

DOG FANCY Editors' Choice 2008

The Year's Best Dog Stuff
DOG FANCY editors pick 2008's top 15 products.

Each year manufacturers inundate our office with new dog products. We can't even begin to count how many arrive over the course of a 12-month period.

We cull through them to decide which should appear in our NewStuff columns each month. Then, once each year, we seek out those that are unique or innovative. The editors at our sister dog magazines and product editors join us to dig through the entries and vote.

Here, we present the ones that garnered the most votes, with commentary from your DOG FANCY editors.

From left: Satori Nakaue and Blue; Annamaria DiGiorgio; Susan Chaney and Max; Andrea Bravo and Jackson
Meet the Editors

Before adopting her mixed breed Max earlier this year, Editor Susan Chaney spent some time dog-less. Except for that one stint, she has lived with all kinds of dogs, mixes and purebreds, including an Irish Setter during college and her early adult life, and, before Max, the dog of her life, a Shetland Sheepdog. Chaney travels to trade shows throughout the year, checking out new products for dogs and the people who love them, and sorts through myriad press releases and product samples that arrive at the DOG FANCY editorial office.

Until recently, Managing Editor Annamaria DiGiorgio lived with two dogs — a Bulldog and pit bull mix — so she knows all about food allergies, furniture covered in dog hair, and what it's like coming home to shredded dog beds and mangled toys. From working on DOG FANCY, DiGiorgio has developed a few standards for great products: They have to be built tough and made with quality materials and ingredients.

Associate Editor Satori Nakaue shares her home with Blue, a cute, timid mixed-breed dog. Blue's had numerous health problems since Nakaue adopted him, and she loves to pamper him. Because she handles both the Haute Dog and Best Behavior sections of DOG FANCY, Nakaue sees lots of products that make life easier for dog owners — or not.

Associate Web Editor Andrea Bravo's canine pal is Jackson, a spunky miniature Dachshund. Combing the Web for DogChannel.com, Bravo checks out the latest trends in dog gear online. She also spends time traveling, camping, and hiking with Jackson — research for DOG FANCY's Canine Traveler section. She's always on the lookout for new products that will challenge and entertain her brainy buddy.

All Season Snuggly Sleeper

"One bed your dog can use in the summer to stay cool and the winter to stay warm — now that's convenient. Fill the cooling insert with water and place it in the bed to cool off your dog, or use the heated pillow in the bed during cold weather. Both covers come off so you can throw them in the wash when needed."

— Annamaria DiGiorgio
Medium, \$119.95; large, \$145.95; from K&H Manufacturing; 719-591-6950; www.khmf.com

Lola, Bowtie Inc.'s Internet Marketing Director Michelle Williams' American Pit Bull Terrier

Holistix Natural Biscuit Treats

"You can feel good feeding your dog these holistic dog biscuits. I like that they include a variety of healthy fruits, vegetables, and meats, from cranberries and apples to peas, sweet potatoes, and bison. The proof is in the ingredient list, which includes food, vitamin, and mineral names you recognize and can pronounce, so you can be sure the treats you're feeding your dog are healthy."

— A.D.\$6.99, from Eagle Pack; 800-255-5959; www.eaglepack.com

Puppy Bumpers

"I have to admit that when we first saw these, we thought, 'Huh?' But after reading about their purpose — to keep puppies and small dogs from slipping through safety gates and deck or balcony uprights — we had to concede they were a good idea. And pretty much all the editors who saw them thought so, too. Fortunately, they come in lots of bright, interesting fabrics, so they're not like putting an e-collar on your dog."

— Susan Chaney \$19.95, from AP Dog Training; 804-512-2553; www.puppybumpers.net

Crispy, Marcie, and Ruthie, Dogs in Review Editor Christi McDonald's Toy Poodles

Big Dog Walker

"This leash-and-collar combo is stylish and functional. With the collar attached, everything you need to walk your dog is in one place, and the thick, braided rope is sturdy and feels comfortable in my hand. I also love that it comes in five fashionable colors."

— A.D. 4-foot leash, \$16.99; 6-foot leash, \$18.99; from Mendota Products; 800-224-1121; www.mendotaproducts.com

Farmstand Slices

"These yummy treats start with bushels of fresh apples, carrots, or sweet potatoes dehydrated to seal in their natural flavors and nutrients. Easy to chew and digest, the wheat-, grain-, and corn-free treats can be broken into bite-size pieces for small dogs like mine or fed whole for a healthy, low-fat snack."

