. The choice and responsibility to act now is ours, and give our grandchildren the opportunity to one day experience a world where all animals, nature and humans are equally respected, acknowledged and loved.



This **November**, we're celebrating and honouring Neptune, Chaka, and Baguira - three of our magnificent pride members who are celebrating their birthdays this month and who remind us every day what second chances truly mean.

As we step into the season of giving, you're invited to become a Guardian - for yourself or as a gift for someone special. Your guardianship is more than a donation; it's the gift that gives back - protecting their forever home and creating hope, love, care, and safety that last a lifetime.

- Join the pride today: <https://shorturl.at/BlyAp>

Most pet stores sell puppy mill dogs.

PLEASE ADOPT.

humanesociety.org/puppymills

Jillian Michaels for

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Why Adopt? A few reasons to rescue your next pet

With millions of homeless pets killed in the United States each year, it's hard to think of a good reason not to adopt. Going to any animal shelter or rescue is a good deed, but when you adopt a pet from a No Kill organization, your good magnifies. Because No Kill shelters manage their population to ensure the save all healthy and treatable pets, when you adopt from a No Kill you save TWO lives--the life of the pet you are taking home and that of another who is now able to come into the adoption program. You just made room for the No Kill shelter to take in, and thereby save, another homeless pet.

You can find anything in a shelter or rescue organization. From big to small; from pure-bred to totally unique; from active to lazy; from young to old; from outgoing to shy; from black to white to red; every combination of pet is available for rescue. With a transient and sometimes disposable society, anything popular ends up in the shelter system. Regardless your preference, you can find the right cat or dog for you in a shelter!

Ethics: When patronizing a shelter or rescue group, you are supporting an organization that is not based in bottom line. The problem with pet stores and breeders trying to profit from selling animals--it is next to impossible to make money if you care for pets humanely. At PAWS Chicago, on average, our costs exceed the adoption fee by \$500 per pet. And that is with volunteers make up the equivalent of nearly 68 full-time employees. To provide quality medical care, walks and socialization, and behavioral training, it costs money. This is why, in commercial puppy mills, moms are bred their entire lives, living in chicken wire cages without walks, medical treatment, love or comfort. It's cheap and they maximize each pet's profit. When it comes to profiting from animals, ethics disappears.

Save money!

Buying an animal from a pet store, the internet or a backyard breeder can be significantly more expensive than adopting from a shelter or rescue group. Commercially bred animals are predominantly raised in inhumane conditions where their health was not a top priority and are often sold while susceptible to life-threatening illnesses. When you buy a pet who gets sick, the costly vet bill are passed on to you. Pets available through PAWS Chicago are up to date on shots, are spayed or neutered, micro-chipped, vaccinated and healthy, which can save a bundle on vet bills. We also partner with veterinarians who offer discounts for pets adopted from PAWS Chicago.

Find the perfect pet for your family

You will receive unconditional love from a shelter pet. Shelters like PAWS have a wide variety of breeds, sizes and ages and one is bound to be the perfect match for you and your family. Our volunteers are experienced and trained to help you find the perfect pet for your lifestyle and home environment.

Include the whole family

Welcoming a new pet into the family is a big decision and one that should be made by the entire family. Part of the fun is selecting the new dog or cat together. Consider surprising your loved ones with a trip to PAWS Chicago where you can meet all the dogs and cats and find the perfect match together. We also ask that you bring any family dogs along so that our experienced support team can introduce your new pet to your canine family member on neutral territory. Pets are a lifetime commitment so working together as a family is key!



Post-adoption guidance

Once you decide to adopt, you will meet with an adoption counselor who will review the most important things to know to integrate your new pet into your family. If there are challenges during the transition, our team of experts is available to help smooth out any bumps for long-term success.

A life-long support system

At PAWS Chicago, we offer a lifetime commitment to every animal who comes through our adoption program. That means that in the event that something happens to you or your family, we ask that you bring your pet back to us so we can find him the right long-term home.

Take pride

By choosing adoption over buying a pet, you can take pride in knowing that you are taking a stand against inhumane commercial breeding. Puppy mills, the source of most sold pets, raise animals in neglectful, inhumane and unsanitary conditions without proper food, water, shelter or veterinary care. By adopting an animal, you can be proud that you are a part of the solution that will help create a No Kill Chicago.

PAWS Chicago Family

By adopting from PAWS Chicago, you are part of our family!



Remembering Jane Goodall and her better world through kindness to animals

By Julie Castle

The world lost a light this week with the passing of Dr. Jane Goodall. It is hard to imagine a planet without her presence and steadfast hope. Yet even in her absence, the legacy she leaves behind is vast and lasting, woven into the very way we see animals, the natural world, and our own place within it.



