

Gear of the Year

Our top picks for the best new dog products.

It's that time of year again, when we comb through the myriad of new dog products to find the latest and greatest stuff for our annual DOG FANCY Editors' Choice awards. And with more than 100 submissions, we had our work cut out for us. But we gleefully rose to the challenge, keeping our eyes open for the most wag-worthy goods that make owners' lives easier and dogs' lives better.

There were 16 winners this year; each product earned our seal of approval by offering innovative solutions to everyday problems or giving new life to an old idea.

And speaking of giving new life to things, we thought it would be fun to give our local shelter dogs a chance at a new career as doggie models. These amazing rescue dogs, courtesy of the Irvine Animal Care Center in Irvine, Calif., dropped by our studio to give the goods a go, flash a smile, and bring cheer to us all. We had a fantastic time with them, but we have even more fantastic news: Every single dog has found a new home!

Wood Chuck

"When you're playing fetch, doesn't it always seem like you can never throw the ball as far as you want, and you end up tiring out before your dog does? Try the Wood Chuck. Made from bamboo and reused cork, the eco-friendly thrower is light, as is the ball, and you can get some serious distance when you hurl this ball across the field." — John Schwartze, Associate Editor \$24.95 for ball and thrower, from Planet Dog; 800-381-1516; <http://www.planetdog.com/>

Hydro Bone

"It usually doesn't take long for playtime to become thirsty time with dogs. This is one of the coolest chew toys I've ever seen — literally. You can soak it in water, which is released when your dog gnaws on it, keeping him quenched and happy. Or you can freeze it to make it last longer on hot days." — J.S. From \$7.99, from Hugs Pet Products; 573-346-0343; <http://www.hugspetproducts.com/>

Nina Ottosson Dog Finder Puzzle

"In spring my two terriers revert to their original duties, chasing invading lizards under, around, and sometimes through our backyard bushes. Outside of gecko season, interactive puzzle games help keep them mentally engaged — and earning their kibble. This latest puzzle game from Nina Ottosson falls into the 'hard' category, and will test and hone your dog's natural smarts." — Ernie Slone, Editor \$49.99, from The Company of Animals; 203-345-1234; <http://www.companyofanimals.us/>

Greenies Pill Pockets Treats Allergy Formula

"For the millions of dogs with food allergies, these treats are a great alternative. Instead of trying to cram a tablet down your dog's throat, why not give him the pill concealed in a nutritious treat that won't set off scratching or paw-chewing?" — E.S. From \$6.99, from Greenies; 866-473-3643; <http://www.greenies.com/>

Dog Wash

"This portable bath is easy to store and made of material strong enough to prevent nail punctures. Just inflate, put your dog inside, zip up the gate, hook the sprayer up to your garden hose, and you're ready to go. You can plop it down right on your patio and unplug the drain when you're done." — J.S. \$149.99, from Hugs Pet Products; 573-346-0343; <http://www.hugspetproducts.com/>

Fizzion

"Fizzion caught my eye because it had a lot of qualities in one product. The active ingredients aren't harmful to pets and can remove a variety of stains and odors from different fabrics without damaging them. You can reuse the 32-ounce bottle, too, which totally cuts down on trash. All you need to do is buy more tablets when you run out." — J.S. \$9.99 for spray bottle and tablets, from Fizzion; 863-734-0200; <http://www.fizzionclean.com/>

Bags on Board Dispenser Leash Handle

"Anything that saves time and gives me one less thing to think about is No. 1 in my book. Just loop your leash through this handle, and you'll always have a secret stash of pick up bags at hand. And once you're done with the doo, you can hook the bag onto the notches for hands-free transportation. Love it! — Katy French, Assistant Editor \$9.99, from Bramton; 800-272-6336; <http://www.bagsonboard.com/>

PoochPlanet OrthoDogs Therapeutic Foam Bed

"I can't say if this bed relieved my dogs' aches or pains, or if they appreciated the eco-friendly soy foam padding. What I can tell you is that this pad quickly became 'the favorite spot.' As soon as one terrier moved off the foam cushion, the other quickly pounced like a lion on a carcass. Natural selection." — E.S. From \$20, from Worldwide; 415-721-7400; <http://www.worldwise.com/>

