



Best Friends Pet Care employee Diane Damino reads a bedtime story to Max, a yellow lab, at Best Friends Pet Care Center in Norwalk, Conn. Kennels are catering to animals who are treated like family members.

Goodbye cages, hello flat-screens

Dedicated animal owners want more extravagant kennels

By Fran Golden
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Actor Kieren Hutchison recently boarded his border collie, Jack, in a suite with a flat-screen TV. It wasn't that he was worried the dog would miss seeing him on "One Tree Hill" and other TV shows on which the actor has appeared. It's just that Hutchison and his wife, actress Nicole Tubiola, liked the look of the doggie suite, complete with a little bed.

"I wanted him to have a bed, as he

sleeps in our bed at home," said Hutchison, who lives near Los Angeles. "I felt like (the cage) was putting him in jail for three weeks and (the suite) was like being at home."

Pet pampering continues to reach new heights in the United States, and pet owners want to make sure it doesn't let up when they are out of town.

Their guests can indulge in bottled water, fancy snacks, bedtime stories and massages.

Don't even call them kennels; some places prefer to be known as "resorts" and even "country inns."

"Ten years ago you took your dog to the kennel and threw them in their cage and hoped they didn't get kennel cough. Now people want their dogs, like kids, to have what they're used to at home," said Doug Poindexter, executive vice president

of the World Wide Pet Industry Association.

While the \$4 billion kennel business has been growing by about 5 percent annually, according to Jim Krack, chief executive officer of ABKA, a trade association for pet providers, kennels opportunity in the luxury extras customers demand.

"They can almost double their boarding income without capital expenditures," Krack said.

In Sudbury, Mass., Scratchy and Sadie, two dogs owned by Linda Levin, recently checked into a Best Friends Pet Care facility.

The bearded collie mix and collie/golden retriever looked like they couldn't wait to get into their shared "Vacation Villa," which they visit whenever Levin is out of town.

The 8-by-9 foot room comes with a separate potty area and two

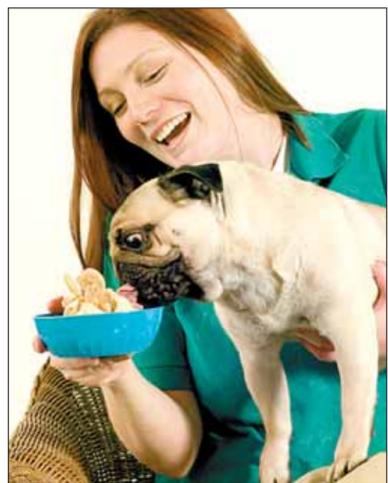
miniature white-framed beds.

The villa includes a blue tile floor, artwork and French glass doors that lead to the hallway so the dogs can see who is coming and going.

The beds for Scratchy (age 11) and Sadie (age 12) were outfitted with orthopedic mattresses, which were covered with cozy blankets. Wall-mounted TVs are in each villa.

Center manager Susan Adam said some pet-care offerings stem from customer requests. For instance, customers were bringing in bottles of water for dogs used to having spring water at home. The facility now offers bottled water (for \$5 per day). Adam said the most popular add-ons are playtime (\$6 for 10 minutes) and doggy ice cream (\$4 per treat).

"What we're selling is not only pet care but piece of mind to the pet owner," Krack said.



Kristin Barbro serves a bowl of doggy ice cream and cookies to Guzzi, a pug, at Best Friends Pet Care Center in White Plains, N.Y.

JOHNSON COUNTY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Spring craft fair offers free admission

Johnson County Extension Homemakers will sponsor its annual spring craft fair from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 3 in Scott Hall on the Johnson County fairgrounds in Franklin.

Vendors will sell floral arrangements, candles, craft items, embellished clothing, woodcrafts, jewelry and more.

Food items will be available throughout the day. Admission is free.

Information: 736-3724

Educational programs cover food, fitness

The Johnson County Extension Homemakers will offer two educational programs March 6 at the Johnson County Extension office in the Oren Wright Building, 80 S. Jackson St., Franklin.

Top 10 Food Trends will begin at 6:30 p.m. At 7:30 p.m., Getting More Active: How to Enjoy a More Physically Active Life will be presented.

There is no charge, and the public is invited to attend one or both programs.

Registration: 736-3724

Get cattle weighed, identified at fairgrounds

Beef weigh-in and identification for 4-H will take place

starting at 8 a.m. March 10 in the indoor arena at the Johnson County fairgrounds in Franklin.

Information: 736-3724

International Day to feature country of Chile

The public is invited to join the Johnson County Extension Homemakers as they learn more about the country of Chile during International Day at 11 a.m. March 14 at Greenwood Christian Church, 2045 Averitt Road.

Prepaid registration of \$2 is required by sending money to Johnson County Extension Homemakers, Wright Building, 80 S. Jackson St., Franklin, IN 46131.

A pitch-in luncheon will be available, and participants are asked to bring a covered dish and their own table service.

Information: 736-3724

Ag Day breakfast costs only 50 cents

The annual Farmers Share Ag Day breakfast will take place at 7:30 a.m. March 21 in Scott Hall on the Johnson County fairgrounds in Franklin.

Cost is 50 cents per person.

For special needs and reservations, which are encouraged though not required, call 736-3724.

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