When I think of Jane, I think of someone who taught us how to live with kindness as a creed — not as a catchphrase but as a way. She credits this learning to Rusty — a dog who could sulk, who taught her about loyalty and fairness, and who refused to be laughed at. She would dress him in pajamas, let him perform tricks, and if anyone laughed at him, he would stalk off. But the deeper lesson was Rusty showed her that animals think, feel, and love unconditionally — that they are clever, individual, full of personality. And she carried this knowledge into the forests of Gombe, before scientific boards and international halls, and onto every stage she graced. Jane was the first great citizen scientist of our modern era. She stepped forward not waiting for an invitation, and in doing so she

created space for all of us to follow. She bucked the status quo, challenged the assumptions of her time, and carved a path through resistance. “Nature will return. I have seen it again and again and again,” she shared. Resistance is also in “the indomitable human spirit,” as she called it. Inviting us to “make change where other people say, ‘It’s hopeless.’”

Jane’s world and that of Best Friends have much in common: both centered on kindness, compassion, and an understanding that the lives of animals have intrinsic value and are deserving of our respect and protection. As it happens, Best Friends co-founder Silva Battista had a connection to Jane through her sister-in-law, Mary Lewis, who was Jane’s assistant and traveling companion for decades. That relationship led to collaboration and mutual support between Jane, the Jane

Goodall Foundation, and Best Friends. When she was invited to be the grand marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade, her only condition was that adoptable dogs from Best Friends walk the parade route beside her grand marshal’s carriage. Jane supported us not out of obligation but from conviction. She believed in what we were doing, especially when it came to kindness as action, message, and mission. She didn’t just lend her reputation; she lent her heart, consistently, until the very end. Jane’s life reminds us that kindness can be a compass. It can guide how we make decisions for animals, people, and communities alike. She showed us that using our voice and influence generously matters and that waiting for permission is rarely how the world changes. Case in point: Her support of Best Friends was never ceremonial. She came to our super adoption event in Los Angeles to promote pets for adoption. When we thought we might need her voice in our stand against a mining operation that posed an existential threat to the Sanctuary, she made a video to stand with us. She showed up. She believed. That generosity of spirit is what defined her. In addition to founding the Jane Goodall Institute to advance the work she pioneered, she also created Roots & Shoots, an international youth organization that engages young people in local action to help animals, their communities, and the environment. Jane was also appointed a United Nations Ambassador for Peace and was awarded the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In June of 2021, I had the honor of interviewing Jane for our Best Friends National Conference. I felt, in that moment, as if I were speaking with Mother Earth herself — or as the Cherokee people named her, “Sister of Mother Earth.” She had already turned the scientific world upside down by naming individual chimps — Fifi, Flo, David Greybeard — insisting they had personalities and emotions. That insistence was radical.

It was anthropomorphism to her critics. But she knew, from her early life, that animals are more than data points. When I spoke with her, she quoted her grandmother: “Once you’ve set your hand to the plow and turned back, you’re not fit for the kingdom of heaven,” she said with a laugh. She elaborated: “There’s a disconnect between this clever brain and the human heart where we poetically seek love and compassion. I truly believe head and heart must work in harmony.” And together they did — for she advanced the world scientifically by following that guiding compass of her heart and reached across arbitrary lines to listen and seek to understand others. She demonstrated to all of us just how strong we are together. To the very end, she traveled 300 days a year, generously offering her influence where she could. This past week, she was on a speaking tour in California. Her life informed her legacy that will forever inform what we understand of the human–animal bond. Jane spoke to each of us when she said that every day we make choices in our lives. All 8.2 billion (or so) of us make choices every day. By making these choices based on kindness, we can see the Earth revived. The courage it takes to stand up and preach harmony in the face of status-quo division is immense.

I will forever be grateful for the time I got to spend with Jane Goodall and for the work she has done for all beings on this Earth. Her absence will be felt deeply. In her memory, I charge you with remaining hopeful in the face of negativity. I charge you with listening to your heart to guide your mind and to do what’s right. And I’ll leave you with this: “What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

Thank you, Jane, for devoting your life to a better world through kindness to animals. - Julie (Courtesy: bestfriends.org)





Homemade Sweet Potato Dog Treats (Baked)

Making homemade sweet potato dog treats is so easy and lets your furry friend have a delicious treat! They only use 4 ingredients so you know exactly what your pup is eating - you can easily adjust the thickness/bake time if your dog prefers extra crispy or chewier treats.

