

# YEAR OF THE DOG

Even if Chinese culture hadn't tipped its hat to canines this year, Seattleites would have



Henny of the Seattle Fire Department is the year's hottest fire-sniffing dog

## Hottest Hot Dog HENNY OF THE SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Turns out Henny was too "sniffy" to be a seeing eye dog—she could never get her blind charge to work on time because she stopped to smell everything on the way. Instead, she took a different career path, becoming highly trained in finding hydrocarbons—and her caretaker's sneakers. The 2-year-old black Lab was the perfect candidate for accelerant detection K-9 (aka arson dog): She is good-natured, has a keen nose and will work for food. Henny lives in Des Moines with firefighter Lt. Steve Baer, his wife, Michelle, and leisure dog Red.

## Best Poodle Sitter CAT RITZINGER

Central District, 206.709.7809; catritz@yahoo.com; kmandu.net

How ironic that the best caretaker of standard poodles has a feline name. Up until meeting her pet poodle, Cat Ritzinger

considered herself a cat person. Then Vita Pepita entered her life, and she fell instantly in love. Rescuing Vita revealed Ritzinger's maternal side, and poodle sitting evolved as a natural outgrowth of her admiration for the intelligent animals. Today she and Vita welcome overnight guests to their Central District home, where poodle parents claim their pups go bonkers with anticipation far before reaching the gate.

## Best Place for Raw Meat for Show Dogs

**BETTER MEAT**  
Ballard, 305 NW 82nd St.;  
206.783.0570

They keep it in the back: \$1.40 a pound, 5-pound packages. It's the secret supplement for dogs, and you won't find it in the display case of family-owned, Ballard-based Better Meat. Co-owner Mike Evensen (the other half is Paul Volpone) and his fellow Alaskan malamute fanciers needed a high-protein mix that would aid the muscular show dogs in per-

forming at their peak, give them energy and make their coats shine. That was in the '90s, and now the blend of beef hearts, stomach and gullets is the preferred diet of local dog aficionados, including the most persnickety of them all, owners of Portuguese water dogs.

## Best Place to Take Your Dog Shopping

**PET ELEMENTS**  
West Seattle, 6701 California Ave. SW;  
206.932.0457; petelements.com

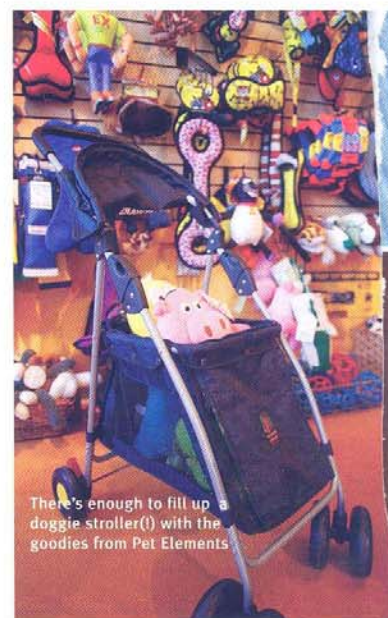
Even though Melanie Wells owns the store, it's obvious who runs the place—the pugnacious Quincy Bobo. The shiny black pug greets customers with a bark and an affable boxing dance in this colorful West Seattle shop, a fantasyland for furry friends. Packed into the 2,000-square-foot space are gifts for cats, dogs and the occasional neighborhood ferret and rat, including toys, collars, leashes, beds and grooming goods, along with natural treats and food. Wells doesn't cater to owners—she's all about pam-

pering pets. She even carries baby strollers meant for animals, just in case your canine doesn't feel like walking.

## Dreamiest Dog Houses

**PACIFIC SCIENCE CENTER**  
Queen Anne, 200 Second Ave. N;  
206.443.2001; pacsci.org

Even Bowser's got his day in this booming Seattle real estate market. This past spring, Pacific Science Center held its inaugural Doggie Dream House Contest, with seven local community groups and businesses designing doggie dwellings for the benefit auction. Best of Show went to Shirey Handyman Services' Pugominium, a two-story mini condo with glass windows, carpeting and stairs. Nonprofit group Reading with Rover received Most Creative, with an open-book roof symbolizing their kids-and-dogs literacy program. Contractor's Resource Center's house, complete with real plants and solar street lamp, was awarded Most Green. Each house fetched approximately \$100—and with the way housing prices are going, we may all end up in the doghouse.



There's enough to fill up a doggie stroller() with the goodies from Pet Elements

LT: BAER & HENNY; SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT; DOG STROLLER: MATT LARSON