



all about
pets

Daily Courier

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

**Big
dogs,
big love**

St. Bernard breeder
has shown top dogs

Scaling up

Reptiles are among the unusual
pet choices many are making

De-skunking tips

A groomer offers her best recipe and
tips for successful stink abatement

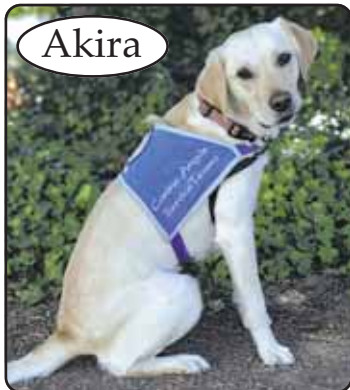


Canine Angels Service Teams (C.A.S.T.)



(C.A.S.T.) is a local non-profit organization that trains dogs to support and serve individual children, young adults, and families facing significant disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and autism.

Pearl helps Ian regulate his emotions when he's anxious, overwhelmed or dysregulated... and she brings so much unconditional love to him! Ian's peers are drawn to Ian when Pearl is with him. She bridges the gap between his different abilities and those of his peers.



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Pearl was raised by a local Puppy Raiser (their 12th pup), she was able to meet Ian's Family and see the team connect so magically!



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all about pets

is published by the Grants Pass Daily Courier
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JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Conrad Galecki introduces a visitor to Hydro, a false water cobra. Page 8.

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ON THE COVER

Paul Bodeving pats Aspen, his purebred St. Bernard Aspen, his only current big dog, get in some yard time at his home in Grants Pass.

Photo by JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Pet Brags



Domino

Domino ensures his street in Medford is safe thanks to his supervising.

Charlie

"But I'm a good boy!"



Brandy

"I prefer human furniture to dog beds."

Riley

"Rain, heat or snow - please just throw!"



Miss Kevin & Mr. Pants



Soo Joo Bean



Tong Tong

Pockets

Feed me tacos!



Spring is the time to get skunked

What a professional groomer suggests to victims of skunk spray to get the stink out

By **Tricia Drevets**
for the Daily Courier

Dusk was settling in after a warm spring day. I was washing dishes when, suddenly, I smelled the very distinct and pungent odor of a skunk.

“Oh, my, that skunk is close by,” I muttered, reaching out to close the window above my sink. Then, horror struck me as I realized my dog was out in the backyard.

By then, Bowie, my golden retriever, was at the back door in full panic. When I opened the door, he rushed in and started rolling and rubbing his face every which way onto the carpet, spreading the oil and its foul odor wherever he went.

As I rushed to contain him and check my phone for information on what to do, things went downhill fast.

Since then, I have learned a few important lessons about dogs and skunks. With the approaching warmer temperatures of spring causing skunks to be more active, it's a good time for dog owners to learn from my mistakes.

This article explores when and why skunks spray, what to do if your dog gets “skunked” and steps to help prevent it from happening.

To help us, we spoke with pet groomer Holly Reyes, owner of Groom At The Top, 128 S.E. K St. in Grants Pass.

It turns out many pet parents make the same mistakes I did.

Why do skunks spray?

When scared, startled or threatened, a skunk will spray a strong-smelling oily liquid that is stored in specialized glands near the base of its tail. Experts believe they only do it when they sense they cannot escape danger.

Skunks may first show warning signs, such as stomping their feet or raising their tails, before spraying. However, dogs are unlikely to pick up on these clues when they encounter a skunk in their yard.

The spray, which can be directed with accuracy as a fine mist or a direct stream, contains sulfur compounds, including thiols and thioacetates, that have a very strong, persistent odor. The smell can last for weeks.

Skunks are nocturnal animals, but they can become more active at dusk as spring approaches, and they focus on mating, raising their young and gathering food.

Females often give birth in May or June and become very protective of their young. As fall turns into winter, skunks tend to become less active.



BEA AHBECK / Daily Courier, 2022

A 5-month-old toy golden doodle, gets a shower at a local groomer in Grants Pass in February, 2022.

What to do if your dog gets skunked?

I managed to get a still-very-upset Bowie into the bathroom, shut the door and gather the ingredients listed on many websites for de-skunking your dog. The ingredients are:

- 1 quart (4 cups) of 3% fresh hydrogen peroxide
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 1-2 teaspoons of dishwashing liquid (Dawn is often recommended because of its oil-dispersing reputation.)

Reyes says she recommends this recipe to folks who call her for advice, adding that it “probably works just as well or better” than products sold commercially for the purpose. (Note: Don't store any remaining mixture; it can explode if stored in a closed container. Also, don't use a hydrogen peroxide stronger than 3%.)

“Skunk spray is an oil, and we [groomers] know how to get it out,” Reyes continued. “We might be able to get it out a little better if we can get to it in time.” Trying to stay calm and talking as soothingly as I could to Bowie despite the way my own eyes and nose were reacting to the skunk spray, I made the pasty mixture and applied it to my dog's face and neck. Then, I rinsed him with water.

Here was my next mistake. It's crucial to let the mixture remain on your dog for five minutes before rinsing. Rinsing too soon prevents the mixture from absorbing the odors as much as possible.

“You really need to work [the mixture in],” says Reyes. “And the problem is that dogs usually get sprayed in the face, so you have to be very careful of their eyes.”

Reyes says that water, even many days

after the spraying, can re-activate skunk odor on a dog. I found this out the hard way after Bowie took a river swim several weeks after the spraying incident.

You may have heard about using tomato juice for de-skunking. Reyes, who has been a dog groomer for more than two decades, says she has never heard of a client having success with tomato-based products.