Author: Kathleen Hansen

- **Healthy for your pup** - I love to make my own dog treats so I know exactly what my dog is eating.
- **Perfect for a Celebration** - Great to celebrate your dog's birthday or gotcha day!
- **4 Simple Ingredients** - You only need whole wheat flour, a sweet potato, eggs, and applesauce! And, unlike many dog treat recipes, they don't use peanut butter so these are nut free dog treats!

INGREDIENTS:

1 small-medium sweet potato, to get 1 cup mashed
2.5 cups whole wheat flour
2 eggs
¼ cup plain unsweetened applesauce

- **Prep** - Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- **Cook Sweet Potato in Microwave** - Prick the sweet potato several times with a fork. Cook in the microwave on high for about 6 minutes, until fork tender. Cook time will vary based on size of potato. Let sit until cool enough to handle.
- **Mash Sweet Potato** - Cut potato in half and scoop flesh into a bowl (discard skin) and mash potato with a fork then measure out 1 cup.
- **Mix Dough** - Add 1 cup of the mashed sweet potato to a mixing bowl and mix in the eggs and applesauce then mix in the flour.
- **Roll out Treats** - Turn dough out onto a well-floured surface and roll dough to about ¼-inch thick (see notes).
- **Cut out into shapes** using a cookie cutter or cut dough into squares with a sharp knife or pizza cutter.
- **Bake Treats** - Place cut treats on parchment lined baking sheets (I used two sheets) and bake for 25-35 minutes until the treats are to your desired crispiness. I've found that my dog prefers treats to be crunchy and hard vs chewy. So I will bake these treats longer than you would 'human cookies'. When done, they should look well past set, but not burnt. But bake them according to your dog's preference!
- **Cool and Serve** - Allow the treats to fully cool and they will crisp up more as they cool. Serve or store!



Notes: Homemade dog treats can be kept at room temperature for 5-7 days or in the fridge for 1-2 weeks. But they can be frozen for up to 3 months. I like to leave a few out and then freeze the rest.

Having difficulty giving your dog its medicine?



SOLNACKS PILL POUCHES FOR DOGS

Stress-free Solution for Administering Medication

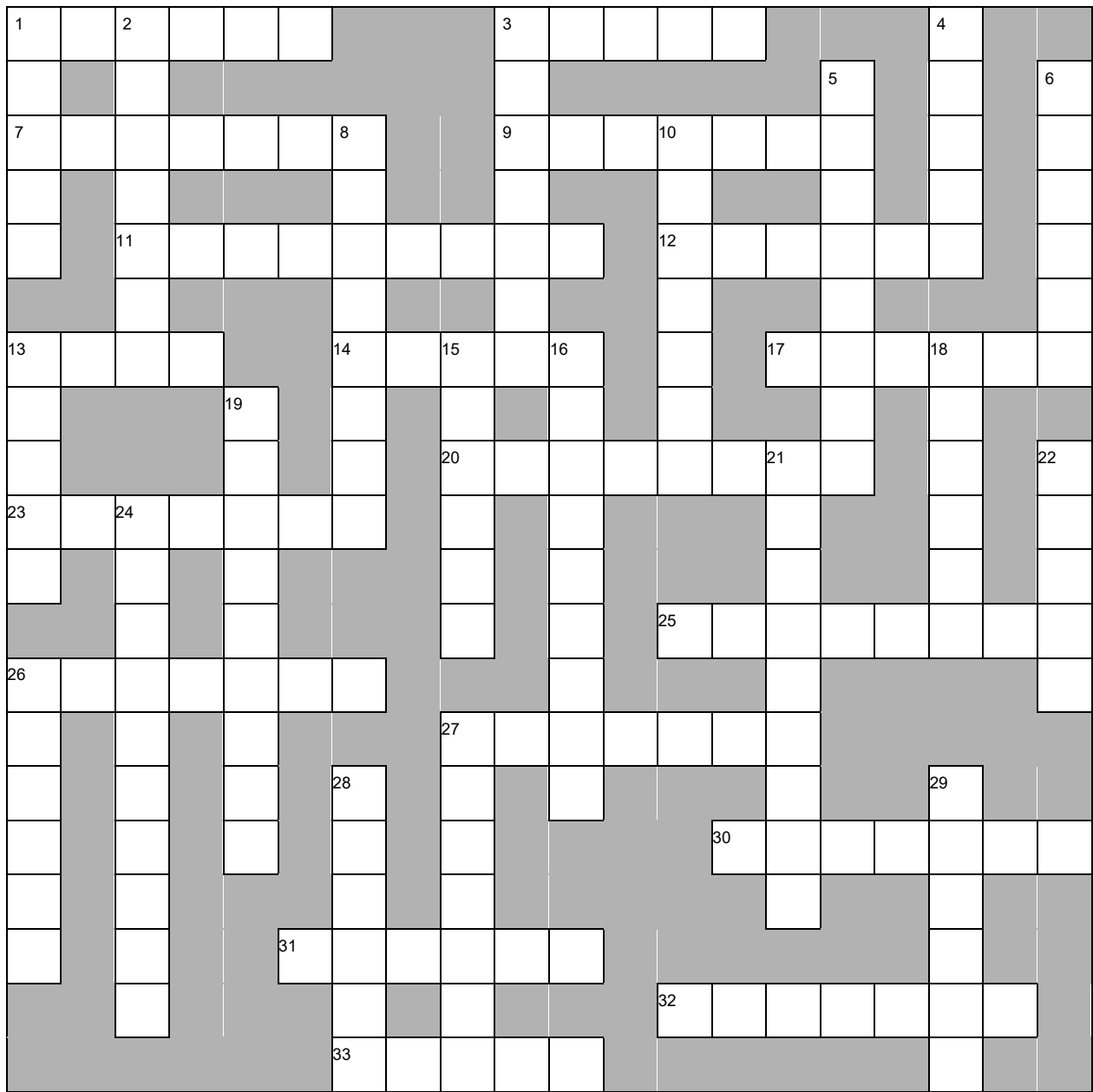
SOLNACKS Pill Pouches are an innovative and delicious solution designed to make pill administration easy and stress-free for dogs. These treats are crafted with natural, functional ingredients to ensure high palatability and effortless use, making every pill a positive experience for both pet and owners.

