

Holiday gift ideas for the pet in your life

BY LISA GRUBER
Special to the Record-Eagle

Wads of used wrapping paper to pounce and hollowed boxes to hide in will provide half the fun for your pet this present-opening season, but a trend toward health and wellness products for you best furry friend show it is what's inside the gift that truly counts. From the organic to the holistic, local pet and feed store retailers offer something for all animal lovers and the objects of their affection, especially gifts centered on the quintessential creature comfort: edibles.

Dog-lectable Delights: Freshly-baked, all-natural dog treats with a twist of creativity are the specialty at The Kennel Club Dog Bakery in Traverse City, where your pooch can finally indulge his curiosity for chocolate with a close substitute. These canine cookies are made with local free-range eggs and may come iced with a yogurt-based topping or carob, which is made from fruit but resembles chocolate in taste and appearance.

Holiday gift baskets, stockings and sampler packs are available and may feature the snowflake-shaped Lick Effect Snow treat or the sock-shaped Santa Paws Stocking.

For pets with a wheat or corn aversion, non-holiday inspired biscuits such as Aller-Gators are made with easily digestible spelt flour. Make sure to stockpile plenty of treats so your pet is distracted when wearing the

Santa or reindeer hat you picked up in this store. See www.kcdogbakery.com or call 932-2045 for more information.

Breath Beaters: New and popular this year are Greenies, a toothbrush-shaped breath freshener and teeth cleaning treat, said Michael Monroe, store manager at PetSmart in Traverse City. The store also sells hundreds of the two-foot-long rawhide bones and "candy" canes.

Holiday-themed rawhide chews and plush toys are available, plus pre-assembled stockings full of your pooch's favorite pastime props: tennis balls, plastic squeak toys, rope pulls and chews. Other favorites include canine sweaters and coats, which are "always hot," Monroe said. Drink bowls with moving water are popular with feline families since they also help keep the cat from seeking out other sources with moving water, such as the toilet or sink.

The store also sells starter kits for freshwater fish, treats for domestic birds, and habitat trails for guinea pigs, hamsters and rodents.

See www.petsmart.com or call 947-4714 for more information.

Healthy & Hip: If looking for products geared toward the overall well-being of your pet, McGough's Inc. of Traverse City offers the latest and greatest treats, including not only the breath fresher treat Greenies for dogs, but also for cats. The store also sells Hip Bones treats, made locally with tart

cherries, that help maintain the health of a dog's hips and joints.

Other puppy treats include rollo chews, a digestible alternative to rawhide made from steer cheek that smells like vanilla.

The store offers the top of the line in terms of quality, "holistic" food for pets, manager Tim Lampton said, such as Canidae for dogs or Felidae for cats, as well as Professional and Chicken Soup for the Cat Lover's Soul or the Dog Lover's Soul.

This store also sells wild bird feed, feeders and heated bird baths.

Call 947-5900 for more information.

Pecking Pals: The Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop in Traverse City specializes in helping customers provide food, shelter and water for wild birds, a favorite outdoor "pet" for many. It also offers site-specific recommendations for the best type of feeder and feeder location to keep local avian species well-fed over the holidays and year-round.

Good intentions to feed the birds can backfire, however, as squirrels may pilage. The Eliminator Birdfeeder is a popular product, as it is the only guaranteed squirrel-proof bird feeder, said store owner Judy Barrett.

An expansive collection of bird feeders and houses that cater to specific species don the store, such as the Long Thistle feeder for finches.

The store also carries heated bird baths and many varieties of bird-specific and general seed and feed as well as "high energy" Christmas Seed Blend, the Suet Christmas Cake or Cranberry Fare seed cakes.

See www.wbu.com or call 946-0431 for more information.

Equestrian Quest: Those in search of horse gifts may visit the Square Deal Country Store in Traverse City, which sells peppermint treats, a favorite flavor among horses, said Lisa Street, store manager. For the playful ponies, the apple-scented Jolly Ball is something they can carry and bounce around.



Record-Eagle/Douglas Tesner
Above, the Kennel Club Dog Bakery in Traverse City offers a wide variety of homemade holiday treats for dogs.

The store also carries the Mysterious Purr Padd, a special blanket your feline friend can use while sitting on furniture. This blanket holds heat, attracts and holds hair, and may keep claws away from furniture fabric.

Dogs that spend loads of time outdoors in the winter may appreciate the store's supply of boots (sold in sets of four) and water-proof, insulated coats that resemble horse turnout blankets. Or, the gift that keeps on giving could be a new healthy brand of food, such as Solid Gold, Nutro or Wellness.

Call 946-5030 for more information.

The products featured at these pet and feed stores are just a small sampling of pet gifts available in the area as you search for that purr-fect present this holiday season.

Lisa Gruber is a local freelance writer.



Record-Eagle/Tyler Sipe
Above middle, a heated bird bath is one of several pet products sold at Wild Birds Unlimited. Above, a birdhouse made of recycled plastic milk jugs at Wild Birds Unlimited.



Record-Eagle/Douglas Tesner
Store mascot Sophie sits on the counter with dog treats at The Kennel Club Dog Bakery in Traverse City.

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