If you want to have a pre-made product on hand, the groomer says Nature's Miracle Skunk Odor Remover is one she recommends.

Symptoms your dog may experience

When your dog has been sprayed by a skunk, the odor (which, take my word for it, is much worse than you might think) is your first concern.

However, your dog may exhibit other symptoms, especially if they have been sprayed in the face.

According to the American Kennel Club, they can include the following:

- Drooling
- Excessive panting
- Vomiting
- Sneezing
- Red or swollen eyes
- Temporary blindness

These reactions usually improve within a couple of hours after the spraying. If other symptoms occur after this period, including lethargy, weakness or a change in urine color or gum color, consult your veterinarian, the American Kennel Club advises.

Also, skunks can carry rabies. If your dog was bitten by a skunk, see your vet

Keeping skunks out of your yard

Daily Courier

“I'd say my biggest tip for preventing your dog from being sprayed by a skunk is to just pay more attention,” says pet groomer Holly Reyes, owner of Groom At the Top in Grants Pass. “Don't just let your dog run out the door in the evening and early morning hours when skunks may be more active.”

Skunks do not seek out human or pet interaction. They are nocturnal animals that typically are looking for food or shelter when they enter your yard.

Here are some tips for making your property less inviting to them.

- Use well-sealed containers to store pet food and bird seed.
- Prevent access to areas underneath decks, houses and wood piles.
- Stuff leaves, straw or paper in front of a suspected den entry hole or sprinkle kitty litter in front of it.
- Use motion-activated lights or sprinklers.

— Tricia Drevets

right away.

Extra precautions I take now

I'd like to say that the incident I described was the first and only time my Bow has been skunked. However, he got sprayed about a year later. Once again, it was a spring evening, and I admit I let down my guard.

This time, though, I didn't let him inside the house until I gathered the supplies I now keep on hand. Then, I walked him by his stinky collar to the bathroom. Preventing him from rolling on the carpet helped a great deal with house odor.

I also waited a full five minutes before rinsing off the paste, which seemed to help a lot.

Since then, I have had no more incidents. I'd like to say that Bow has learned his lesson, but I don't think that's the case. He's a friendly, goofy Golden, after all.

It's because I take him out on a leash and scan my fenced backyard with a flashlight before letting him off the leash to do his nighttime business. It can be a pain on late nights, but all I have to do is think of the potential consequences and out I go, leash and flashlight in hand.

Freelance reporter Tricia Drevets of Grants Pass is a regular contributor to Daily Courier special publications.

Groomer Holly Reyes says she recommends the recipe (above) to folks who call her for advice...

The paste must be put on as soon as possible and left for 5 minutes before rinsing.

“The problem is that dogs usually get sprayed in the face, so you have to be very careful of their eyes.”



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Kylo Beals, 3, plays fetch with his Dalmation and pitbull mix, Lenny, while at the dog park inside Bear Creek Park in Medford earlier this month.

Give your dog a lark at the park

Daily Courier

Public dog parks give pups a chance to socialize and have a romp off their leashes.

The Grants Pass area has four dog parks, one county and three city parks.

SCHROEDER PARK: Josephine County's dog park is at Schroeder Park, at the end of Willow Lane, off Redwood Avenue. Outside the dog park, Schroeder also has river access and a park host.

This park has separate areas for small and large dogs.

A parking fee is required at \$5 per day; or get a parking pass for 2026 for all county parks for \$35 per vehicle or \$55 for a transferable pass that can be used on any vehicle; discounts or free passes are available for parks volunteers and disabled patrons. Passes are available from park hosts, the parks main office at 125 Ringuette St. or the Josephine County Fairgrounds office, among other places.

For information, call 541-474-5285.

The city of Grants Pass maintains three dog parks. There is no charge for parking or to use the parks.

All parks are divided into large dog and small dog areas.

For details, call 541-471-6435.

GILBERT CREEK PARK: The dog park is downhill from the parking area and soccer field at Gilbert Creek Park, 1750 N.W. Hawthorne Ave. Outside the dog park is access to the creek. The nearby tennis court users sometimes supply "balls from heaven" for park pups.

GREENWOOD DOG PARK: At the end of

Greenwood Avenue, with views of the Rogue River, this park connects to the walking trails of Reinhart Volunteer Park as well. It's also the most accessible of the dog parks for those with walking problems.

REDWOOD DOG PARK: Redwood Park is at 1395 Dowell Road and the dog park is in the southeast corner of the park. It's the smallest of the city's dog parks.

Jackson County's cities have their share of off-leash dog parks as well:

ASHLAND DOG PARK: The city's 2-acre dog park is at 950 Perozzi St., off Nevada Street.

EAGLE POINT DOG PARK: The Chamberlain Dog Park at 336 Sandi Way in Eagle Point is near the corner of Reese Creek Road and Crystal Drive. The main Chamberlain Park includes restrooms, a playground, sports courts and a shelter.

MEDFORD DOG PARKS: Bear Creek Park, 530 Highland Drive, includes a dog park, among many other amenities including the Panther Pride Trail, a skatepark, pavilions, BMX track and amphitheater.

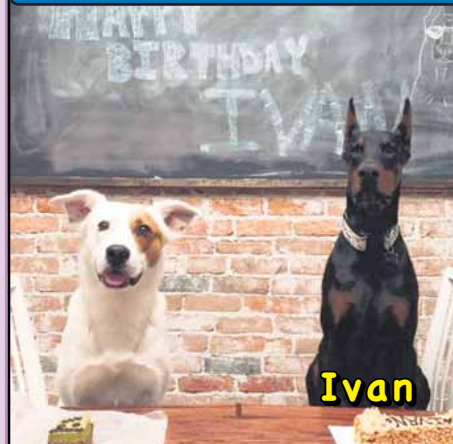
Hawthorne Park, 501 E. Main St., also has an off-leash area for dogs.

