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# pets

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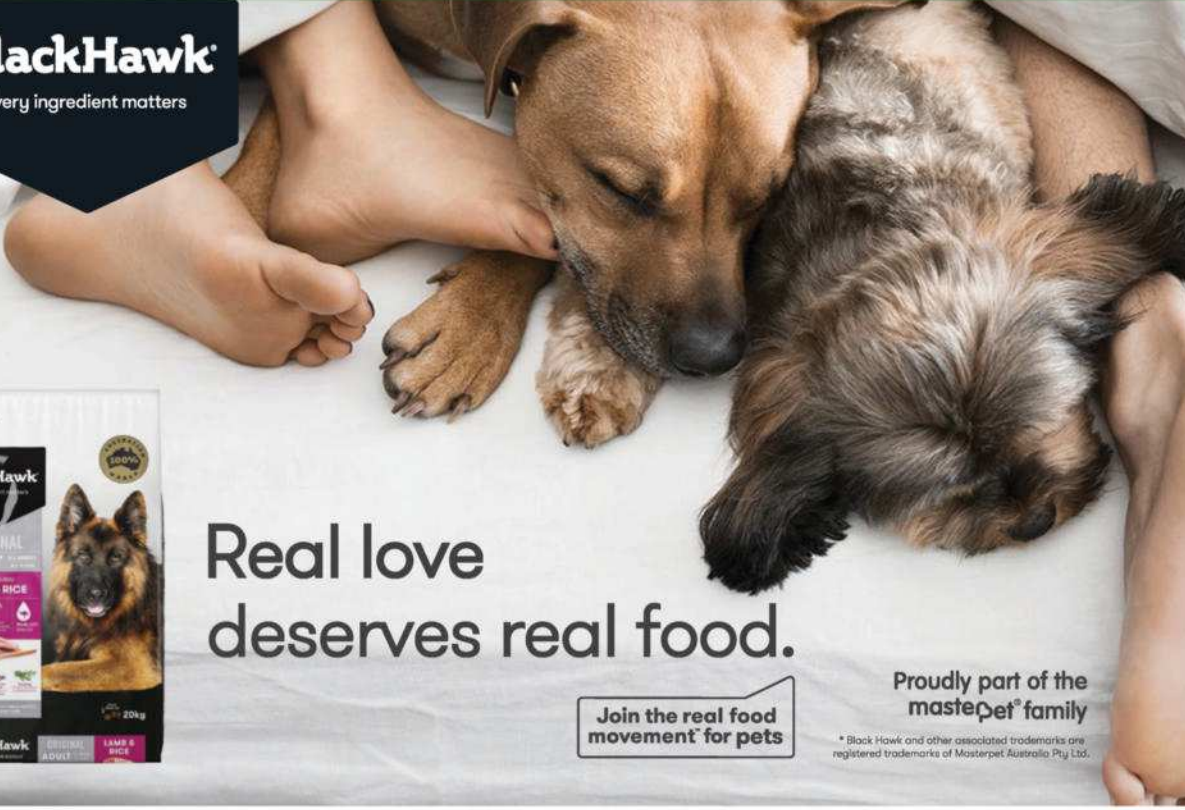


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# may the fur-orce be with you...

**W**hat does *Stars Wars* have to do with your furkids, you may ask. Everything! Not only has the galactic film franchise sparked some of the cutest doggy costumes (furry Darth Vader or BB-8, anyone?), the loyal, adorable creatures dreamt up by its creators often remind us of our very own four-legged “Ewoks” and “Chewbaccas”.

To celebrate *Star Wars* Day, which falls on May 4, we transformed our April/May cover girl, actress He Ying Ying, into a Jedi and of course, her photogenic pooch, Dolly, took on the role of a very convincing Ewok. The rising star shares her unassuming journey from varsity student to A-lister in waiting (pg 38). If you’ve always wanted to throw an out-of-this-world paw-ty but never knew how, flip to pg 12 for tips on how to put together a *Stars Wars*-themed shindig for

your furkid.

This issue, we also look at the emotional support that our pets lend us. We shed light on emotional support animals (pg 20) and share some of the most touching furry tales from around the world (pg 18). Also, discover how dog agility can benefit pooches of all breeds and ages (pg 62).

While we had a lot of fun bringing our *Star Wars* issue to fruition, it was also a timely reminder that every furkid holds the force to impact our lives (and vice versa). As you return home to your precious fur-mily, appreciate them and look at them in a different light.

  
Justina Tan,  
Senior Editor



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# pets

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USING **GOLDWELL** (6295 2088)  
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# we've got mail

**Congratulations to the five lucky winners. Enjoy your set of Probiotix Plus and SmartBones Holistic Sticks (worth over \$50), courtesy of Wildlife & Veterinary Supplies.**

**I** was very touched by the story *A Race Against Time*, which featured volunteers who braved the volcanic eruptions at Mount Agung to feed the hungry dogs left behind. The photos told a beautiful story of love and compassion. It takes a big heart to do something like this. Kudos to all the volunteers!

**Ai Honda**

**W**henever I receive **pets**, I immediately flip to Paw-rent Diary. It's a hoot reading the hilarious adventures of the **pets** team, and it lends a personal touch to the magazine. I have a six-year-old Jack Russell Terrier, Advin, that enjoys all the space and affection in our home. I sometimes wonder what it would be like introducing another pet into the household. Reading the recent Paw-rent Diary story made me laugh out loud—I believe that if I were to suddenly

bring a cat into my home, Advin might throw a barking fit!

**Shann Goh**

**I** felt compelled to write in because I spotted Hugh Jackman in your latest issue. I love him! Seeing how big stars like Ed Sheeran, Song Hye Kyo and Kylie Jenner love their pets so fiercely made me see them in a different light. It's easy to be star-struck by their celebrity status, but I realise that they're just like one of us paw-rents!

**Gloriana Judith**

**M**y son once complained that our seven-year-old Sheltie had eaten his homework. I didn't believe him at first, but I was shocked when he showed me the torn-up pages! This behaviour continued for months and I did not know what to do! We resorted to keeping her out of his room and keeping paper objects away from her. Besides paper, we also noticed that she sometimes chewed on pebbles. Thankfully, this issue was addressed in *Body and Soul*, so I now know how to treat it. Thank you **pets** magazine!

**Bryan Tan**

**M**y friends tell me I have a problem—I love to shop for my Frenchie, Sylvia! I prioritise Sylvia's health and well-being, so I'm constantly on the lookout for new products I can try on her. Tried and Tested always recommends the best products. The ratings have been relatively accurate! I now use Earthbath's Shed Control Wipes Green Tea & Awapuhi. Sylvia seems to love the wipes too because she comes running whenever I take them out!

**Chloe Lee**



## Brickbats or bouquets?

The **pets** team wants to hear from you! Snail mail your letters to 85 Playfair Road, #04-02 Tong Yuan Industrial Building, S(368000), or write to [contact@petsmagazine.com.sg](mailto:contact@petsmagazine.com.sg). Please include your name, address and contact number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Five selected letters will win a \$50 Kohepets voucher (free delivery for orders of \$60 and above)!

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# THE IN THING

APRIL / MAY  
2018

## Read the signs

Cats are notoriously hard to read—the same can be said of their health as they're masters at hiding signs of sickness. While this "skill" keeps Puss safe in the wild, it makes it challenging for cat paw-rents to detect serious feline health conditions early. The Tailio device is a game changer.

Designed to be placed beneath any litter box, Tailio gathers data on Puss' weight, his waste, how frequently he visits his litter box, and his toileting patterns.

The information is then passed through an analytics system that learns your pet's profile, taking note of details such as weight trends and litter box behavior, and flagging anything abnormal—such as a marked decrease or increase in toilet visits—to you via a mobile app. The app

also allows you to set litter box-cleaning reminders.

So why look to the litter box for clues on kitty's well-being? According to vets, obvious changes in a feline's weight and elimination are the first telltale signs of illness, stress, and life-threatening conditions. The weight-monitoring feature is also an excellent tool for owners of pudgy furkids.

Have more than one cat? No problem. Tailio can track multiple kitties—differentiating them by their varying elimination patterns and weight.

*Tailio retails at US\$249 (S\$329) and is available in black and white. Shipping charges vary. Find out more at [tailio.com](http://tailio.com).*



TEXT CHRISTIANN PRIVANKA

# OUT OF THIS WORLD

Which dog doesn't love a good paw-ty, especially one with meaty lightsabers? Here's how to throw a fur-bulous space-orama for your furry Jedi and his best pals. **BY GILLIAN LIM**



## DELICIOUS DROID

Just as BB-8 was a trusty assistant to Resistance X-wing fighter pilot Poe, he'll become Fido's best bud. Craft your own little BB-8 treat dispenser out of styrofoam balls and coloured markers, and cut a little hole at the bottom to make room for your furkid's favourite snack.

**Tip:** Join the two parts with small toothpicks, and only allow your pooch to play with it under supervision.



## ATTACK OF THE MUNCHIES

Nope, there's no clone army here—just Fido and his hungry friends. Satisfy your furry guests with these *Star Wars*-inspired doggy snacks. Turn sticks of jerky into beaming lightsabers by coating them in coloured yoghurt; trap Hans Solo in carbonite by freezing him in blue jello; and pipe your favourite *Star Wars* characters (using mashed potato frosting) over frozen peanut butter and banana pupcakes!

**Tip:** While food colouring is safe for pups in small amounts, you can also make your own all-natural dye out of fruits and vegetables, such as beet, spinach, blueberries, turmeric and cinnamon.