Snook's Sweet Potato Dog Chew

"Dried chunks of sweet potato strung along a hemp rope make this slightly strange-looking chew toy a great idea. So if your dog gets a little too excited during his afternoon chewfest, no worries! Chew away." — Andrea Bravo, Associate Web Editor From \$8, from Snook's Pet Products; 503-630-3646; <http://www.snookdog.com/>

WalkNStake

"I've tried so many ways to restrain my dog on camping trips, but this one might be the best solution. Loop your dog's leash through the handle while you're out walking, then when you're ready to stay put, just open it up to reveal two sturdy metal stakes. Once in the ground, the WalkNStake's 360-degree swivel head will keep your dog confined while still letting him move in all directions — as far as you'll let him." — A.B. \$29.99, from WalkNStake; 866-261-6011; <http://www.walknstake.com/>

1Z Coat

"I love 2-in-1s (even my own shampoo), so I think this coat/harness duo is fantastic. Skip the hassle by attaching your leash to this coat, and you're both ready to go. The coat will keep your pup nice and toasty, and it's waterproof and washable — what could be better?" — K.F. From \$42, from Pawz Dog Boots; 718-369-8883; <http://www.1zcoat.com/>

Co-Sleeper Brand Pet Bunk Bed

"This clever bunk bed lets your dogs rest by your bedside. The bottom compartment offers a haven for smaller snugglers while the top offers your dog comfy open-air sleeping — at your level. It's also portable, and with the holidays approaching, this will help everyone sleep well at grandma's house." — K.F. From \$179.99, from Arms Reach Concepts; 800-954-9353; <http://www.armsreach.com/>

Sleepypod Air

"This will be the year I try flying with my Miniature Dachshund, Jackson. Knowing that there are products like the Sleepypod Air makes me a lot more comfortable booking my tickets. The breathable mesh carrier folds and zips in at both

ends to adapt to different airlines' under-seat storage requirements. Plus, dual zippers along the side let you secure the carrier to the top of your rolling luggage, and hidden straps can fasten with car seatbelts, making all legs of your journey a breeze." — A.B.\$149.50, from Sleepypod; 213-341-1088; <http://www.sleepypod.com/>

Days Ago Digital Counter

"Struggling to remember when you last gave Max his heartworm meds? This handy little counter will take the worry from your mind after you set it to remind you. Place it on or near his meds, and you'll be able to give Max his next dose at exactly the right time. It can help remind you when to bathe or groom your dog, or anything you have trouble keeping track of." — Annamaria Barajas, Managing Editor\$8 for two counters, from Double U Products; 800-401-4906; www.howmanydaysago.com

Crazy Critters

"Most dogs love furry plush toys, and they love ripping the stuffing out even more. Now, imagine a plush toy sans stuffing, and you have Crazy Critters. Your dog can play all day with these adorable little creatures, and you'll never have to bust out the vacuum to suck up those little, white stuffing clouds again!" — A.M.B.\$9.99, from TeleBrands; 800-538-0649; <http://www.buycrazycritters.com/>

Eurobowl Home Water Dispenser

"This product bills itself as 'fresh water without electricity,' and I love the money- and planet-saving looks of that! The EuroBowl refills automatically and is virtually impossible for your dog to tip over. A valve keeps the bottle sealed to prevent leaking while you refill. And the front view window lets you know when to replenish the bottle." — A.M.B.From \$23.50, from New Angle Pet Products; 516-466-4747; <http://www.newanglepet.com/>

MEET OUR MODELThese wonderful dogs have all found homes, but there are thousands of great dogs across the country in shelters and in rescue groups still waiting. They could get no better gift than a loving home for the holidays.

Larry (Chihuahua mix)

Diamond (pit bull mix)

Belle (retriever mix)

Kenzie (Chihuahua mix)

Kat (mixed breed)

Dixie (mixed breed)

Malachi (mixed breed)



- See the winning dog products from 2009 -