JACKSONVILLE DOG PARK: The Waggin' Tails Dog Park at 400 S. D St., is operated by a local nonprofit. It has large and small dog areas and is accessible. See waggintailsdogpark.com for more.

GOLD HILL BARK PARK: Inside the Gold Hill Sports Park just outside of town on Highway 234, the fenced area is near the skate park. Features include shade trees, benches and a waste station. The park also has hiking trails, a boat ramp and river access, a skate park and sports courts. For more, call 541-855-1525.

Pet Brags

Ivan's Birthday!



Longhorns

Our friend's (Rod Maddox) longhorns at his ranch in Jacksonville.



Timber & Jack

Daughter & Father

Karma

She is adorable and won't allow us into lakes or rivers because she "rescues" us!!! Adores everything and everyone. Playful and good natured.



Shadow

Smart cats love to read the Courier!



Bear & Flappy

You never know when Flappy is going to jump on your head!



Willie

Will hunt & retrieve my walking stick from anywhere!



Lucky

Race horse, then pony horse and now part of a family.

St. Bernard booster



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Paul Bodeving spends time with his dogs Aspen, a male St. Bernard, and Mugsie, a female terrier. Bodeving and his late wife bred and showed purebred St. Bernards for years and he's still involved in the local Rogue Valley Kennel Club and Southern Oregon St. Bernard Club.

After decades of breeding them, Paul Bodeving's gentle giants can be found around the country and the world

By Cara Denney
for the Daily Courier

The Rogue Valley is known for many things — coffee, rafting and fishing on the river, wineries and believe it or not, pedigree St. Bernards. But for St. Bernard breeder Paul Bodeving, these gentle giants are not so much a claim to fame and fortune as they are simply his best friends.

“A pure bred dog is first of all a pet, not a breeding machine. It is for companionship, not just to make money,” Bodeving said, wiping a big slurp of sticky drool off his pants from his current buddy, an older St. Bernard named Aspen.

Pro tip from Bodeving: Don't get a St. Bernard if you can't deal with the drool.

“It's the best glue you can have,” Bodeving said with a laugh.

But all joking aside, breeding these animals is an all-consuming and expensive hobby, that for Bodeving has been his side hustle for 30 years.

“My father raised German Shepherds,” Bodeving said of his childhood growing up in Luxembourg, a small country nestled between the borders of Germany, France and Belgium. He learned dog breeding from his father but chose a different and smarter — according to Bodeving — breed, the St. Bernard.

St. Bernards are known for being quick learners, loyal and loving and fiercely protective of “their people.” The image of a St. Bernard with a wooden brandy cask around his neck looking for lost travelers is a myth, according to Bodeving.

“St. Bernards are named after the St. Bernard Pass between Italy and Switzerland. The brandy cask is all Hollywood but they were used to carry heavy loads up into the mountains. They can carry up to 4,000 pounds,” Bodeving said. Naturally with such strength and size, St. Bernards are also known for their big appetites.

“When we lived in Cave Junction we had 32 puppies. We went through 1,000 pounds of food a week. I don't even want to know how much that added up to,” Bodeving said, belying the fact that this is a man who knows almost everything there is to know about breeding St. Bernards.

An American Kennel Club delegate, a judge at national show events, a track record over the years of only two dogs ever being returned, and able to “guarantee my dogs do not have genetic problems,” has resulted in Bodeving having his dogs find forever homes all over the United States and the globe.

St. Bernards can fetch a price anywhere from \$500 to \$10,000, with \$3,000 to \$3,500 being the average.

Still, Bodeving is adamant that the goal of breeding is to “treat the dogs humanely, not try to make a living off them.”

Bodeving's love for the dogs was shared with his wife Karen, who passed away in April after enduring cancer for years. Married 41 years, Bodeving says Karen was also very involved in the AKC world as a judge and delegate along with her husband. They were also both members of the Southern Oregon St. Bernard Club and Rogue Valley Kennel Club, the local AKC chapter.

“We worked together 24/7, had the same hobbies with the dogs and raised a family together,” Bodeving said of the hole that his wife has left in his life

Turn to BOOSTER, Page 7

Booster From Page 6

that led him to move to Grants Pass. Here he has children and grandchildren nearby, along with his faithful companions Aspen, and a feisty little white Boston Terrier named Mugsie.

“Mugsie was Karen’s dog. She and Aspen are best buddies,” Bodeving said of the unlikely pair, with Aspen towering over Mugsie. As if to prove their master’s point, the two dogs ran about the yard, Mugsie in the lead, and Aspen rambling behind.

Bodeving is a fan of all dogs, but for anyone wanting to get a purebred dog, his advice is that everything hinges on the breeder.