Soft, chewy treats
Contains real ostrich meat - Hypoallergenic
Fits any size medication
High Palatability
No corn, wheat or preservatives
Stress-free Experience:
Reduces resistance and stress during pill administration.



Feed as a treat or use as a pill cover

Crossword 1



Across

- 1 Long-haired Scottish herding dog, Lassie's breed (6)
3 Short for Siberian, Russian forest cat (5)
7 Large, docile cat that goes limp when held (7)
9 Giant rabbit breed from Belgium (7)
11 Large, fluffy English chicken (9)
12 Irish or English bird-hunting dog (6)
13 Tailless cat from the Isle of Man (4)
14 Arctic sled dog with striking blue eyes (5)
17 Yellow singing bird from islands (6)
20 Red and white-faced beef cattle (8)
23 Ancient desert horse with dished face (7)
25 Small colorful pet parrot, also called budgie (8)
26 Wild American horse (7)
27 Muscular, short-haired Southeast Asian cat (7)
30 Flat-faced, long-haired cat breed (7)
31 Curly-coated dog, comes in toy, miniature, and standard sizes (6)
32 Humped cattle from India (7)
33 Black beef cattle from Scotland (5)

Down

- 1 Short-legged Welsh herding dog, royal favorite (5)
2 White egg-laying chicken breed (7)
3 Black-faced British sheep (7)
4 Square-jawed German guard dog with pushed-in face (5)
5 Small pony from Scottish islands (8)
6 Small tan dairy cow producing rich milk (6)
8 Texas cattle with enormous horns (8)
10 Massive ancient guard dog (7)
13 Large, colorful long-tailed parrot (5)
15 Hairless Egyptian cat breed (6)
16 Large white pig breed (9)
18 Hardy mountain dairy goat (6)
19 Tiny Mexican dog, smallest breed (9)
21 Golden or Labrador hunting dog that fetches (9)
22 Spotted or painted horse (actually a color pattern) (5)
24 Ancient ticked-coat cat from Ethiopia (10)
26 Compact American horse breed (6)
27 Wrinkly, stocky British dog with pushed-in nose (7)
28 Fluffy rabbit or goat bred for fiber (6)
29 Color-pointed cat with white paws (6)



Instructions for Giving your Cat a Pill

Pick the cat up and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position the right forefinger and thumb on either side of the cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to the cheeks while holding the pill in the right hand. As the cat opens its mouth, pop a pill into its mouth. Allow the cat to close its mouth and swallow. Retrieve the pill from the floor and the cat from behind the sofa. Cradle the cat in your left arm and repeat the process.

Retrieve the cat from the bedroom, and throw the soggy pill away. Take a new pill from the foil wrap, cradle the cat in your left arm, holding the rear paws tightly with your left hand. Force the jaws open and push the pill to the back of the mouth with the right forefinger. Hold your mouth shut for a count of 10.