### JOURNEY THROUGH HYPERSPACE

What's a Star Wars paw-ty without Stormtroopers, X-wing Starfighters, TIE fighters, and of course the Millennium Falcon? Set the scene for some lightspeed action with these easy-to-make decorations! Inflate white balloons and use black permanent markers to draw Stormtrooper faces; and print and cut out coloured silhouettes of the galactic vehicles and little stars, then string them up on the wall.

**Tip:** Reuse Christmas tree tinsel for that extra shimmer.



### PAW-SOME PADAWAN

Create your own flowing robes for aspiring Jedi puppers by sewing brown cloth together and cutting holes for his head and arms. If your handicraft skills aren't the best, don't fret—the more rugged, the better! Top your furkid's frock off with a rope and he's ready to dish out peace and justice in the galaxy as the Chosen One.

**Tip:** Opt for hot glue guns or fabric glue for a quicker fix.



PHOTOS **EDDIE TEO**  
 STYLING & ART DIRECTION **LIM KAY LI**  
 PET MODEL **RUBY (@RUBYTHEMALTIP0015)**



**P.L.A.Y Play Tunnel (from \$88)**  
 Transform any open space into a doggy playground with this portable agility tunnel. Constructed using heavy-duty mesh, fabric, wire, and four stakes to secure the tunnel to the ground, it's durable yet pliable so it can be bent at an angle for added fun. After use, simply fold flat and slip it into the accompanying carrying bag for convenient transportation and storage. Comes in small and large. Available at [gingerandbear.com.sg](http://gingerandbear.com.sg).

# a playful approach

**It's been said that play is the brain's favourite way of learning, so give Puss' and Fido's mental, emotional and physical well-being a boost with our top playtime picks. BY JUSTINA TAN**



**Major Dog Swimming Eddy (\$17.90)** Eye-catching and buoyant, the Swimming Eddy dog toy has an attached cord that allows it to be flung far on both land and in water. Certified to the same safety standard as children's toys, it also makes an excellent chew. Available at [mobyshop.com](http://mobyshop.com).

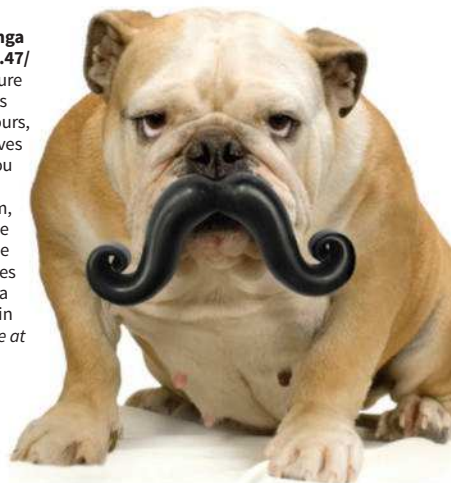


**Mungo & Maud Toile Bone Dog Toy Blue (£15.50/ S\$28.75)** Crafted from an elegant yet durable toile print cotton canvas and fitted with a squeaker, this bone-shaped plushie fits in seamlessly with your sophisticated abode. Available at [mungaandmaud.com](http://mungaandmaud.com).

**Allstar Innovations Wobble Wag Giggle Ball (from \$9.92)** Made from durable vinyl, the Wobble Wag Giggle Ball makes curious sounds—sans batteries—as it rolls around, which entice Fido to engage in active play. It also features six pockets that allow smaller mouths to easily grip and carry it around. Available at [lazada.sg](http://lazada.sg).



**Moody Pets Humanga Stache (from US\$7.47/ S\$9.77)** We aren't sure if this toy is for Fido's entertainment or yours, but if your pooch loves playing fetch and you think a handlebar moustache suits him, the Humanga Stache is a must-have. Made of rubber, it combines a squeaky ball with a gag 'stache. Comes in three sizes. Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).







**3 Fat Cats Rocky's Throne of Games (£89/\$\$164.81)**

The cat scratcher to trump all cat scratchers, this beautiful chesterfield-inspired sofa for Puss features a faux black suede with gold stud print and is fashioned from high-density, ultra-durable, eco-friendly corrugated cardboard. A pleasure for your pampered kitty to scratch or lounge on, the chair arms even contain play balls to keep him entertained. Available at [3fatcats.shop](http://3fatcats.shop).

**Petlinks Mystery Motion Concealed Electronic Motion Toy (US\$20.99/\$\$27.48)**

Fulfil your cat's inner crouching tiger with this battery-operated gadget. It incorporates a motorised unit and feathered wand attachment—both are concealed beneath a polyester cover. When the device is switched on (there are four speed settings), the feathers move erratically to simulate the movements of a real prey, enticing your cat to chase, pounce and leap. Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



**Freak Meowt Teabag (\$18.50)**

The perfect "cuppa" for your catnip-obsessed kitty, this teabag is stuffed to the brim with premium Canadian catnip—and nothing else. Even as your feline furkid rolls around in ecstasy, the toy's sturdy cotton construction should have no problem withstanding his vigorous chewing and scratching. Available at [furrplay.com](http://furrplay.com).



**Munchiecat Sushi Deluxe 8-Pc Catnip Sushi Set (US\$40/\$\$52.33)**

Packed in a bamboo print bento-style gift box, this vibrant eight-piece catnip sushi set is so pretty, we're having second thoughts giving it to Puss. Designed to cater to a cat's hunter instincts, each "nigiri" has polyester fibre, organic catnip, crinkle paper and bells securely contained within a plush minky fabric exterior. Oishii! Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



**Catit Senses 2.0 Super Circuit (\$49)**

The feline equivalent of a train set for kids, this interactive cat toy features interlockable pieces of covered track that can be arranged in various permutations. Once you've assembled your desired circuit, slip the accompanying multi-coloured ball onto the undulating track and watch as your kitty spends hours chasing and batting at it. Furthermore, it can be integrated with other 2.0 circuits and Catit products (like the Food Tree and Wellness Center) to create the ultimate cat activity hub. Available at [kohepets.com.sg](http://kohepets.com.sg).

# build your empire

**Flaunt the Force (and your *Star Wars* obsession) with these cool yet practical must-haves for your home and workspace. BY GILLIAN LIM**



**The Yoda Table Lamp (US\$179.95/S\$236.3)**  
Illuminate your room with Jedi Master wisdom and save yourself from the Dark Side with this bronze lamp. The textured cloth lampshade even has one of Yoda's famous quotes emblazoned on it. Available at [hammacher.com](http://hammacher.com).



**Star Wars BB-8 Lotion Dispenser (US\$12.99/ S\$17.08)** Featuring the skittish yet lovable droid, this soap/lotion dispenser is made of resin and plastic, and accented with intricate details. Available at [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).



**STAR WARS Death Star Floating Bluetooth Speaker (\$239.99)**  
Rule the galaxy with this levitating collectible Bluetooth speaker. Providing five hours of continuous playback, this portable battle station is certain to impress even Darth Vader. Available at [toysrus.com.sg](http://toysrus.com.sg).



**R2-D2 USB Desktop Vacuum Cleaner (£12.99/ S\$23.97)** Let this little astromech droid pootle around your workstation and pick up dust and stray crumbs. The USB-powered vacuum makes for a great office toy and is a handy way to prevent the dark forces of clutter from taking over your desk. Available at [thefowndry.com](http://thefowndry.com).



**Star Wars Death Star Paper Light Shade (£6.99/\$12.90)** Fit this 30cm-wide lamp shade on any hanging light fixture and you'll get one of the most powerful weapons in the galaxy. While this paper lantern isn't blaster-proof and doesn't come with a Dark Lord of the Sith, it's sure to add an "Imperial" touch to any living space. Available at [thefowndry.com](http://thefowndry.com).



**Samsung POWERbot Star Wars Limited Edition—Darth Vader™**

**(\$799)** If you've always wanted a robot vacuum to do your dirty work while belting the Imperial march or mimicking Darth Vader's infamous heavy breathing, this powerful limited edition cleaning machine is for you. It's not only smart enough to steer itself through your space independently and handle any terrain, you can even control it remotely via your smartphone. Available at all major consumer electronics stores.



**Star Wars R2-D2 Coffee Press (US\$39.99/\$52.57)**

This bleeping droid is more than happy to help a human in need—especially if it involves providing motivation for the day. This coffee press has a glass body and serves up to four cups of piping hot coffee. Available at [thinkgeek.com](http://thinkgeek.com).



**Star Wars Han Solo Fridge (US\$159.99/\$210.33)** Keep this by your workspace or bedside and you'll always have a tall, cold one—we don't mean Han Solo—at the ready. This cooler can hold up to 18 cans of soda, and comes with a handle on the top for easy portability. Available at [thinkgeek.com](http://thinkgeek.com).



**Star Wars Stormtrooper Print Pencil Case (\$20.99)**

Pack for a cosmic adventure with this monochrome zippered bag! Perfect for storing stationery, cosmetics and coins, this pouch measures 20cm by 11cm and is inspired by the iconic troops of the Galactic Empire. Available at [ladcraft.com.sg](http://ladcraft.com.sg).

**Large Marquee Light—1cm star wars logo (\$59.99)** Cast the dark forces of the cosmos out of your home or office with this battery-operated marquee light. Cord-free and made of a metal outer case and wooden backing, this decorative piece can be hung on a wall or placed on a desk. Available at [cottonon.com/SG](http://cottonon.com/SG).