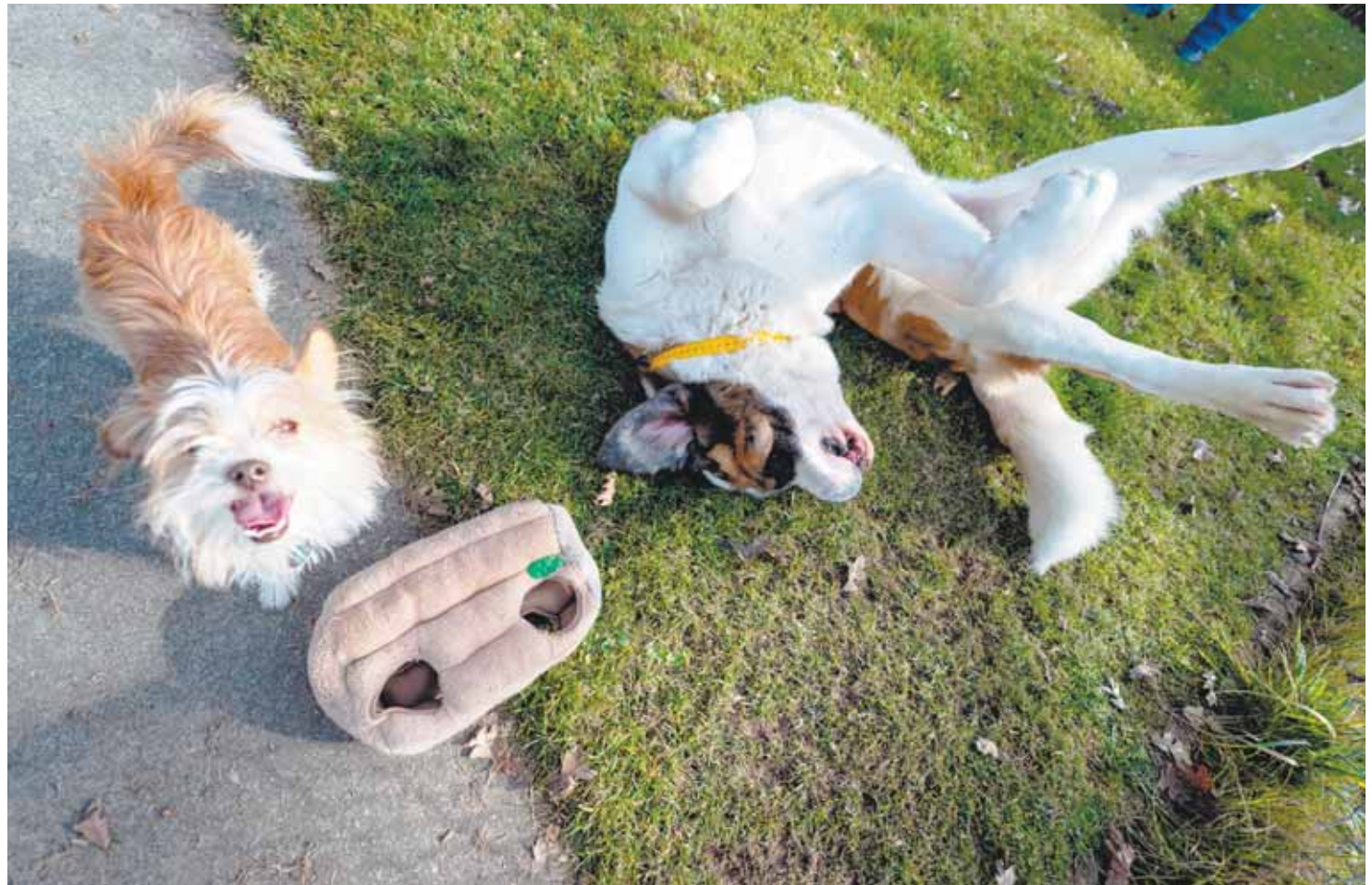
“Trust the breeder. Find one that is available 24/7 to ask questions. Get to know your dog’s parents. And don’t look just locally. There are dog breeders everywhere,” Bodeving said.

Bodeving said he wouldn’t rule out another litter for Aspen, but he’s not actively seeking this. Bodeving does have one breeder in the area that he would recommend — someone he trained himself.

“The most important thing is to know where your dog came from genetically,” Bodeving said, explaining that this is what gives a good prognosis for any potential health problems in the future.

“Because, unfortunately, there is no lifeguard at the gene pool for genetics.”

Freelance reporter Cara Denney of Grants Pass is a regular contributor to Daily Courier special publications.



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Mugsie (left) and her pal Aspen, a St. Bernard, enjoy their time together with a favorite toy. The playmates are owned by Paul Bodeving, a longtime promoter of purebred St. Bernards in the Rogue Valley.



A Heartfelt **Thank You** to our Grants Pass Community

From all of us at Allen Creek Veterinary Hospital, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to the Grants Pass community for your kindness, patience, and understanding.

Your support—through thoughtful words, compassion, and trust—means more to us

than we can say. It is a privilege to care for your beloved pets, and we are truly grateful to be part of such a caring and supportive community. Thank you for standing with us. We are honored to serve you and your animals today and always.

A Very Special Thank You to:

- Once Upon A Horse – Spay and Neuter Program
- JoCo Spay and Neuter
- Rogue Valley Street Dogs
- Feeding Pets of the Homeless
- No Pets Left Behind
- Rogue Valley Humane Society
- Project Youth+

And thanks to all of our anonymous donors for your continued support.

Dr. Heidi Buehner

and the Allen Creek Veterinary Hospital Team.





JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Conrad Galecki, the snake handler at Primeval Pets in Medford, holds Hydro, a false water cobra. According to Galecki, snakes are the most popular purchases at the store. He strongly advises to do research before committing to snakes or any nontraditional pet.

Something unusual

A Medford shop specializes in reptiles, amphibians and other atypical critters

By Cara Denney
for the Daily Courier

If it's true when people say that "happiness is a warm puppy," then what is a cold reptile or furry tarantula?

According to the staff members at Primeval Pets in Medford, their slithering, crawling, multi-legged and even live-rodent-eating pets also give them happiness and more, if they are just given the chance.

