

## NYC Businesses Prepare for Westminster

**The annual arrival of thousands of dogs requires special preparations from local businesses.**

Posted: February 9, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

As 2,500 champion dogs arrive in New York City to compete for the prestigious Best in Show title at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden, many surrounding businesses are preparing for the influx of dogs and their handlers that the annual show brings.

Located across the street from Madison Square Garden, New York's Hotel Pennsylvania will be housing hundreds of dogs and has been preparing for months, according to spokesperson Jerry Grymek.

"December and January is when it really starts kicking into high gear," he said. "But we're always thinking about it all year round. It's always in the back of our heads. It's Westminster."

Grymek added that his job description changes from public relations to pooch relations as he becomes the resident "doggie concierge" and helps with "doggie requests" such as an extra pillow, an extra cot, and food.

"A guest may say 'can you get a good cheese pizza for our dog?' Or 'a hamburger with no onions and pickles,' and I'll get it for them," Grymek said.

The hotel will also be providing a "doggie spa" with a masseuse, an animal psychic, bathing tubs, and grooming rooms. "From our end it's a lot of time, but it's well worth it," Grymek said. "For these show dogs, they deserve it ... We put on a yappy face and we just cater to their needs and welcome them with open paws." It's not just the hotels that are affected by the influx of dogs, but other local businesses as well.

"You do see an impact across the city with parties that take place," said Christopher Heywood, director of tourism public relations for NYC & Company, the city's marketing and tourism organization. "Many restaurants host special functions, I know Tavern on the Green for instance in Central Park is taken over by all of the Dachshund aficionados – and there's similar things like that throughout the city."

The Westminster Kennel Club has hosted the event in New York City since its inception in 1877. It's the longest-running sporting event in the country, behind the Kentucky Derby.

"It's a pretty well-oiled machine," Heywood added. "A lot of the hotels around Madison Square Garden and Penn Station plan this months in advance and are literally taken over by it."

The show takes place Feb. 11 and 12. For details visit the Westminster Kennel Club website.

- Read more about the world's greatest dog show in our Westminster Unleashed section! -