Bob and James Bowen



Jake and Bill Lindler

# tails from the heart

**Animals are capable of so much love, compassion and bravery, more than we give them credit for. Here are some of the most touching stories from around the world. BY GILLIAN LIM**

## **BOB THE BUSKING CAT**

Recovering heroin addict James Bowen had been living on the streets of London for 10 years before he moved into a supported housing flat; he was barely making a living by busking.

One day, an injured ginger cat appeared on his doorstep with no collar and identification. Despite James' multiple attempts to shake the feline off, the kitty followed him everywhere. James decided to take responsibility for the ginger—which he named Bob—even though that meant spending his already meagre earnings on Bob's medication.

Never leaving his new paw-rent's side, Bob quickly became James' busking companion and perched himself on the street musician's shoulder or guitar, unfazed by the flashing cameras and

growing crowd. The pair went viral on social media, to the point where they drew the attention of literary agents. James ended up signing a book deal and *A Street Cat Named Bob: And How He Saved My Life* was published in March 2012; the film adaptation was released in November 2016.

James wrote in his book: "I believe it came down to this little man. He came and asked me for help, and he needed me more than I needed to abuse my own body."

## **JAKE THE FIRE DOG**

Jake the Hanahan Pitbull was only three weeks old when he found himself trapped in a burning shed in September 2015. Bill Lindler, a local firefighter and the pup's neighbour, came to the rescue and saved the canine, which ended up with burns on

PHOTOS @JAKETHEFIREPIBBLE, @OFFICIALJAMESBOWENANDSTREETCATBOB, @OSCARTHECAT, @4188RIA



Oscar the therapy cat



Mila the Beluga whale and Yang Yun

75 percent of his body.

After Bill found out that Jake’s owners had abandoned him at the clinic because they couldn’t afford the vet fees, he decided to adopt the pooch. Surrounded by the loving squad at the Hanahan Fire Department, the sweet Pitbull recovered quickly.

Now, Jake is the official mascot of the fire department and goes to schools on educational trips to teach children about fire safety. He even has his own fire badge and an oath, signed by Hanahan mayor Minnie Newman, promising to make kids smile with his charming personality!

### OSCAR THE NURSING HOME CAT

Little Oscar was adopted by the Steere House Nursing & Rehabilitation Centre in Providence, Rhode Island in 2005. As a therapy cat, Oscar comforted the home’s dementia and Alzheimer’s patients.

During Oscar’s first year as a permanent resident at the 41-unit advanced dementia unit, staff observed that the feline would pace from room to room, sniff and look at patients, but rarely spend time with anyone—except those who had mere hours to live.

Often, Oscar would be the first responder on the floor to realise that a resident was about to die, and he’s proven staff wrong as well. Nurses once placed the kitty on the bed of a patient they thought was about to pass away, but Oscar

dashed off to sit beside another patient. Turns out, the second patient died that evening, while the first lived for two more days. He’s so accurate that staff know it’s time to call family members when Oscar stretches out beside a patient.

To date, Oscar has accurately predicted over 100 deaths, and continues to hold vigil over departing patients. The intuitive feline has even been thanked by families in obituaries for providing comfort to their loved ones in their final moments of life.

### MILA THE BELUGA WHALE

As part of a free-diving contest in Harbin, China, contestants had to sink to the bottom of Polar Land’s 6m-deep aquarium arctic pool and stay there amid the Beluga whales for as long as possible.

One of the finalists, Yang Yun, was preparing to resurface when she developed leg cramps from the freezing cold. Paralysed, the diver began to choke and sink further, believing she was going to die. That’s when Mila the Beluga whale dove into action even before organisers spotted the problem. Sensing something was wrong, she gripped the diver’s leg gently in her mouth and pushed her to the surface, saving her life. Competition officials commented afterwards that Mila is an incredibly sensitive animal that’s used to working with humans, hence, she was able to sense the diver’s distress even before anybody else did. 🐋

# PAW PRINTS



## animals for the soul

Emotional support animals (ESA) were relatively unheard of here until a couple of months back, when online news reports of a Florida woman flushing her “emotional support” hamster down the toilet surfaced. The story goes that 21-year-old college student Belen Aldecosea had a flight to catch, and her ESA-certified pet hamster wasn’t allowed on board. A Spirit Airlines employee purportedly advised her to let the hamster loose outdoors or flush it down the toilet—the woman chose the latter and is now considering suing the airline.

So what exactly are ESAs? These are animals that help to alleviate and comfort those who suffer from mental health issues and emotional instability. While this category of pets is uncommon in Singapore, it is popular in the U.S.. However, Dr Jessie Chua, clinical psychologist from The Resilienz Clinic, points out that an ESA is not a recognised form of mental health therapy.

“It can assist the patient in daily living—such as giving a person with depression a sense of responsibility so that they will get out of bed each day—but it is not psychotherapy,” says Dr Chua.

ESAs are commonly used to treat depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. “The company and unconditional attention from an ESA is often soothing. Having to take care of a life tends to

change the sufferer’s perspective from one of hopelessness to one of responsibility. It also helps him/her find purpose and meaning in life, and improves confidence and self-efficacy, which all aid in recovery from mental illness,” says Dr Lim Boon Leng, psychiatrist with Dr BL Lim Centre for Psychological Wellness.

Typically prescribed by a physician or medical professional as a method of treatment, ESAs are still controversial as some pet owners in the U.S. have been known to abuse the system by faking documentation so their furkids can be allowed on flights without an additional fee. “There are hardly any guidelines to begin with, except that a professional mental health provider has to certify that a pet is an ESA,” says Dr Lim. Dr Chua adds that there hasn’t been much research or regulations on ESAs locally.

Although not recognised here by government bodies, Dr Lim believes that ESAs have the potential to be approved for mental health treatment in Singapore as well. “It is not unlike getting a pet and should pose little problem for the most part, as long as ESA owners are sensitive to our nation’s unique multi-cultural society.”

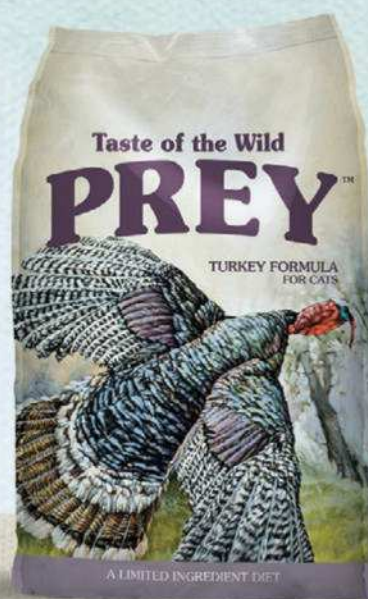
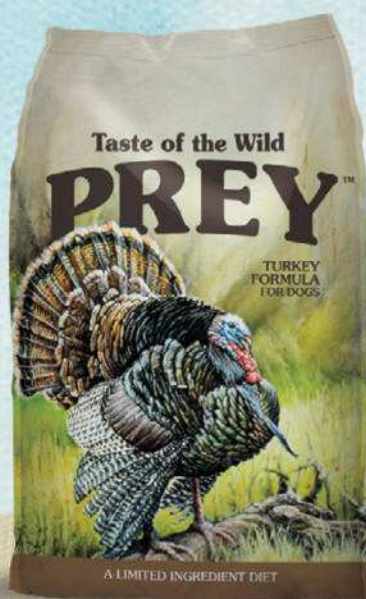
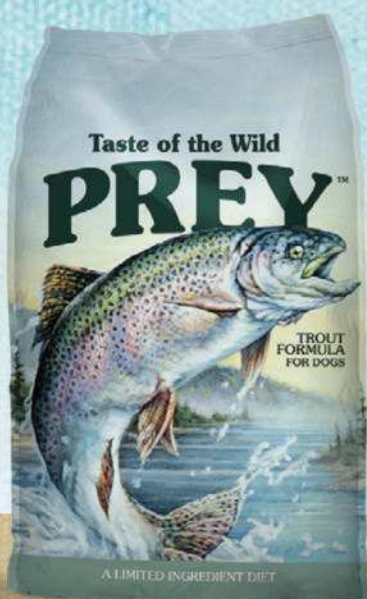
TEXT CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA

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## perfect pH

Fluid in a dog's body is naturally more alkaline, so when it becomes too acidic, oxygen (which is essential for tissue regeneration) is unable to get to where it's needed. This in turn heightens the risk of canine degenerative diseases. An alkaline diet increases the pH levels in your dog's body, which effectively reduces the risk of health conditions like diabetes, kidney, liver and heart disease, and other degenerative diseases. It also prevents a dog's blood, lymph and cerebral spinal fluid from reaching acidic levels, which may sicken your furkid.

Canine Caviar is the first and only alkaline pet food producer, and with **Canine Caviar's Wild Ocean Grain Free Limited Ingredient Alkaline Holistic Dog Food for All Stages**, the benefits of an alkaline diet go further. Flash-cooked to maintain nutritional integrity, the ingredients that go into the kibble include high quality herring, split peas, and wild salmon oil. Over time, you'll notice reduced scratching, hotspots, and digestive upsets in Fido. Available at [Pet Lovers Centre \(petloverscentre.com\)](http://Pet Lovers Centre (petloverscentre.com)).