Retrieve the pill from the goldfish bowl and the cat from the top of the wardrobe. Call your spouse from the garden. Kneel on the floor with the cat wedged firmly between your knees, holding front and rear paws. Ignore the low growls emitted by the cat. Get your spouse to hold the cat's head firmly with one hand while forcing the wooden ruler into the mouth. Drop the pill down the ruler and rub the cat's throat vigorously.

Retrieve the cat from the curtain rail, and get another pill from the foil wrap. Make a note to buy a new ruler and repair curtains. Carefully sweep shattered figurines from the hearth and set them to one side for gluing later.

Wrap the cat in a large towel and get your spouse to lie on the cat with its head just visible from below the spouse's armpit. Put the pill at the end of the drinking straw, force the cat's mouth open with a pencil, and blow down the drinking straw.

Check the label to make sure the pill is not harmful to humans. Drink a glass of water to take the taste away. Apply Band-Aid to the spouse's forearm and remove blood from the carpet with cold water and soap.

Retrieve the cat from the neighbor's shed. Get another pill. Place the cat in the cupboard and close the door on its neck to leave its head showing. Force the mouth open with a dessert spoon. Flick pill down throat with elastic band.

Fetch a screwdriver from the garage and put the door back on the hinges. Apply a cold compress to the cheek and check records for the date of last tetanus shot. Throw the T-shirt away and fetch a new one from the bedroom.

Ring the fire brigade to retrieve the cat from the tree across the road. Apologize to the neighbor who crashed into the fence while swerving to avoid a cat. Take the last pill from the foil wrap.

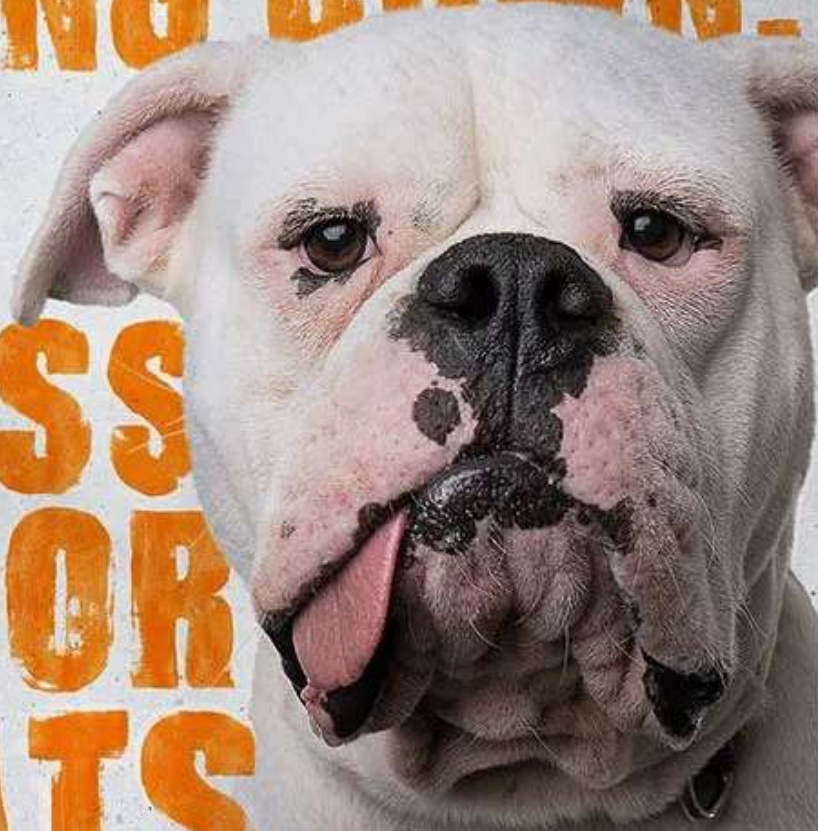
Tie the cat's front paws to rear paws with garden twine and bind tightly to the leg of the dining table. Find heavy-duty pruning gloves in the shed. Force the cat's mouth open with a small spanner. Push the pill into the mouth, followed by a large piece of fillet steak. Hold the head vertically and pour 1/2 pint of water down the throat to wash the pill down.

Get your spouse to drive you to the emergency room; sit quietly while the doctor stitches your fingers and forearm and removes pill remnants from your right eye.

Stop by the furniture shop on the way home to order a new table.

**WE WILL NOT
TAKE THIS
SITTING DOWN.**

**UNLESS
IT'S FOR
TREATS.**



It's time to adopt change. Every day nearly 5500 dogs and cats are killed in shelters across the country — but with Best Friends Animal Society leading the charge, and your help, we can Save Them All.



**SAVE
THEM
ALL**