

Internet Interpet

When we started this column in our debut issue, we pointed to an array of great pet magazines online with the view to spotlighting online pet retailers in this one. We'll do that at the end of the column so that you are aware of Australian pet product sites as well as some notable overseas ones where you can find new and unusual products and perhaps order them through your local retailer from authorized distributors here.

But in our research, we came across some amazing and amusing sites throughout the world, which offer a staggering amount of bizarre products and services. Here are a few.

Can you believe that there is a professional association for 'Pooper Scoopers'? Yep, it's called aPaws—The Association of Professional Animal Waste Specialists—which has a website at www.apaws.org. It not only acts as a group with a mission statement to raise the level or awareness in the animal waste industry, it's got links to 'pooper scoopers' in all US states and Canada. Some of them, like my former hometown Atlanta's Dirty Work (at www.dirtywork.net), are absolutely hilarious in their marketing. When 'doody calls' and you're 'too pooped to scoop' they can make your poo-problem 'va-poo-rise'!

Their businesses also have comical names as the California membership roll-call shows; Entre-Manure, DoodyDude, Poop Troop, Hate to Doo!, Call of Doody, Pooper Troopers, Peninsula Poop Patrol, Doo Not!, and We Do Doo Doo

And while we're on this delicate subject, I was bemused to find in a lengthy booklet on a major pet food brand which contained all sorts of scientific information, that they feature a 9 photo chart of a faeces scoring system which graphically details in full colour the range of dog poo from dry and crumbly white to watery brown. And to top it off, there's also a large poster available for pet stores. If you want a peek at the rather humorous scoring system, just go on the Net to Google.com and enter 'Faecal Grading System' in the search. You'll come up with a PDF link in living colour!

There's nothing more irritating when surfing the net than having your cat try to climb up on the warm back of your screen. Problem solved with a computer monitor perch for cats to lay on while you type away. It comes in a variety of fabrics with adjustable feet, washable cover and Velcro fastener which will hold up to 13 kilos—one size fits all it seems.

www.woodrufforpets.com/monitor-perch.html

Only in America as they say. For those who suffer separation anxiety when their pet passes away, there's always Pet Preservation freeze dry taxidermy for dogs, cats, birds and other pets. As you would expect, there are photos of preserved pets and heart-tugging stories at www.petpreservations.com with that wonderful marketing tag line, "Because only a true friend can leave pawprints on the heart."

But wait, there's more. If you have money to burn, why not take your precious past pet's DNA and create a newer, younger version? As seen on TV and in the media, Genetic Savings and Clone—again, only in America folks—has opened their website for those who want to empty their wallets and create cloned cats now, dogs soon. If you're in doubt and just want to save some genetic starter material, they have an annual storage fee for that in case you decide later to forego the new car and instead have a new cat made to order as an exact replicate of your former moggie. www.savingsandclone.com Considering over 4 million animals in the US each year are euthanased, because they are not adopted, this does seem wasteful on many fronts.

Now from the Only In Japan file.

If you want to stay in touch with your pet in the here and now, there are two new options on the market. One is the iSeePet method of communicating with your fur child from your Personal Digital Assistant via the Internet to their video and audio enabled bowl. See them, call them, feed them—yes you can release a controlled amount of food to them while you watch—at www.alphaomega.jp/us/iSeePet/product.html

Real time communications with your pet can extend to the wireless world of Pet Cell Phones. You can get a phone that attaches to your dog, automatically answers for him to hear your commands and can also be set to autodial you should the pet get lost and someone finds it. www.petsmobility.com/index3.html So whether you're on holiday, at work or on the road, pets can be contacted with that friendly recognisable voice of their owners.

If you're taking your pet out on the road, or a bushwalk, fear not; there are plenty of products for 'Outward Hounds' ranging from quick-release dog backpacks so they can carry their own gear, a variety of pet slings or carriers so that you can haul them, as well as portable dog treat bags and pet bowls. While you'll find a broad range of these featured in the quarterly travel magazine for dogs and their travel companions—Fido Friendly at www.fidofriendly.com—you can see a selection of products at Pooch Canada which you may be able to order locally or, if light enough to ship economically, from over the pond. They're at www.pooch.ca and of particular note is the Pet Lookout Car Booster Seat which attaches to the upper part of a car seat so small dogs can watch traffic while you drive instead of being unable to reach the window.

Now if your pet is mobility impaired, you can always craft your own rolling support device if you are mechanically adept. But for those who want a high tech custom fitted wheelchair for a disabled pet, there's Wheelchairs for Dogs at www.wheelchairsfordogs.com/. Using lightweight aluminum frames, neoprene supports and pneumatic wheels, these are perfect for animals with problems affecting rear legs.