## taste of quality

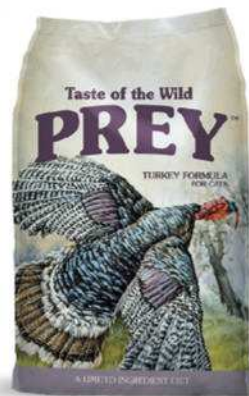
What are the traits of a quality pet food? Free of flavouring, made with human-grade ingredients, and contains mostly meat. **Kakato Premium Pet Food's Tuna & Chicken** nails it on all counts. Made with real tuna and chicken, it contains high levels of EPA, DHA, omega-3, vitamins, proteins and minerals. Plus, it's cooked at a low temperature to seal in nutrients and flavours. Available at [kakato.com](http://kakato.com).

## raw rewards

Meat makes the best treat for your furkid, which is why **Vital Essentials Freeze-Dried Raw Dog and Cat Treats** are such a hit with Puss and Fido. Made from single-source, whole animal proteins that're freeze-dried over 48 hours, nutrients are sealed into every piece. Available at [mobyshop.com](http://mobyshop.com).

## less is best

In the wild, diets of canines and felines comprise mainly of the prey they hunt. **Taste of the Wild PREY** goes back to basics with a simplified, limited-ingredient kibble. Every pack contains no more than four key ingredients, with real animal protein always being the first on the list. Distributed by [Link 2 Link Asia Pacific Pte Ltd](http://Link 2 Link Asia Pacific Pte Ltd). For more information, call 6262 2216 or visit [link2linkco.com](http://link2linkco.com).





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- ✓ Ethically sourced, human-grade ingredients



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## can't cream this

Cats often don't drink enough water, so **Aatas Cat Crème De La Crème** kills two birds with one cream. Containing both meat and broth, every sachet hydrates and serves as a scrumptious treat for Puss. Available in chicken, salmon, and tuna flavours. *Distributed by Link 2 Link Asia Pacific Pte Ltd. For more information, call 6262 2216 or visit [link2linkco.com](http://link2linkco.com).*



## digest this

Good digestion is integral to an animal's health, and this includes furry critters as well. **Oxbow Papaya Fruit Plus** is made from real papaya and pineapple, which are loaded with natural digestive enzymes. It's almost like feeding your tiny furkid the actual fruit! *Available at [moomoopets.sg](http://moomoopets.sg).*

## treat better

**Herbsmith's Sassy Cat and Smiling Dog pet treats** are more than just snacks. Made with real proteins and whole produce that're either freeze-dried or dry-roasted, the brand recommends specific meats for specific needs: older animals with joint problems should take "warming" meats like turkey, while allergy-prone furkids should consume "cooling" meats like duck. *Available at [reinbiotech.com](http://reinbiotech.com).*



## gourmet kitty

One of the few local pet kitchens catering to both dogs and cats, **Meat Bowls** boasts five scrumptious fresh food options for Puss that take into consideration the obligate carnivore nature of felines. Offering both cooked and raw options, their cat bowls contain 70 percent organic mince and 30 percent ethically farmed vegetables like carrots and broccoli. *Available at [meatbowls.com](http://meatbowls.com).*

## ancestral diet

Inspired by The Paleo Diet, **Absolute Holistic Air-Dried** dog food is designed to mimic your pup's ancestral carnivorous diet. Containing protein sourced from free-range farms and the oceans of New Zealand, each meat-based recipe has added superfoods like kelp, flaxseeds and green lipped mussels. The ingredients are gently air-dried for optimal nutrition and to retain the high levels of natural enzymes. *Available at [mobyspetshop.com](http://mobyspetshop.com).*



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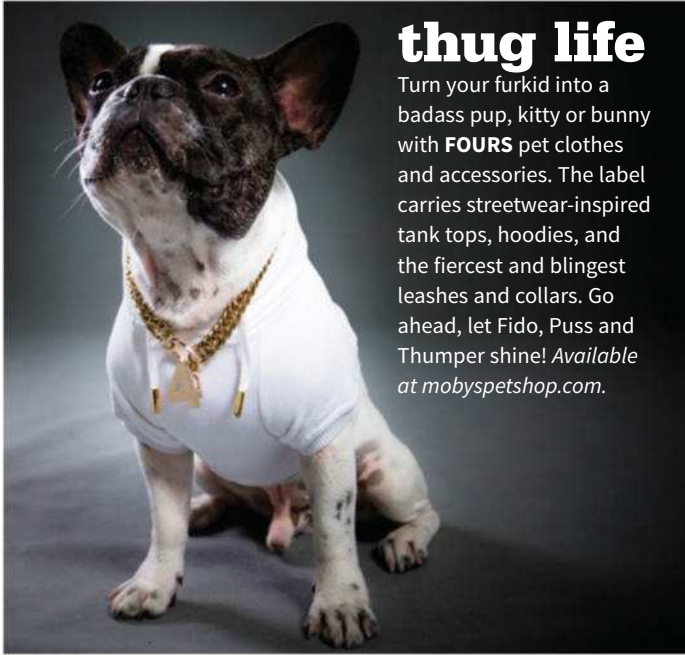
Foam Rubber Hybrid



By combining the clearest two colours together, this range not only creates a stimulating toy to capture visual attention but also ensures high visibility which is paramount to outdoor play. An example of this feature in action is when the toy is thrown over long distance, the dog can easily follow the movement of the toy – a benefit to both owner and pet.



[www.petloverscentre.com](http://www.petloverscentre.com)



## thug life

Turn your furkid into a badass pup, kitty or bunny with **FOURS** pet clothes and accessories. The label carries streetwear-inspired tank tops, hoodies, and the fiercest and blingest leashes and collars. Go ahead, let Fido, Puss and Thumper shine! Available at [mobyspetshop.com](http://mobyspetshop.com).



## tressed to impress

As paw-rents, nothing makes us swell with pride more than when Fido's fur draws compliments. Glve your pup's coat a high-shine boost with **Rocco & Roxie's Shine Conditioning Shampoo**, which boasts a hair spa-worthy blend of Moroccan argan oil, geranium, and camomile. Available at [sg.iherb.com](http://sg.iherb.com).

## real deal

Raw diets can be tricky but with **Isle of Dogs' Nourish Air Dried Lamb and Venison**, the meat is air-dried at low temperatures in small batches to keep it fresh and maintain its nutritional integrity. Your pup would, therefore, absorb all the benefits of over 90 percent real, raw meat alongside coconut oil, vitamins and minerals. Available at [Pet Lovers Centre \(petloverscentre.com\)](http://petloverscentre.com).



## aussie rules

Australia is home to some of the finest produce, which is why **BlackHawk** packs its **Australian Pasture Grazed Lamb** dog food with 55 percent real lamb sourced from Australian farms. This grain-free, protein-rich recipe is also loaded with premium goodies like emu oil, pumpkin seeds, rosemary, and parsley. Available at

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Contains no grains for optimal health and vitality.



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## furry lifesavers

“A blood transfusion is not a cure. However, it can buy time for the patient’s condition to stabilise and improve the animal’s chances of survival,” says Dr Anthony Goh, senior veterinarian at Mount Pleasant Vet Centre (Gelenggang). Under the **Mount Pleasant Blood Donor Programme**, dogs and cats can donate blood. Furry heroes like Mocha and Mittens have donated blood under the programme. These heroes had a rough start in life—Mittens was found in a drain and Mocha was given up by his family. Now, with the support of their paw-rents, they are making a difference in the lives of fellow furry ones. *For more information, visit [mountpleasantvetgroup.wordpress.com](http://mountpleasantvetgroup.wordpress.com).*



## what a ball

Dogs see colours differently from humans, which is why **Foaber’s Foam Rubber Bounce Ball** features patterns that give your pooch clearer visibility of the toy when it’s tossed around. Combining the flexibility of rubber with the lightness of foam, the ball has superior bounce and is durable yet kind on teeth. *Available at [Pet Lover’s Centre](http://Pet Lover’s Centre) ([petloverscentre.com](http://petloverscentre.com)).*



## wipe that smile

Not all furkids will tolerate a toothbrush. For a convenient but no less effective solution, clean Puss’ or Fido’s mouth daily with **Earthbath Tooth & Gum Wipes**. Free of parabens and alcohol, the wipes contain baking soda and peppermint to keep your pet’s mouth healthy and fresh. *Available at [reinbiotech.com](http://reinbiotech.com).*



## design with heart

Fancy a pet accessory designed by singer Nathan Hartono or local fashion guru Daniel Boey? A project mooted by three dog lovers, **Keepers Paws** showcases 11 limited edition dog tags created by well-known paw-rents from various walks of life. 10 percent of sales goes to supporting Action for Singapore Dogs. *Available at [keepers.studio](http://keepers.studio).*



## in safe waters

To keep your fish swimming, **Tetra Aquasafe** is your best bet. With over 60 years of successful product development, Aquasafe instantly makes tap water safe for your little swimmer and protects its gills and mucous membrane. Besides neutralising harmful chlorine, chloramine, copper, zinc and lead, Aquasafe also contains a vitamin blend formulated

to reduce stress and support Goldie's overall health, as well as iodine to boost growth and vitality. *Available at [reinbiotech.com](http://reinbiotech.com).*

## the flip side

Good boy by day, life of the party by night. The **FuzzYard Flip Bandana** features a different design on each side that can be reversed to reflect Puss' or Fido's mood or behaviour. A breeze to wear, the bandana simply folds over your pet's collar and snaps in place. *Available at [nekojam.com](http://nekojam.com).*



## chic clean

Pick up after your dog in style with **The Foggy Dog Luxe Peacock Dog Poop Bag Dispenser**. Beautifully crafted from sturdy canvas that's screenprinted in Japan, the elegant dispenser can be clipped onto any leash and offers easy access to the bags via a brass grommet. *Available at [gingerandbear.com.sg](http://gingerandbear.com.sg).*



## fresh invention

If you drive regularly—especially with furkids in tow—you could be breathing in air that's up to 12 times more polluted than outside. Pop the pint-sized **3M Vehicle Air Purifier Plus** in your car, and its revolutionary four-layer filtration system will eliminate bad odour, germs, PM2.5 dust particles, harmful gases, dust and pet dander within minutes. Plus, the device also has a smart sensor panel that auto-adjusts the purification rate based on the air quality within your vehicle.

