

Pet-friendly styles are all the rage



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HOUSE PROUD

We seem to have finally reached a point where we no longer have to justify a devotion to our pets. A decade ago it raised eyebrows when people learned I routinely took my back-injured Border Collie to a chiropractor.

I recall one colleague asking, "Where do you think you're living, Hollywood?" She didn't understand that this dog was a superstar to me.

Pet-friendly people now have the upper hand. Nowadays when you hear about doggie acupuncture and cat exercise structures that are as involved as children's play sets, the fur baby's foster parent simply doesn't care what anyone else thinks.

The pet industry is responding in kind. Where it used to be routine to throw an old blanket on the floor as a bed, or shove an open-tray litter box into a corner, everything from pet beds to boxes, bowls, coats, and boots has gone unscale.

And critter-loving companies are constantly innovating to develop new solutions that merge the needs of an animal with the wants of its humans.

Indoor crate-training is popular and effective for house-breaking and ultimately giving Rover a cozy room of his own but the mass-produced, plastic or metal versions can stand out in a nicely decorated room, and not in a good way. Some niche manufacturers believe you don't have to sacrifice style for function.

You can now find beautiful wooden or wicker crates that double as coffee and end tables but they are only appropriate for smaller breeds. The panels of Maricela Sanchez' safe, durable crates are works of art, featuring intricate patterns with plenty of open space for visibility, and available for larger dogs.

Made of marine-grade polymer, they come in black or white with a choice of designs and sizes. Through her com-

pany, Bespoke Crates and Gates, Sanchez has made such an impression that she has been commissioned to build custom tables, room screens and panels apart from her creature comforts.

If Snoopy or Garfield were to go outside on their own, the options for pet doors were once very limited. You had the flap and you had the squeeze but nothing that matched the quality of the windows and doors on the rest of your house.

Now pet door sizes range from kitten to pony and are made from durable products, warrantied against failure. You can still buy the vinyl flap but it's hardly an option for a Canadian winter. These days doors are lockable, durable and claim to stand up to whatever the Great White North can throw at them.

Manufacturer Plexidor specializes in a shatter resistant, saloon-style door with an aluminum frame that's guaranteed to never warp, rust, bend or crack. If you have the budget and the desire to make Lassie the envy of the neighbourhood, Plexidor's Electronic Door and Electronic Wall versions feature a programmable panel and other

elements akin to a house security system. Concern about a possum or raccoon following your furry family member into the house are eliminated with these particular doors. Only the dog or cat that's wearing a special pre-programmed collar key will gain access. This also cuts down on the likelihood that they'll invite a bunch of buddies over to party when you're not looking.

Decor for your favourite feline or wonderful Weimaraner can go far beyond giving up a living room chair or buckling them into a warm jacket for a walk on a windy day. I really don't know who we've been trying to kid with this master-and-pet talk for all of these years anyway. After decades of denial perhaps we're ready to admit that he who cleans the litter box or stoops and scoops is really not the one in charge.

Crates are available at <http://maricelasanchez.com/>. Plexidor products are sold at Pet Valu and Global Pet Foods.

— Lisa Brandt is an author, decorating enthusiast and the morning newscaster at 98.1 Free FM Radio in London, Ont. Visit her at www.lisabrandt.ca.



Beautiful wicker or wooden crates not only keep the little guy at bay but can double as coffee or end tables.



New pet door sizes range from kitten to pony and are made from durable materials that are warrantied against failure.