"They have to trust you," Primeval's snake wrangler, Conrad Galecki, said as a nearly 2-year-old albino black pastel ball python snake was coiled around Galecki's arms. The snake's pale white tail splashed with bright yellowish orange markings rested across the back of Galecki's neck as he stroked the snake.

"Once they do, well, when I hold my snake... everything just melts away" Galecki said as he lowered his face

to gently kiss the top of the snake's pale white head, only slightly bigger than a person's thumb.

There was no accompanying stereotypical hissing as seen in every movie where the villain stands stroking his pet snake while revealing his master plan to take over the world. Instead, while resting in Galecki's embrace the intermittent appearance of the snake's forked tongue — the way snakes smell aromas — seemed more like the familiar panting of a dog being petted than a lethal threat from an enemy.

Still, despite the stereotypes and misinformation, Galecki — sometimes called The Snake Whisperer — described his decades-long interaction with snakes as something that gives focus and a kind of peaceful nervous system regulation.

"Some of the big snakes are even being used by the military as therapy pets for soldiers who have lost either

arms or legs or both. Here is an apex predator, who is on the floor, also with no arms or legs. A few minutes wrestling on the floor with one of those really helps," Galecki said, while stroking a two year-old false water cobra named Hydro.

Still, not everyone is convinced that something that could, in the wrong situation, hurt a person makes the best pet.

"That is probably the biggest misconception that people have about the pets we have here — that they are out to hurt you," said Jose Celada, co-owner of Primeval Pets.

"But I mean, a dog or cat can hurt you, too," Celada said with a shrug.

Primeval Pets, located at 2021 West Main St. in



Photos by JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

This Chinese Water Dragon watches the people who are looking into its terrarium from its perch on a branch. Lizards and other reptiles require varying amounts of attention and care. Many have quite long lives as well, say the staff at Primeval Pets.



In addition to snakes, lizards and frogs, tarantulas like this one, scorpions and roaches are also available at Primeval Pets in Medford.



This green and black dart frog is one of the unusual amphibians people might consider as a pet.



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Jose Celada, owner of Primeval Pets in Medford, slides open the door to a terrarium belonging to a blue azureus dart frog.

Unusual From Page 8

Medford, appears from the street as simply a medium-sized older ranch-style house that has been converted to a pet store, surrounded by ample parking. Inside, however, depending on a person's comfort level with these less than traditional pets, the shop reveals itself as either an exclusive club and reptilian paradise or an ever-intensifying purgatory, with only the glass and plastic between customers and the lizards, pythons, scorpions and even cockroaches keeping it from being a truly hellish place.

"Oh yeah, we get people, kids, but all ages, too, in here all the time to just hang out, or look at the pets," Celada said.

Some of the signage on the enclosures for snakes and other pets reflect Primeval's almost zoo atmosphere, noting the pets that are not for sale. The glass tank where a starkly white snake is doubled on itself like a worn out pool noodle folded in half houses Blanca, a leucistic Columbian rainbow boa whose sign says that she is a "Store Ambassador." Nearby Mr. Miyagi is not the "Wax on. Wax off" mentor of "Karate Kid" fame, but rather a Chinese water dragon who is simply, according to the label on his glass, a "Permanent Resident." There are other store ambassadors throughout as well as post-it notes assuring potential owners that the baby Mexican black king snake is, in fact, "pretty sweet."

"Snakes have their own personalities and they recognize yours," Galecki said, debunking the thought that, due to a reptile's steady gaze and seemingly rare emotional expressions, snakes are relationally cold or distant.

Celada explained a snake's vomeronasal organ, also called a Jacobson's organ, has two ducts that reach down from the roof of the snake's mouth and allow it to recognize various smells when it flicks its tongue.

"They have this Jacobson's organ that I think allows them to smell their owner and know who they are," Celada said.

Galecki agreed, adding that in addition to that ability of specific smell, snakes have other ways of relating to people.

"Snakes pick up on your energy and respond back to you," Galecki said.

Along with their personalities, the pets

at Primeval run the gamut in price, as well, from quite affordable to hundreds of dollars for the more exotic or rare reptiles. Galecki said that many first-time owners don't realize how expensive having snakes as pets can become, and how long the commitment is to being a snake owner.

"They come in thinking they are going to get, as their first snake, a really big one. But they don't realize that snakes take time and care to keep it healthy and happy. And then if it goes well, they get more and more and then before they know it they have 20 snakes at their house. Twenty snakes that can live more than 10 or even 20 years," Galecki said, admitting to currently having about 30 of his own snakes at home.

Celada nodded in agreement with Galecki's assessment of the devotion these pets require, and therefore the people they attract.

"People who have these kinds of pets usually have kind of a type. Like they care more about taking care of their snakes than themselves and so spend all their money on pet food and stuff. So yeah, I can kind of recognize snake owners out of a crowd," Celada said, adding that he felt that reptile pet owners are more open to new things, than traditional pet owners, in his opinion.

Some of those "new things" for customers who are used to chain or big box pet stores start with a counter near the check-out register, which is lined with various uncovered small plastic boxes that — upon closer inspection — are alive and wriggling with various worms; brown segmented super worms and pale green squishy looking horned worms, to name a few.

These squirming masses of life are not sold as pets, but rather as feed for pets. Handling these, or even rats or mice, is part of the commitment reptile owners make as well.

"We're here almost every day. We're open on Christmas — we're always here," Galecki said, explaining that people buy a lot of pets as gifts at holidays.

Celada said the Valentine's Day just passed was a big day for pet sales.

Because what says "I love you" better than a snake, tarantula, scorpion, frog or cockroach?

Freelance reporter Cara Denney of Grants Pass is a regular contributor to Daily Courier special publications.