*Available at [lazada.sg](http://lazada.sg), [qoo10.sg](http://qoo10.sg), and Autobacs stores islandwide.*

# the great cover-up

Although we adore our feline friends, the last thing we want is for Puss' litter box odour to declare his presence before he's even spotted. Our resident kitties, Mimi and Scotty, put four naturally derived clumping cat litters to the challenge. BY JUSTINA TAN



## Our criteria



- ☆ How absorbent is it?
- ☆ How well does it manage odour?
- ☆ Does it clump easily?
- ☆ How much does it track?
- ☆ Every time Puss eliminates, how much (or little) is needed to top up the litter box?



### FUSSIE CAT NATURAL CHARCOAL PAPER LITTER

from [mobyspetshop.com](http://mobyspetshop.com)  
Price: \$14.30 for 7 litres

**Features:** Infused with charcoal for improved odour control, the pellets in this litter are made of paper, which is non-abrasive and gentle on paws. Biodegradable, non-toxic, dust-free and flushable in small amounts, the heat-sterilised natural fibres neutralise ammonia odours quickly while preventing the growth of bacteria, mould and fungus.

**Verdict:** The litter is highly absorbent, so only a small clump needed to be removed each time Mimi peed. The pellets even clung to poop, so there was little to no odour regardless of whether she was doing a number one or two. Even when wet, the litter did not stick to the box or to her fur and paws. Hence, there was no tracking at all. As the litter box didn't smell, we only had to change her litter once a day in the morning. It's a great option for enclosed areas.

Score: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



## NURTURE PRO TOFU CAT LITTER—ORIGINAL

from Yappy Global Pets Pte Ltd

Price: \$16.91 for 6 litres

**Features:** Made from soya bean curd, this litter is free of synthetic materials, chemicals and fragrance. Flushable and 99 percent dust-free, the biodegradable tofu pellets are designed to be non-irritating to allergy sufferers and are safe even if ingested by Puss. They possess a lightweight, spongy texture that promotes fast clumping action and improved absorbency.

**Verdict:** Absorbency was generally decent, but when Mimi peed, the clumps formed were a tad loose and moist. The pellets efficiently controlled ammonia odours, but were a little less effective with masking the smell of poop. There was a bit of tracking, which was easily tackled by placing a mat or towel in front of the litter box.

Score: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



## PIONEER PET SMARTCAT ALL NATURAL CLUMPING LITTER

from perromart.com.sg

Price: \$19 for 2.27kg

**Features:** Derived from U.S.-farmed grass, this sand-textured litter clumps as quickly and tightly as clay but is 99 percent dust-free and contains no chemicals and fragrance. The litter's superior clumping power also means that it effectively traps odours and doesn't stick to the box, making it a breeze to scoop and dispose of.

**Verdict:** As fresh litter was poured into the box, it emitted an overwhelming scent of what smelled like oats and barley. The clumps formed when Scotty peed were dry and tightly packed, so they could be effortlessly removed from the litter box without tarnishing the remaining clean litter. Plus, a little went a long way. Odour control for both pee and poop was excellent. However, the tiny sand-like particles clung to Scotty's paws and fur and tracked everywhere.

Score: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



## CHERIE CLUMPING UNSCENTED NATURAL WOOD CAT LITTER

from kohepets.com.sg

Price: \$24 for 4.3kg

**Features:** Able to absorb up to four times its own weight in liquid, this litter is made with 100 percent sustainably sourced virgin timber. The compressed wood pellets boast rounded edges that are more comfortable for Puss to step on. Dust-free and eco-friendly, the litter is ideal for allergy-prone paw-rents.

**Verdict:** Exuding a faint woody scent akin to pencil shavings, this litter does an amazing job of masking pee and poop odours. The clumps formed were hard and dry, so they were easy to dispose of and there was minimal wastage. The litter lasted two weeks without smelling foul, making this a fairly economical option. It tracks slightly, so slip a mat in front of the litter box.

Score: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



# the art of craft

If you're a paw-rent and a serious beer connoisseur, head to Little Island Brewing Co with your pooch for an indulgent craft beer tasting sesh. Smoked meats and a sea view complete the experience. BY GILLIAN LIM



PHOTOS EDDIE TEO PET MODELS JINGLE, JELLY, AND JUNIOR (@JELLYJINGLEJUNIOR)

If you aren't an east-sider, getting to Little Island Brewing Co (LIBC) takes some commitment. But it's definitely worth the journey if you know your ales from your lagers. How serious is this three-year-old microbrewery? There are 10 massive brewing tanks and a whopping 30 self-pouring tap stations dispensing original local craft beers, house-brewed sodas and wines. Now, that's dedication.

Located at a 10,000 sq ft area in Changi Village, the casual joint sits within an industrial-style warehouse space furnished with concrete counters, communal wooden tables and twinkling fairy lights. Once you're there, purchase a stored value card (minimum credit of \$10), and then head to the self-dispensing draft wall where you can be your own bartender.

While pooches aren't allowed indoors unless it's raining, furkids are welcome in the sprawling 300-seater al fresco dining area. The indoor seating area can fit 182 patrons, and water, ice and cutlery are located at self-serving central counters—great for paw-rents who wish to fetch water for their furkids. The breezy establishment isn't fenced up and the carpark is right outside, so keep your canine companion leashed at all times.

#### FOOD AND DRINK

Start off with a plate of Chicken Wings (\$8), which are coated with sticky Thai spices and topped with tangy Vietnamese dressing, and the grilled Chili Pumpkin (\$10), which comes with Greek yoghurt, tomato salsa, pine nuts and caramelised onions. For those who love crunchy sides, snack on the Crispy Whitebait (\$10), which is deep-fried silver fish tossed with sumac-spiced sea salt—a surefire hit with the kids.

As for mains, the Grilled Fish (\$32), a chargrilled and salt-wrapped whole red snapper, was fresh and moist. We ordered the hearty Meat Platter (\$48)—great for big groups—which comprised LIBC's signature 15-hour smoked Wagyu beef brisket, crispy roast pork belly, chicken inasal and smoked pork sausage. But our favourite was the Balinese Pork Ribs (\$26),



which was so tender, the meat slid off the bone. We concluded the meal with a classic Sticky Date Pudding (\$12), a sinfully indulgent combo of butterscotch sauce, dense pudding and vanilla ice cream.

While LIBC has a wide variety of drinks, including beer, cider, homemade soda and wine, we recommend the Naked Lager (\$12 for 450ml)—an extra pale beer that fills your mouth with notes of sweet honey, vanilla and malt—and That Old Black Magic (\$12 for 450ml), a dark, creamy Irish stout with hints of chocolate and coffee. The brews are also sold in 100ml quantities (\$1.90 to \$5), so if you can't make up your mind, try them all! The draft beer list is rotated regularly because the brewery is always concocting new brews in small batches, so call to check if your favourite drink is available before dropping by.

#### AMBIENCE

The brewery's pretty quiet in the day, but it comes to life at night. On weekends,



### ACCESSIBILITY

Although Changi Village is as far as the east gets, LIBC is conveniently located right behind the village's hawker centre so you can't miss it. A much-appreciated boon is the on-site car park that can fit up to 30 cars. The nearest train station, Pasir Ris MRT, is more than 10 minutes by car, but there are several bus services that operate from Changi Village Bus Terminal, which is right next door.

### PRICE

A meal here won't burn a hole in your wallet. Appetisers start from \$8, mains from \$14, salads from \$8, desserts from \$3, and drinks from \$1.90.

### PAW-RATING: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾

This microbrewery will definitely be a hit with craft beer loving paw-rents—the grub is tasty and affordable, and the homemade brews are outstanding. LIBC is the perfect spot for casual, laidback evenings with friends when the weather is cool. However, with outdoor-only seating for dog owners, it's probably less comfortable on rainy or extremely sunny days.

expect bustling crowds, live bands and a flurry of activity at the self-pouring taps. With its concrete flooring, long wooden tables and rustic industrial vibe, LIBC brings to mind a hipper beer garden. There are no fans in the outdoor area, but it's fairly cool as it's near the sea. There's a transparent tent over the al fresco area, so you'll be covered on wet days.

### PET-FRIENDLINESS

There's plenty of room outdoors, so bigger breeds should have no problem fitting in. However, dogs aren't allowed indoors and have to be leashed at all times. There's no furkid menu, but you can help yourself to an unlimited supply of water and ice.

*Little Island Brewing Co  
Blk 6 Changi Village  
#01-01/02  
Tel: 6543 9100*

*Opening hours: 12pm-11pm (Sunday to Thursday); 12pm-12am (Friday); and 11am-12am (Saturday). Last orders at 10pm. 🍷*

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# PEOPLE AND PETS

## Inside

\* A Jedi rises at Stars Avenue: Does Mediacorp actress He Ying Ying have the Force?