— Satori Nakaue \$5.95, from Cloud Star; 800-361-9079; www.cloudstar.com

Be Seen Toys, Leashes, and Jackets

"The Be Seen line of products features reflective Lunabrite technology, which increases visibility of each toy, leash, collar, and harness. If winter months have you walking or playing with your dog in the dark, the products' glowing trim makes it easy to find his retrieving toys and help you — or nearby drivers — spot him wearing the harness."

— Andrea Bravo Toys, collars, leashes, jackets, and harnesses, \$20 to \$60; from Sherpa Pet Group; 800-743-7723; www.sherpapetgroup.com

Air Collar

"Made of that same squishy, porous material as your running shoes, the Air Collar is lightweight and breathable. The spongy cloth is comfortable and designed to be quick-drying, so your water-loving dog's skin won't chafe, get irritated, or get stinky after a swim. A wide variety of colors and prints gives this comfy collar a stylish side, too."

— A.B. \$15.99, from Spiffy Dog; 970-870-6164; www.spiffydog.com

Drink Better Bowl

"Owners of large dogs will love this water bowl, which encourages dogs to slow down while they drink, helping prevent indigestion and vomiting. The floating obstacle in the middle of the bowl controls the flow of water, so dogs won't slop water on your floors or soak their ears and muzzles. Its sturdy non-skid design prevents the bowl from slipping."

— S.N. \$24.99, from Contech Electronics; 800-767-8658; www.contech-inc.com

Heartbeat Pillow

"How sweet is this? The plush toy uses a heartbeat sound to soothe and calm anxious puppies and dogs. Once turned on, the sound lasts for five minutes. The heartbeat mechanism can be removed when you need to wash the pillow."

— A.D. \$14.99, from Petstages; 847-504-4010 ext. 211; www.petstages.com

Plum Perfect Facial Cleanser

"The plum-scented cleanser removes dirt and tear or food stains to brighten your dog's face. The foam makes for a handy way to easily clean his face, rather than using water to work up a lather and rinse. Its tearless, gentle formula is great for cleaning sensitive areas around the eyes and mouth, and the fruity scent smells delicious!"

— A.B.\$11.50, from Espree Animal Products; 817-251-6300; www.espree.com

Deluxe Pet Beds with Microban

"This line of beds with built-in Microban protects against mold, mildew, and germs that cause stain and odor. They're machine washable and come in great colors. Plus, Microban protection makes products easier to clean and keeps them cleaner longer. Every dog owner can benefit from this."

— S.N.\$29.99 to \$69.99, from Petmate; 877-738-6283; www.petmate.com

Zuka Bowl

"These collapsible travel bowls come in colorful and fun prints. On outings with Jackson, this would be perfect for giving him a drink — be it during lunch at a sidewalk café or a quick stop on his daily walk. The bowl features a carabiner-type clip to attach it to a leash or belt loop, and can fold up to fit into a purse or stow in your car."

— A.B.Small, \$12; large, \$16; from Itzadog; 800-961-2364; www.itzadog.com

ORKA Flyer

"Here's a new twist on an old favorite. Many dogs love to fetch a flying disk, but they don't always grab it quite right. This flexible one is made of nontoxic synthetic rubber, so it's easy to snag and easy on the teeth. Bright and translucent, it's not likely to get lost at the park, either. Since it floats, it's great for water games, too."

— S.C.\$12.99, from Petstages; 847-504-4010 ext. 211; www.petstages.com

HoundAbout Pet Stroller

"OK, I can just imagine the e-mail we're going to get on this one. But, before you take to the keyboard, let me tell you why this was a winner. If you have a big, old dog with bad arthritis, or a large dog with a disability, this pet stroller can get him out into the neighborhood for fresh air and fresh smells. We're not suggesting that your average dog should ride in a stroller, but what if you're a runner and you go distances that are too far for your dog? This is a great option to let him run for a while, then ride."

— S.C.Medium, \$249; Large, \$299; from Solvit Products; 866-676-5848; www.solvitproducts.com

HduO Water Dispenser

"I first saw this water dispenser in the spring at America's Family Pet Expo in Costa Mesa, Calif. I immediately knew it would be a contender for this year's Editors' Choice awards. What an excellent idea — get rid of the water bowls. And this machine has all the options you could want: You can turn off the hot water or flip a switch to stop the kids from draining the bottle, and a sensor keeps the dog's tray from overflowing. If you use bottled water and have a dog, I think you'll have a hard time resisting this one."

— S.C.\$299.99, from Aninx Corp.; 561-738-5566; www.hduo.com