Keep your beloved pet close... Stylishly!



*Present this ad for discount.



Father & Son Jewelry

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Ash Holders are also available for Your Human Loved Ones.

Order **NOW** while supplies are available.

Engraving is available.

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UPCOMING

Look for these upcoming Daily Courier special sections:

- March 15 — Home & Garden
- March 19 — Puzzle Book
- April 12 — Home & Garden
- April 16 — Puzzle Book
- April 26 — Business Pulse
- May 10 — Home & Garden
- May 14 — Puzzle Book
- May 31 — Summer Adventures
- June 7 — Graduation pages
- June 7 — Home & Garden
- June 18 — Puzzle Book
- July 12 — Home & Garden
- July 16 — Puzzle Book
- July 19 — Fabulous Fifties pages
- Aug. 16 — Home & Garden
- Aug. 20 — Puzzle Book
- Aug. 20 — School bus schedule
- Aug. 27 — Football preview



This blue azure dart frog certainly qualifies as an unusual pet. Finding it in a large terrarium can be a daily exercise.

JULIE ANDERSON
Daily Courier

 **Pet Brags** 



Luna
Lulu Bear

Vista

Vista, we've only known you for a few weeks, but you've already stolen our hearts.



Roscoe

"My heart dog over the rainbow bridge!"

Babies

Bombastic Side-eye



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Organizations can help fix a pet

Several nonprofit organizations offer funds to help low-income residents with the cost of spay/neuter procedures at local veterinary offices.

Each organization gladly accepts donations to help fund this outreach. See websites to donate.

ROGUE VALLEY HUMANE SOCIETY SPAY-NEUTER VOUCHER PROGRAM. For RVHS voucher program details, write to vouchers@roguevalleyhumanesociety.org for a listing of partner veterinarians, current voucher amounts, and how to claim a voucher. (See main article for more on RVHS.)

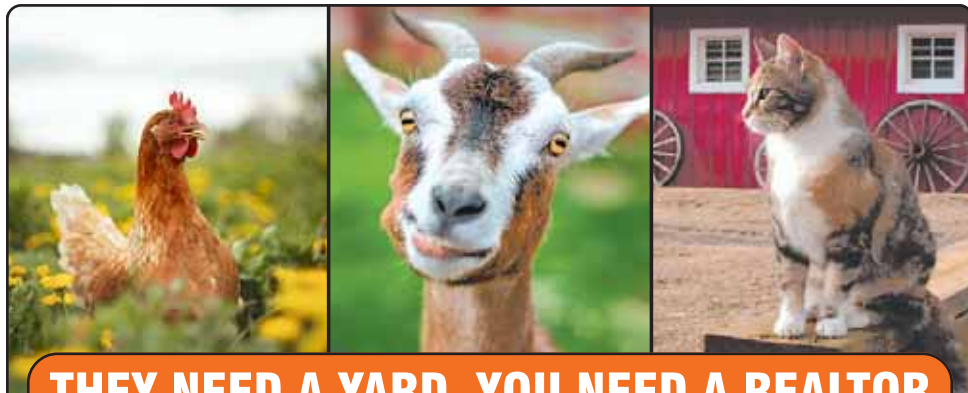
JOCO SPAY & NEUTER FUND. Established by the Raskin Family in 2009, this fund is operated solely by volunteers and has assisted in the spaying/neutering of more than 14,000 dogs and cats to date. For more information, call 541-244-0685 or visit jocospayneuter.org.

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Do pets sleep with you?

Experts say it may be a reason for disturbed sleep. Some pet owners say they appreciate the safe feeling.

By Albert Stumm
Associated Press

It turns out, our furry best friend might be our sleep enemy.

Lots of pet owners let their animals sleep on the bed with them, which usually disrupts sleep. But many would say it's worth it.

And researchers don't necessarily disagree.

Melissa Milanak, a professor at Medical University of South Carolina specializing in sleep health, said most people at her clinic say their pets disturb them often at night.

"You can't say that hands down, it's bad for every single person, but there is a lot out there saying it negatively impacts your sleep," she said.

Generally speaking, having a pet is good for many people's health. Pets have been shown to lower their humans' stress levels, get them to exercise and more. Many pet owners also say they feel an immeasurable amount of comfort by having their pets close as they sleep.

But dogs' and cats' natural sleep cycles aren't the same as those of humans.

Dogs tend to be light sleepers and wake up multiple times at night. Some display instinctual behavior like scratching at bedding, which can prevent deeper phases of sleep even if it doesn't wake you up.

As many cat owners know, "the zoomies" often happen before they are ready to get out of bed. Cats evolved to hunt in low light, meaning they are particularly active at dusk and dawn.

Milanak also said allergens such as pet dander and microbes brought into the house can affect owners' breathing, preventing them from getting enough deep sleep.

Brian Chin, a professor of social and health psychology at Trinity College in

Connecticut, said his research has found sleeping with pets was associated with poor sleep, "particularly those dimensions of sleep quality and insomnia symptoms." That's even accounting for the fact that pet owners may be less inclined to report problems in a survey because they don't believe their beloved pets cause problems.

"I hate to even admit that my cat disrupts my sleep at all," said Chin, who has one cat that keeps him awake and another that leaves him alone.

Moreover, a higher number of pets was associated with higher sleep disruption, he said.

What should you do about it?

It's not as simple as telling pet owners that they shouldn't share the bed, Milanak said. For a lot of people, it becomes part of their sleep routine, which makes it difficult to sleep without it because they have come to associate their pets with sleep.

Because the topic is sensitive, Milanak asks new patients several questions before getting to whether they sleep with a pet. If they're waking up multiple times a night, for example, they may not realize why. Once the association is made, she then asks whether they are open to not sleeping together.

