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A billion-dollar industry

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

People have a tendency to overdo on everything, be it a toy, treats, foods, collars or whatever.

The dog product business, which is a billion-dollar industry, knows this and caters more to the needs of dog owners than their dogs. These companies have dog and human psychologists as well as behaviorists and are always working on ways to sell and market their products, so they mainly try to meet the fancies of the owners.

Ask yourself why you buy those squeaky toy chickens, hamburgers and shoes. It's simply because whatever you are eating, your dog is watching you, and you may well be thinking, "Oh well, I will buy Fido a toy resembling this." Those latex-made products last maybe a few days before you are back out buying more.

It gets expensive, especially if your dog is a good chewer.

That applies to everything. A dog does not need a Louis Vuitton or Versace leash or a collar from Saks 5th Ave. Those items are more for the owner. The dog does not need Baccarat Crystal food/water bowls. Again it's catering to the owner and not the dog. There is nothing wrong in buying quality-named products as long as you realize they're for you and not the dog. Your dog doesn't know the difference. But in our minds we feel we are treating our dogs with the best of the best.

Please note that quality does make a huge difference as long as the product flawlessly does what it's intended to do. Just because a leash says Louis Vuitton does not mean it is a Louis Vinton. It may be a knockoff made in China. Anyone can take a cheap leash and sew a name brand on it.

However, there are quality dog products out there with-known names.



To be sure, look to see where the product was made. I know it's hard to find quality products, since most everything comes from China, but there are other countries that make great quality dog products. Examples; Herm Springer (Germany) and Acme (England).

People also buy clothes for their dogs – which is fine if it makes you happy. However, it doesn't do anything for the dog other than make it look cute.

Many people feel that when it's cold outside, their dogs need jackets and/ or sweaters. No they don't. If you are out in the cold of winter walking with your dog, your bodies stay warm

because your movements create heat. A dog's temperature is based on and regulated from its paws. Of course, if you leave a short-haired dog outside with no physical activity, it will become cold even if you have a jacket on it, just like us humans. If we just stand around we will feel the cold. If we are moving around, we aren't as cold.

I also want to point out that dog booties do not give them any traction or warmth. Traction is acquired by their nails. I have seen many dogs slip and pull a tendon or a ligament because of booties.

Added note: If you don't want snow or ice or street salt to accumulate on your dog's paws, before going out for a walk wipe the paws with Vaseline (petroleum jelly). By the time you come back from your walk most of it will be off, so just wipe the remainder off

Treats are good as long as you use them wisely and not as a substitute for other things. Remember that dogs make associations, so when you stop giving treats they will eventually stop doing whatever behavior you rewarded them for.

You might be surprised to know that an empty plastic soda or water bottle is a great toy that dogs love to play with. Try it (but make sure you remove the bottle cap).

For training purposes, your dog needs a water bowl, a food bowl and a collar. For training you need quality equipment. Let your trainer guide you according to your dog's character and temperament.

Remember: Versace, Gucci, Coco Chanel, Louis Vuitton and other highend products are for you, not your dog. Dogs don't know the difference, and they don't care. High-fashion clothing is fine as long as it makes you happy, but make sure it doesn't cause any danger or constrict your dog's movements.

Have a woof woof of a month.

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