\* Paw-rents share why babies and furkids make such an adorable combo

\* Furry cancer fighter: Jam the Golden Retriever beats the odds

\* Why you should sterilise your pet (and no, it's not cruel to do so)



# STARS AVENUE: A JEDI RISES

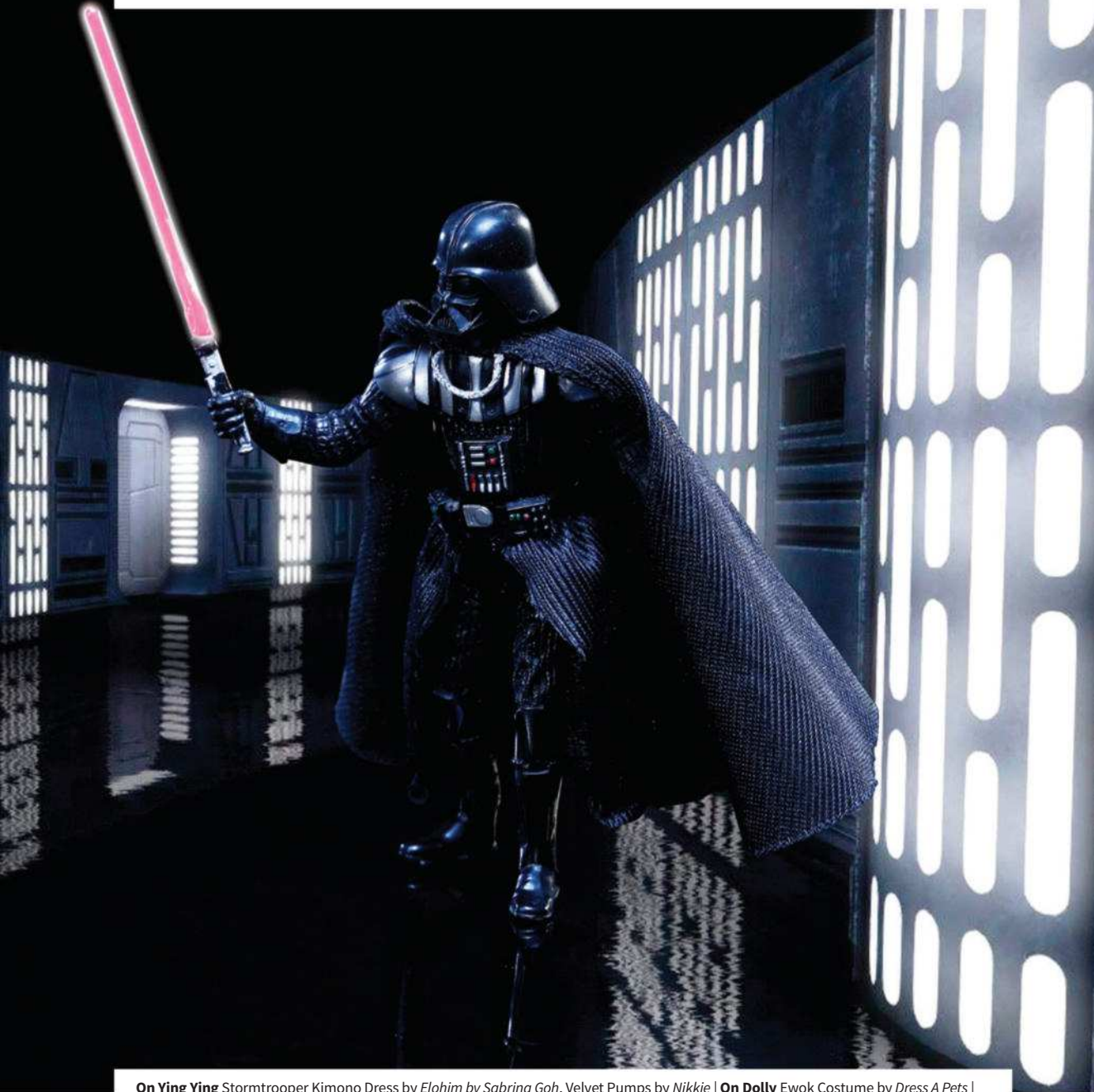




**As depicted in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, greatness can arise from even the humblest backgrounds. Mediacorp actress He Ying Ying may have had a modest entry into showbiz, but the guileless ingenue seems headed for the A-list. With Dolly, her 14-year-old Shih Tzu, nestled in her lap, the doe-eyed lass shares with Justina Tan her journey to stardom.**

Photos **Ching** | Art Direction **Jenn Chew** | Styling **Lim Kay Li**

Makeup **Aiyi** from Makeup Entourage using Laneige | Hair **Samuel Sim** from Hairloom using Goldwell (6295 2088)



**On Ying Ying** Stormtrooper Kimono Dress by **Elohim** by **Sabrina Goh**, Velvet Pumps by **Nikkie** | **On Dolly** Ewok Costume by **Dress A Pets** | **Figurines** Stylist's own



“I don’t hanker to be well-known,” shares 23-year-old Mediacorp starlet He Ying Ying. And we actually believe her. We often expect celebrities—even the nicest ones—to be a tad attention-seeking and self-absorbed, and we don’t blame them. After all, when you’re in the business of competing with others for popularity, screen time, endorsements and magazine covers, it’s almost impossible not to be at least a little narcissistic. But there’s nary a hint of divadom in Ying Ying.

Although she has starred in nine drama series over the last couple of years and is one of local TV’s favourite new faces, the rising star still seems content to lead a simple collegiate life. She rocks up to the photo studio barefaced and togged in a cropped top and high-waist shorts, looking every bit the varsity student she was when she was scouted at the National University of Singapore (NUS) to join Ch 8 talent contest *Hey Gorgeous* three years ago. She has no minders in tow at the photo shoot; Dad and Mum aren’t there to babysit her furkid or lend moral support at her second solo magazine cover shoot; and Ying Ying’s entourage are limited to her Mediacorp manager and Dolly, her 14-year-old Shih Tzu that curls up contentedly in her lap as she gets her hair and makeup done. After the shoot and interview wrap, Ying Ying and Dolly wait unassumingly by the road for their Grab/Uber ride. It’s what plebs like us do, not a comely young actress on the brink of stardom.

Ying Ying may act like a commoner, but she looks nothing like one. Blessed with limpid peepers, porcelain skin, a pert nose, an oval-shaped face, and a lithe frame (she was a ballet dancer in her younger years), the actress is one of the prettiest in her cohort at Mediacorp. These stunning features were what caught the eyes of the *Hey Gorgeous* crew, which had spotted the then NUS Arts faculty sophomore on a school poster during a site recce, gotten her contact through the university’s student union, and asked her to turn up for the on-campus shoot. “I was like, ‘Huh? Mediacorp?’ Because before uni, I wore specs and braces, so I never felt I was pretty or particularly good-looking. When I was asked to join this show, I thought that I probably made the cut because of makeup and styling. Without makeup, I was a 4/10. Still, I was

flattered and felt I should give it a go. Plus, my major was Communications and New Media, so I figured that if I joined *Hey Gorgeous*, I could really learn something because they are professionals,” says Ying Ying.

So join the contest, she did; emerging second runner-up and winning a best smile award. After the contest, Ying Ying scored the female lead role in Toggle web drama *Run Rachael Run*. Shortly after, she snagged a part-time contract with Mediacorp. Despite embarking on a showbiz career, dropping out of university was never an option for the NUS graduate. “It would be foolish of me to stop studying since I was already in year two at that time. I took a study loan and had to pay it back. I didn’t want to waste whatever time and money I had already spent on my uni education, and I wanted to complete my studies because I just felt it was a safety net.”

After graduating last May, the older child and only daughter of an entrepreneur father and pre-school teacher mother is now a full-time Mediacorp artiste and steadily climbing the ranks at Stars Avenue. She has played lead roles in web dramas like *Run Rachael Run* and *A Lonely Fish* (where she had her first on-screen kiss), and key supporting roles in Ch 8 blockbusters like *Hero* and *The Lead* and long-form dramas *118 II*. This April marks a milestone for the actress; she will be appearing on-screen in another long-form drama *Reach for the Skies* and as the second lead and daughter of Zoe Tay and Chen Hanwei in Ch 8 drama *A Million Dollar Dream*.

Watching Ying Ying evolve from a wide-eyed uni student with an ordinary middle class upbringing to an A-lister in the making, we can’t help but liken her to Rey in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. While the budding star may not yet be the brightest in the galaxy, with her heart in the right place and the same meek spirit that has brought her to where she is today, the down-to-earth actress seems destined for greatness. May the Force be with her.

**You were only nine when Dolly joined the family. How has your relationship with her evolved?**

It’s only recently that she’s become so attached to me. She follows me wherever I go and likes licking my legs, which she did

**On Ying Ying**  
Jaz Jintha Dress  
and Velvet  
Pumps by  
*Nikkie*  
Line Robe and  
Line Palazzo  
by *Elohim* by  
*Sabrina Goh*  
Escargot  
Bracelet and Da  
Gaz Cuff from  
*Manifesto*

**On Ying Ying**  
Solar Choker,  
Escargot Bracelet,  
and Orion  
Stack Ring from  
*Manifesto*  
Ripped Oversized  
Pullover from  
*Sabrina Goh*  
Pleat Overall  
from *Comma*

today, so my mum jokes that I have *zhu jiao* (Chinese for pig's trotters). (laughs) Maybe she was feeling anxious at the shoot, and licking me brought her comfort.