Looking for a uniquely Aussie product? If your pet rodent wears itself out on the treadmill and just needs a cool place to hang, what better than a Rat and Mouse Hammock. Not only are there chew resistant models but also rat carriers that hang around the neck as pouches, tube lofts and snuggle sacks. But no product called RatSak at www.dapper.com.au/hammocks.htm

And finally we leave you with a fabulously funny, English challenged, yet classy site for the ultimate clothing accessory. Aside from the snappy, custom designed, made-to-measure Kimonos For Dogs, you'll find the mutt-tailor's explanation as follows at www14.big.or.jp/%7Esee/shop/



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Shopping on the Net

Because we're a bit pet mad and traveled to the US on average three times a year, as well as having Yank friends who came over here who wouldn't mind carrying some legal pet products for us, we used to be big fans of the Internet for ordering pet toys to be delivered to our last hotel stop before exiting America for hauling back to our birds or dogs. Yes, we did face some amusing times coming through quarantine with some of the items which were made of wood or appeared odd on the Xray machine, but never had anything confiscated.

That was in days before importers got hip to the huge range of products that pet lifestyle fans wanted to acquire here and couldn't find in most pet stores. While ordering over the Internet can offer a greater selection of toys and specialty products from overseas, the exchange rate and freight charges as well as potential import duties and clearances can easily make that impulse purchase an expensive disaster.

With so many of the major distributors in Australia now bringing in a wider range of pet products and retailers being more amenable to stocking innovative toys, treats and accessories, you can often find them in your local shop or order via the Internet from an Australian online pet store. Of course the advantage to using local sources is no hefty freight charges from overseas as well as uniquely Australian products that you can't find in foreign pet sites.

Still, it's great to cruise through some of the massive US sites to find items that you can query local vendors if they can source through their distributors. Here are some just for fun and then some of the better Australian based web sites we've encountered. You can print out product information and take it to a store or email the page location of the product to an online supplier here and see if they have the identical item.

Doctors Foster & Smith may sound like a pair of vets but it's a huge online pet store that carries a vast range of products at www.drsofostersmith.com. They don't ship to foreign addresses so it's limited to 'screen shopping' to compare to local availability. You can find a mind boggling array of products for dogs, cats, birds, fish, small animals, reptiles and much more.

Similarly, **PetsMart** and **PetCo** are two of America's largest chains with huge stores similar to a Bunnings Warehouse for hardware. Their sites at www.petsmart.com and www.petco.com are also fantastic sites to drool over all manner of pet products. But they do not ship internationally.

Birds Just Wanna Have Fun is an Austin Texas-based home business of Kit Manchester who we've visited on one of our trips for a bird-toy making seminar. Her site is at www.birdsjustwannahavefun.com and has some great toys that she and her helpers make up such as the Can't Wait Toy which is our Eccy's favourite pull apart. Kit also sells toy parts including Paulie Rope, cotton rope, marbella beads and other unusual items to string together. For foraging and enrichment, you can't beat her selection, but if you want to get some of the more economical alternatives back here at home, you can find safe wooden parts at Spotlight and Lincraft stores or other craft shops. You can also get raffia and uncoated straw hats to shred from these type of craft stores as well as balsa wood pieces which birds love to destroy!

Two other favourites for bird toys are **Wranglers Roost** at www.wranglersroost.com and **Busy Beaks** at www.busybeaks.com which has an excellent selection of parts as well as books, cards and DVDs, one set of four which is on teaching tricks to your bird.



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Let's Go Shopping At Home!

Mollycoddled Pets

A relatively new pet product site, based in Victoria, caters for dogs, cats, little animals and gifts for pet lovers. It's a brightly coloured site that's fast and details products with clear photos. You can find all sorts of fun, interactive toys such as the 'Bubble Kitty', a toy that blows catnip-infused bubbles. Or for tugging loving dogs you can find a selection of tough 'Aussie Dog' toys such as the 'Tugathong'.

They have a range of upmarket collars and leads—my personal favourite being the Candy & Glamour Pup range that has daisy detail and sparkling Swarovski crystals. Kitties also have a range of pretty, sparkly collars to choose from. For the pocket pets, they sell a variety of grooming aids, wood chews, treats and harnesses. For humans, a small range of dog and cat inspired bath products are featured. Fun sweaters and other apparel like the classic Driza-bone are available for purchase.

As a secure site, you can order online with most credit cards yet MCP also offer a form to download and fax through to them. Good old fashioned mail order by payment of cheque and money order is accepted. Orders to states other than WA and NT over \$40.00 are free. Order under that amount and there's a nominal shipping and handling fee of \$7.50. All orders are sent by Australia Post and are carefully packaged.

www.mollycoddledpets.com.au

Puss 'n' Pooch Gallery

Want to wear your heart (or favourite cat breed) on your sleeve? Then look no further than this site which offers cat lovers all sorts of gift items. Purchase a pair of Siamese sterling silver cats to dangle from your ears; select from their range of kitty inspired key-rings or a funky baseball style t-shirt that asks "What part of Meow don't you understand?"