"It's like if I said to somebody, you need to stop smoking," she said. "They're going to give me all the reasons why they want to continue smoking."

The first, most obvious solution is putting a dog bed on the floor in the bedroom, or locking the cat out of the room at night.

For those who insist on having the pet in bed with them, she advises washing the sheets more frequently and perhaps

Turn to SLEEP, Page 13

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A cat named Poke sits on a bed at her home in Waipahu, Hawaii. Many pet owners sleep with their pets, even if the pets disturb their rest in the night. Much like cats themselves, pet lovers continue to insist on cuddling up with their furry pals, no matter what experts say.

LINDSEY WASSON
Associated Press, 2023

Sleep From Page 12

adjusting their sleep schedule to match their pet's routine.

"Maybe you need to go to bed earlier so you can get up earlier to accommodate the pet," she said.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it

Despite any problems, many pet own-

ers feel that the bonding and emotional benefits outweigh minor sleep disruption.

Angela Wilson, who lives in Cobb County, Georgia, said she has bought a series of ever-more plush beds for her golden retriever, Sadie. But Sadie jumps into her bed anyway.

Then they usually sleep peacefully back to back.

"People complain about their dogs waking them up, but she doesn't wake me up," Wilson said. "She's very gentle."



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Pets add to greenhouse gases, but you can reduce their pawprint

By **Caleigh Wells**
Associated Press

The whole “pets are family members” idea isn’t just a sweet sentiment. Data shows that pet owners are increasingly buying food that resembles their own diets.

The trend toward refrigerated, “fresh” or even “human-grade” pet food can come with a price beyond the pet food budget.

One of the most climate intensive decisions we make is whether to own a pet. It’s for the same reason that humans have a big impact: They eat every day. And most of them eat meat. The environmental impact of meat includes the land the animal lived on, the food it ate, the waste it generated and other factors.

“What else do pets do? We have to feed them. I think that that’s why it’s number one,” said Allison Reser, director of sustainability and innovation at the Pet Sustainability Coalition.

But just like people, a pet’s impact on the planet can vary greatly depending on their diet.

Does human-grade mean better?

The marketing of higher-quality pet food suggests that it’s healthier.

But there isn’t much evidence to suggest refrigerated, fresh or human-grade food leads to better pet health outcomes, according to Alison Manchester, assistant clinical sciences professor at Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine.



MICHAEL CONROY / Associated Press, 2022

Deciding to have a pet is a climate intensive decision that’s affected by what we feed them — since most pets eat meat, just like most of us.

“I think a lot of it is playing on marketing and treating pets as members of the family,” said Manchester.

She said traditional kibble and wet food

can also provide a perfectly balanced pet diet, and it often makes use of animal parts that aren’t palatable to humans and otherwise might have been wasted.

Billy Nicholles, pet food researcher with Bryant Research, said the trend of using human-grade meat in pet food increases its climate impact because pets aren’t just eating animal parts that would have otherwise gone unused.

“We definitely can’t dismiss these impacts altogether by just saying these are the offcuts, these are environmentally negligible,” he said.

Reducing your pet’s climate pawprint

In the U.S., feeding dogs and cats accounts for more than a quarter of the environmental impact from meat consumption.

The pollution created from the meat that dogs and cats consume in the U.S. is equivalent to the pollution created from driving 13.6 million cars for a year, according to a UCLA study.

One common and easily-solved problem is giving less food to overweight pets.

“Not only does (overfeeding) mean that the dog’s going to have a poorer quality of health,” Nicholles said. “It also means that we’re increasing to those environmental impacts as well.”

The American Kennel Club said diet makes up the majority of a dog’s weight problem, so fixing it relies mostly on making sure it’s eating the right number of calories (treats included).

Protein should make up roughly 18% of an adult dog’s diet and roughly 26% of an adult cat’s diet, according to the Association of American Feed Control Officials.

Manchester said it’s possible for dogs to be healthy on a vegan diet.

“Dogs can get plenty of protein and the right balance of protein without actually ingesting any meat,” Manchester said.

Cats rely more on animal products. Manchester said she doesn’t know of a balanced, commercially available vegan cat food. That means minimizing their impact comes from choosing less pollutive meat options when possible. Beef is the most pollutive protein. Chicken and fish are lower-impact, and plant-based options pollute the least.

Manchester also recommends buying pet food instead of making it at home or feeding pets table scraps. She said that there’s “a lot of room for error” with balancing the nutrients in homemade pet food that can lead to nutrient deficiencies, bone or heart problems and other health issues.

Picking the right brands

For those looking to avoid human-grade dog food, Reser said to check the label and avoid ingredients that sound appetizing to humans, such as high-quality chicken breast meat.

Ingredients such as organ meats or crickets indicate that the protein is coming from byproducts or more sustainable sources. These steps can be done when shopping at grocery stores or large pet supply stores.

But for those who want to go further, some of the most sustainable brands might cost more, or require more research because they aren’t available in physical stores or on major websites. Some may require a vet’s prescription.

The brands that focus on sustainability might have labels that show they are climate neutral certified, that they’re regenerative organic certified or that they’re a certified B Corp.

Other things to consider

Diet isn’t the only factor to consider. The type of pet, its breed and where it came from all affect its impact.

For example, buying a dog from a breeder creates demand for that breeder to make more dogs. Nicholles said a dog in a shelter already has a “priced-in” carbon impact.

“If there are dogs in the world that already exist that need homes, that seems to be a more responsible decision for the planet than going through a breeder,” said Reser.

Nicholles says, generally, the smaller the pet, the smaller the carbon footprint.