**Would you say that in your family, you are the closest to her now?**

We are all close to her in different ways. Every time my dad is home, he'll sit down by her bowl to hand-feed her—my dad hand-feeds her every day. And sometimes if Dolly is extra demanding, she'll want us to play catch using her kibble or hide-and-seek with her food. With my younger brother, she sits beside him when he plays computer games. When my mum goes to bed, she goes to bed as well. Every room in my home has a dog bed.

**Dolly is already 14. Do you ever think about her not being around one day?**

Of course! Every time my mum and I talk about this, we want to cry. Even now, I feel like crying talking about it. (tears) Sometimes, if there are crying scenes and I cannot cry, I'll think of her.

**If you could liken Dolly to any *Star Wars* character, which would it be?**

She's a bit like C-3PO because she's silly, very blur, and only cares about herself. (laughs)

**Which is your favourite *Star Wars* character?**

Princess Leia, because she's very badass. For a woman to be a general and to be so strong and decisive, it's quite inspiring. Not to mention, Carrie Fisher was very pretty.

**What is the most badass thing you have done?**

I confronted a stalker when I was in junior college! He was a man in his late 50s and had been following me around the MRT station. I turned around and shouted at him to stop following me. He just grumbled and walked off.

**Dolly was dressed as an Ewok for the shoot. Is she anything like it?**

She's also noisy and excited...when there's

food. (laughs) She's not very protective, but she follows me around. When she wore the outfit, she really looked like an Ewok. It was so cute!

**What would you be doing now if you hadn't gone into showbiz?**

Probably public relations or journalism, but I think journalism can be quite stressful because you have deadlines to meet and you have to get all your information correct. Otherwise, people on the Internet will scold you. (laughs)

**What made you choose acting over public relations or journalism?**

It's very hard for undergrads to find a job now, so I figured that since I already had a job before graduating and I really, really like it, why not carry on? Furthermore, I didn't have to go through an internship. (laughs)

**Did your peers treat you like a star after you started acting?**

No lah. (laughs) My friends just saw it as another way to tease me. If we are in a shopping mall together, they like to shout, "Eh, He Ying Ying ah! Mediacorp ah!" They don't treat me differently. They just tease me and understand that I have less time to meet because I'm busier.

**Do you get recognised on the streets?**

I don't notice it, but there was a funny incident. I was taking a cab to uni once, and at that point in time, I'd already acted in a few dramas. When I entered the taxi, I was barefaced. I did my makeup on the way there, so when I reached and was going to pay the fare, the taxi uncle looked at me and said, "Eh, you're from Channel 8, right? Sorry ah, I couldn't recognise you just now." Then I said to him, "Uncle, is it because I never wear makeup?" (laughs)

**How different is showbiz life from uni life?**

It's very tiring. (laughs) In uni, you can customise your timetable. So every day I woke up at noon and got home by 6pm,





**On Ying Ying**  
Sunniva Faux  
Leather Shirt  
from *Manifesto*  
MTF W Tee  
by *Elohim* by  
*Sabrina Goh*  
Mira A-Line Skirt  
by *Nikkie*

and in between there were a lot of breaks. Even during lectures, I could relax and not really pay attention. But when acting, filming can run from 7am to 7pm and in that 12 hours, you always have to be switched on.

**Who in local showbiz has been a big influence or help to you?**

Aileen Tan; I played her daughter in *Hero*. Even now, I still call her Lizhen Mummy. Ah Jie (Zoe Tay) also helped me a lot. These veterans have no reason to help me, but they are so passionate about acting and they want me to be good as well so they really guide me a lot. Initially, I was very star-struck when I met them. I didn't know how to hold a proper conversation with them, so I used to just greet them and quickly scurry away. (laughs) But once I got to know them, they were not intimidating; they just have a very strong presence.



Go behind the scenes of Ying Ying's cover shoot! Subscribe to us on YouTube at @PETSmagazine.

**Isn't the entertainment industry cutthroat and competitive?**

Showbiz isn't as "dark" as what some people might think, and even in the industry I've managed to find a few close friends like Hong Ling and Bonnie Loo. Such friendships are very precious because even if I wasn't in showbiz, I might not be able to find truly good friends.

**So it's a myth that you need to be wary of people in showbiz?**

You have to be cautious no matter what industry you're in. I speak with a filter, so I don't think I have offended anybody (laughs). But I have come to learn that you do have to be careful with what you say because some people might be sensitive.

**April is Star Awards month and you are up for the Best Newcomer award for *118 II*. Are you nervous?**

I'm nervous, but because all the nominees are my friends, I'll be happy for whoever wins. Being nominated is recognition as well, so it's good enough for me. If I get the award, it's a bonus.

**You often get cast as a sister or daughter, but if you could play any role, what would you want to be?**

A villain—a very, very evil one. I think that it's delicious to be able to act as a bad person. I would like to try such a role because I want to humanise her. I think it'll be quite fun if somebody likes your bad character.

**Does that mean you would rather be a Sith Lord than a Jedi?**

No, I still want to be a Jedi! I want to be a bad guy on screen, but a good guy in real life. (laughs)

**Given your growing popularity, how have you remained grounded?**

I don't care much about popularity, or about being known. I always tell my best friend, "If you notice any changes in me that you think are not good, please tell me." I am not the kind of person who wants to achieve a lot. I don't need a lot of money. I feel like the most important things in life are health and happiness. 🐾



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Janelle, Shervelle and Ray with their felines (from top, left to right) Chaffy, Bucky, Olive, Fyllis, and Eyoru.

# my little ones

**Having furkids at home might seem like a handful, but these supermums add a human jellybean to the equation. Here's how dedicated paw-rents Janelle Phua and Lee Jia En juggle pets and motherhood. BY GILLIAN LIM**

- ✪ JANELLE PHUA, 32, EXECUTIVE
- ✪ RAY TAN, 35, EDUCATION OFFICER
- ✪ SHERVELLE TAN, 21 MONTHS
- ✪ BUCKY, 9, DOMESTIC SHORTHAIR
- ✪ CHAFFY, 9, DOMESTIC SHORTHAIR
- ✪ D'OLIVE, 6, SEMI LONG HAIR
- ✪ EYORU, 9, DOMESTIC SHORTHAIR
- ✪ FYLLIS, 2, DOMESTIC SHORTHAIR

Having felines in the house was always on the cards for Janelle Phua—before she got married to 35-year-old education officer Ray Tan, and even when she was expecting her baby girl, Shervelle. In fact, the 32-year-old executive wasn't too concerned about how Shervelle would fare in a household with five cats.

Janelle has been fostering cats since 2012, so she knows how to keep the household safe for the entire brood—from trimming the cats' nails regularly to minimising accidental scratches to making sure that Shervelle doesn't accidentally eat

PHOTOS EDDIE TEO



kitty food or litter.

As Shervelle grew older, she became more inquisitive about her furry siblings and inadvertently grabbed their fur, rolled over them, or stepped on their tails. To ensure the well-being of her felines, Janelle installed cat shelves for the furry five in her living room.

**What precautions did you put in place before Shervelle arrived?**

I started telling them that there'd be a new addition to the family soon, and I found treats and feline pheromone sprays like Feliway to calm them down. Another drill I went through was to broadcast newborn crying sounds, and to hold a doll in my arms while walking around, as if I was trying to soothe a crying baby. I gave all my cats access to explore and even utilise the baby stuff, like the rocker, cot, drawers, so they wouldn't be intimidated by all the new objects popping up around the house.

**What kind of relationship do you want Shervelle to have with your cats?**

I hope the cats can be her lifelong buddies, playmates and confidantes that will be there for her through her ups and downs.

**Were your cats or Shervelle ever stressed or uncomfortable around each other?**

Not my daughter. (laughs) Usually she's the source of the cat's discomfort, especially if she grabs their fur or tails. But my cats will escape to another part of the house or stay on higher ground when that happens.

**Any accidents so far?**

They're unavoidable...there were a few instances when my daughter grabbed the fur or the tails of the cats when she was learning to crawl, and the cats beat her to release her grip before running away. Even when my daughter was sleeping, she fell victim to cats chasing each other and got scratched as they ran past her.

**Out of the five cats, is there one that's Shervelle's favourite?**

Yes. Fyllis was adopted to be Shervelle's cat



from the very beginning. They'll snuggle together to sleep as if they've been best friends for the longest time. Shervelle loves to play fetch with Fyllis' favourite mouse toy—when she finds the toy, she will go looking for Fyllis. No matter how Shervelle pulls her tail or fur, this silly cat will still return to her side.

**What do you feel are some benefits of having pets and babies grow up together?**

I see a significant difference in her immunity as compared to her peers who don't have pets. Prior to her enrolment into preschool when she was 18 months old, Shervelle was never down with cough or flu despite our family having a history of allergies and childhood asthma. Plus, Shervelle's picking up skills such as compassion and being mindful of her surroundings. She's learnt that fighting is wrong, so she will now "scold" the cats when she sees them fighting. (laughs)



Qifeng, Jia En, Carissa and Kairi

- ★ LEE JIA EN, 30, STAY-AT-HOME MOM
- ★ HO QIFENG, 32, CHEMICAL ENGINEER
- ★ CARISSA HO WEN TING, 26 MONTHS
- ★ KAIRI, 7, SILKY TERRIER

As a first-time stay-at-home mum and paw-rent of seven-year-old Silky Terrier Kairi, Lee Jia En struggled to find a balance between both of her charges. When two-year-old toddler Carissa was younger, Jia En had to be with her constantly as she was a very needy and difficult baby. As a result, spending time with Kairi was a challenge, and taking her out for long walks was close to impossible. “You have to constantly remind yourself to give your pet some love and attention every now and then,” she shares.