Figurines of every size and shape are also available in pretty much every imaginable material: crystal, bronze, ceramic—you name it—they've probably got it. Other items for a cat loving home include cushions with cute cats and wording like "No outfit is complete without cat hair". Or for those relationships that revolve around your feline, there's a cushion with the wording "We're staying together for the sake of the Cat". Magnets, bags, throw rugs and clocks - anything cat, you can find it here.

The site is easy to navigate with pricing marked very clearly. Postage and shipping costs are low and most items can be shipped anywhere within Australia and overseas. Gift vouchers are also available.

www.pussandpoochgallery.com.au

Posh Pets Online

If you're in the market for some personalised diamante collars for your cat or dog you can find them at this site. They also cater for the special breed of folk who just love dressing up their 'fur children' in sparkly outfits and funny hats. Most major credit cards are accepted and they ship throughout Australia from their Gold Coast location.

www.poshpets.com.au

Dogs And The City

This is the site for a relatively new dog fashion and accessory shop. If you can't visit the friendly and airy shop in Double Bay you can at least get a limited taste for the range of products they carry. Opened late last year by dog trainer Lisa Wolfenden, this shop stocks everything from high quality grooming products, tempting treats and fashionable dog totes. They currently don't have a secure site to accept credit card, but can easily take your order via fax, phone or mail order.

www.dogsandthecity.com.au

Petalia.com.au

This massive site is more than just an online store for pet goodies. Here you'll find a wealth of articles written by vets on a vast array of subjects—from sensible nutrition advice to treating snake and spider bites and everything in between. They have an in-house vet to answer questions and utilise a pool of specialist vets for other health articles. As a spokesperson for Petalia says "Aussie vets talking about Aussie pets." Similar sites based overseas don't cover the range of specific problems pets can encounter in Australia and Petalia have filled this niche.

Other helpful information included is a vet locator where you just tap in your postcode and up pops a list of vet clinics in your postcode and surrounding suburbs. Over 230 vet sites created and maintained by Petalia are hot-linked with their site information and email addresses. The site is kid-friendly with cute graphics and fun games to entertain. Articles specifically written for children on pets and care are also included.

If you're curious about certain breeds of cats or dogs you can quickly find this information in their tools section—Abyssinian to Turkish Van or Affenpincher to Yorkshire Terriers—it's all found with photos, details of origin, characteristics and advice on special needs of the breed.

We shouldn't forget to include information about the online shopping side of their site. There's a vast array of products to choose from and shopping here is fast and simple as a scroll and click for your pet, online-retail therapy needs. Safe toys, comfy beds, special collars, vitamins, grooming products, dining accessories, tick treatments, flea prevention and gourmet treats are all available. Orders are shipped throughout the country via Australia Post and average shipping and handling costs are between \$5.50 and \$11.00, more for heavier items. All major credit cards—including Amex and Diners—are accepted through their secure service.

www.petalia.com.au
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Mega Market Pets - Girraween - 0403 338 063
Merrylands Produce - Merrylands - 02 9637 2312

Pet Addiction - Darlinghurst - 02 9360 0012
Pet Barn - Alexandria - 02 9557 8300
Pet Barn - Penrith - 02 4731 6044
Pet Barn - Northmead - 02 9630 1600
Pet Barn - Campbelltown - 02 4627 1600
Pet Barn - Moorebank - 02 9601 2911
Pet Barn - Chatswood - 02 9417 1744
Pet Barn - Gosford - 02 4325 5455
Pet Care 2000 - Caringbah - 02 9542 7473
Pet Care 2000 - Wetherill Park - 02 9757 1322
Pet Care 2000 - Yagoona - 02 9708 0472
Pet Deli - Gladesville - 02 9879 0161
Pet Depot - Leichhardt - 02 9569 5388
Pet Care Direct - Peakhurst - 02 9533 6581
Pet Force - Sutherland - 02 9545 0122
Pet Food Plus - Roselands - 02 9750 2922

Pet Shack - Katoomba - 02 4782 7322
Pet Stock Animal Supplies - Adamstown - 024956 3550
Pet Stock Animal Supplies - Albion Park - 02 4257 4001
Pup N Dog - Blacktown - 02 9621 1610
Stefmar Pet Care Centre - Matraville - 02 9661 5324
Stefmar Pet Care Centre - Enfield - 02 9715 1408
Super Save Pet Supplies - Newmarket - 02 4926 2006
TJR Wholesale Pet Supplies - South Windsor - 02 4577 4868
Warehouse Pet Supplies - Alexandria - 02 9519 1144
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