For some pets, size just doesn’t change much. Most cat breeds fall into a narrow size range. But dogs can vary greatly in size, and thus climate impact. Smaller dogs not only eat less, but create less waste and use crates and other accessories that require less material to make.

“It matters a lot, for the slightly obvious reason that a larger dog is going to be eating many, many more calories,” said Nicholles.

Reser said accessories that come from regenerative, durable or recyclable materials can often have a lower impact and need less frequent replacement.

Or, for a cat like Reser’s that gets bored of toys quickly, try a completely different tact.

“I make her toys out of trash, honestly,” she said. “Like a piece of newspaper or a receipt, she loves.”

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Behaviorists say music can be tool for pet owners

By Cheyanne Mumphy
Associated Press

People use music to set moods, create a desired atmosphere and evoke memories of family and friends. The right song at the right time can have similar effects for some dogs.

Pet owners, trainers and animal shelter workers sometimes use music as a training tool, a distraction from triggers and to create a relaxing environment for dogs kept in kennels or left alone at home. But researchers say music is context-dependent, meaning the effects vary based on dogs' temperament, the setting, the type of tune and volume at which it's played.

Social media videos of dogs howling to music, relaxing to the sounds of specialty playlists or TV channels while their owners are at work, appearing to clam down while boarded, and getting exposed to the same song to assist with crate training show some of the ways music is integrated into pets' lives.

While some trainers consider music to be a helpful, many animal behaviorists, who study animal psychology and understand complex behaviors, suggest additional research is needed to prove how much of an effect music has on dogs and in what situations. Here is how experts suggest making music a potentially paw-sitive experience:

Music as a support strategy

Many factors cause dogs to experience stress and anxiety, and there are as many behavioral responses. Dog behavior specialists and veterinarians say separation anxiety, noise phobias and other fears are common sources of stress and can exacerbate negative behaviors like aggression, submissive peeing or barking, or medical conditions that may require a professional diagnosis or medication.

"Music may promote more relaxation for dogs, but it would not be the first thing I turn to if I want to reduce stress in dogs," said Seana Dowling-Guyer, a lecturer at Tufts University's Cummings School

"Dog-calming music is simplified classical music. It's slow, repetitive, has a predictable structure and gentle notes."

Aniruddh Patel

Tufts University professor of psychology who studies music cognition

of Veterinary Medicine and associate director of a research program aimed at improving the lives of dogs in shelters or at risk of being given up by their owners.

Prior to her work at Tufts, Dowling-Guyer worked with shelter animals. The goal was to find them homes, but she noticed that dogs barking, jumping or getting excited in their enclosures sometimes "put off potential adopters." The shelter staff tried to create a calmer environment playing music. Worker debates over the type of music to play is what led Dowling-Guyer to further research on the subject.

"I was interested in the practical application, not just for owners, but for veterinary offices, groomers or other situations where dogs were sometimes stressed or mildly uncomfortable," she said, adding that music is not meant to be or should be considered a cure for anxious behaviors or conditions or be considered a replacement for more formalized training.

Not all dogs like all music

High Country Humane, an animal shelter in Flagstaff, Arizona, plays classical and instrumental music on the kennel floors.

"It's really stressful here, and the classical music seems to help calm the dogs down," shelter manager Megan Boyer said. "Everybody is a little bit less amped up. It's a stress reliever for the dogs."

Dog music compilations typically include elements of the music that's designed to help humans relax or sleep but takes into account biological differences in how dogs hear and process sound.

"Dog-calming music is simplified classical music. It's slow, repetitive, has a predictable structure and gentle notes. In an unpredictable environment, any kind of predictability using sounds could be sooth-

ing to an animal," said Aniruddh Patel, a Tufts University psychology professor who studies music cognition in humans and other species.

But not all dogs like classical music or exhibit the same behaviors when exposed to similar genres, experts say. Lori Kogan, a Colorado State University professor who studies human-animal interactions, says "dogs tend to habituate to what they are used to" as opposed to innately preferring some types of music over others.

Citing similar human curiosity about the musical preferences of cows, Kogan said, "I don't think cows are born liking country music. What's happened is that the people they interact with play country music, and the animals have come to associate that music with positive things."

How to know if music will help your dog

Many pet owners leave a TV on or music playing when they go out to stimulate or distract their dogs while they're gone, Dowling-Guyer said. She recommends switching up the playlist or programming so pets do not get bored or come to associate a negative event, like their owners leaving, with a specific song.

Tawny Keiser, a 46-year-old family

practice manager in the San Diego area, says a dog television channel on YouTube has become a fun diversion for Margarita, her 10-year-old pug who suffers from separation anxiety.

"She recognizes the television and will sit and watch it. She's engaged, and often gets really excited and jumps off the couch to sniff the screen," Keiser said, adding that Margarita also loves dog cartoons that feature background music.

Paying attention to how a family pet reacts when you turn on home speakers can provide useful information. It's important to watch for signs of discomfort, like lip-licking or panting, to determine if a dog doesn't like the sounds, Dowling-Guyer said.

Otherwise, there is no harm in playing music for a pet, experts said. Don't be discouraged if your dog doesn't seem to engage with it, Dowling-Guyer said.

She also wants dog owners to be wary of trainers who say music is a solution for behavior concerns, saying "that is usually a red flag."

The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists, a certifying board for specialist veterinarians, says pet owners may encounter services or advice that can inflict lasting physical and emotional damage on pets if certain training techniques are improperly applied. Experts suggest seeking trainers with the proper licensing, advanced degrees such as a doctor of veterinary medicine, or certification to address animal behavior.



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