Having grown up with dogs herself, she knew how colourful life could be with a furry one in the house. Before she brought Carissa home from the hospital, she told her husband, Qifeng, to bring a piece of Carissa’s clothing home so Kairi would become familiarised with her scent.

For the first few weeks, the hyperactive pooch was wary of the oblivious newborn babe and seemed confused. “She’d often hide in the corner of the room and it really broke my heart to see her like that,” says Jia En. “It took about a month or two for Kairi to become comfortable with Carissa. But now they really enjoy spending time with each other. Carissa loves to play pretend, so Kairi will sometimes be Carissa’s food taster when she’s a chef, or her patient when she’s a doctor.”

**Describe the first interaction that Carissa and Kairi had.**

I allowed Kairi to sniff Carissa the moment I brought her home from the hospital. Carissa, being a newborn, was asleep and unaware of whatever was going on. Kairi

was excited yet rather apprehensive. She wasn’t too keen on interacting with Carissa after that first meeting so I gave her space and time until she was ready.

**Were you ever worried that the two might not get along?**

I wasn’t worried about Carissa because I myself grew up around dogs. I was actually more concerned about how Kairi would feel with a new addition to the family as she had always been my “baby”. (laughs)

**What did the rest of the household think?**

Thankfully, both sides of the family didn’t have anything negative to say. My side of the family have always been dog lovers, and my in-laws are very easy-going people. They give us the freedom and space to parent Carissa the way we want, which I am very thankful for.

**Were there any accidents?**

No major ones. There were a few times when Carissa would accidentally step on Kairi's paws, but Kairi would just walk away. I always keep a close eye on them when they're together, and I often remind Carissa to look out for Kairi when she's running about lest she accidentally steps or trips over Kairi.

**How can you tell they like spending time with each other?**

They're always very comfortable around each other and Kairi likes to be in close proximity of Carissa—especially when Carissa has food. (laughs) Carissa also occasionally asks for Kairi when she wakes up in the morning or when we're out without Kairi. Sometimes she'll look for Kairi just to give her a pet on the head.

**Were there any interactions between the two that surprised you?**

Kairi went for her sterilisation surgery just a few months back and before I went to pick Kairi up from the vet, I reminded Carissa not more than twice to avoid touching Kairi when she's home as she'd be in a lot of pain. I didn't know if Carissa

understood, but I was pleasantly surprised when I brought Kairi home and Carissa really didn't touch her! She just kept telling me, "Kairi see doctor. Kairi pain pain." The next day, she asked me if she could touch Kairi and when I said yes, she was so gentle with her!

**Do you plan on getting more pets?**

Definitely! In fact, I'm already planning to get Carissa a pet of her own when she's older. Some time back, I told her that I'd get her a guinea pig when she's older and she replied with: "Thank you, Mummy!"

**Please share three tips on how to successfully run a household with both babies and pets.**

1. Always supervise your furkid and baby when they're playing together.
2. Involve your pets in your day-to-day activities with your kids as much as possible, and vice versa. Your kids will learn a sense of responsibility and your pets won't feel like they're being neglected.
3. Be a good role model to your kids.

Always treat your pets the way you want your kids to treat them—with gentleness, love, and respect. ♡





# beating the odds

**Despite losing his nose and upper jaw to cancer, 15-year-old Goldie, Jam, continues to be the spirited, charming gentleman he's always been.**

BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA

**I**t's no doubt startling to see a dog without a nose. But look past his appearance and you'd never know Jam had cancer. The 15-year-old Golden Retriever still behaves like a young pup—he playfully sneaks up on his paw-rent Unisa Chu, 42, an office manager, as she's getting into her car; and makes puppy eyes to score treats. Seeing how spirited he is, who would have thought that just eight months ago, the Goldie was given three to six months to live?

## SWEET BEGINNINGS

When Unisa first brought Jam home in 2003, he was everything she had hoped for in a furkid—and more. He had such a sweet demeanour that Unisa decided to name him after something sweet.

When fellow Goldie, Bacon, joined the pack 13 years ago, Jam welcomed him with

open paws and nary a hint of jealousy. “Jam is the easiest dog anyone could have. He has always showered me with love and sleeps beside me when I’m working at home. He also waits patiently for treats without being demanding,” shares Unisa. To her, this loving Goldie fur-mily was all she could ask for.

## CANCER STRIKES

Last year, Unisa noticed some anomalies in Jam while taking photos of him. One of his nostrils was a bit larger than the other, and was slightly discoloured. The Goldie also seemed to be suffering from a recurring runny nose, frequent nosebleeds, and developed inordinately loud snoring. Unisa felt something was amiss and brought him to the vet last July. She was crushed when Jam was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma—a type of skin

cancer. Cancer cells were also found in the pooch's lymph nodes later on.

It was very difficult for Unisa to accept Jam's diagnosis initially. It wasn't obvious that the senior Goldie was sick because he didn't behave any differently. She couldn't believe that her cheerful, affectionate pooch had cancer.

Jam's vet gave him a gloomy prognosis: The pup had three to six months to live. In desperation, Unisa took time off work to bring her beloved furkid to seven different vets and veterinary cancer specialists for more opinions and treatment options, spending over \$20,000 in the process. To her, this wasn't sacrifice—it was something she had to do. Eventually, treatment options came down to either immunotherapy using natural killer cells, or a nosectomy (amputation of the nose).

Unisa spent quite some time convincing her family members that a nosectomy was Jam's best shot at beating the cancer. Even on the day of surgery, she had friends telling her not to go ahead with it. "I had people advising me to put him down, and another vet suggested palliative treatment considering his old age. It made me furious. I don't think they understood how much Jam meant to me. Giving up on him was never an option," she says.

Giving Jam the best quality of life was Unisa's main priority, and a nosectomy offered a complete removal of the cancer cells. Hence, her mind was made up—she and her family were going to battle the cancer alongside Jam.

### STAR GOLDIE

Despite opting for surgery, choosing a nosectomy was one of the hardest decisions Unisa ever had to make. "When Jam walked out by himself to the clinic reception area after surgery, the shock of seeing him was real. His features had changed drastically and although I had tried to mentally prepare for it, it was still traumatising," admits Unisa.

A true fighter, Jam showed little indication of his illness. Even on the day of his nosectomy, the Goldie was extremely calm. It was only during the early stages of recovery that he didn't like the surgical

site being touched because it was sore.

The wound was very raw post-surgery; it took two weeks to heal superficially and another two months for the fur to grow over the surgical site. Although his nasal bones have been removed, Jam is still able to breathe through a hole in whatever remains of his snout. However, sometimes objects get lodged in the hole when he sniffs too vigorously.

Suffering from cancer and having part of his face removed has never dampened Jam's spirits. He's still as playful and greedy as ever. Unisa reckons that Jam doesn't even know he's missing a nose and his upper jaw. "Although Jam is unable to pick up food with his mouth and has to be hand-fed, it seems to have only made him happier. I think Jam is happy as long as there's an endless supply of food!" says Unisa with a laugh.

Being a sensitive and loving breed, it didn't take long for Bacon to realise that his "brother" was unwell. Although Bacon is usually the more demanding of the two Golden Retrievers, he became



Golden combo:  
Jam before surgery  
(left) with Bacon  
(right)

more affectionate to Jam post-surgery. He would gently sniff his cancer-stricken pal and cuddle up to him at bedtime—behaviours he hadn't exhibited previously.

Besides quarterly blood tests and physical check-ups, Jam's vet says that the Goldie doesn't need any special treatment or care in the foreseeable future.

However, Unisa cannot confidently say that her precious pup has recovered for certain. She does optimistically add that Jam's vet is happy with how things are going for the pooch and doesn't think there's anything to worry about at the moment.

### CREATING AWARENESS

If there's one thing Unisa has learnt through Jam's cancer journey, it's that more paw-rents need to know about the prevention and treatment of canine cancer. "A dog's diet is very important. Giving it the right food, knowing its allergies, and regular vet visits are all essential in raising a healthy pup," says Unisa.

She adds: "It's crucial to pay attention to your dog and assess changes in its behaviour, odour and bodily discharge. Dogs tend to hide pain from their owners because they love them too much and don't want to distress them. As paw-rents, it's important to trust your instincts because you know your furkid best."

Although Jam's fight against cancer was a distressing period for Unisa, she's immensely grateful for the support of her followers on Bacon M Jam—a Facebook page she set up for her Goldies. "I'm very touched by the support given by other paw-rents who have gone through a similar ordeal. It gave me the hope and strength to make difficult decisions and carry on," she shares.

But Unisa's biggest cheerleader, ironically, is the furry cancer warrior himself. "I think Jam has given me more emotional support than I could ever give him," she says. "He's still so happy to be around us, even when he was in pain after the surgery. Our family will always love Jam dearly—with or without a nose." ❧



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# a fur-rific approach

**Bubbly Petz isn't just about making your furkid look good. Bright, airy and free of cages, the pet grooming salon places a strong emphasis on the well-being of its furry clients. BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA**



We've seen our fair share of pet grooming joints, so trust us when we say that Bubbly Petz—located at the ground floor unit of a Joo Chiat shophouse—is in a league of its own. While the aesthetics are certainly pleasant (think light wood furnishings and brightly lit spaces), it's what the salon believes in and practises that has us sold.

Founded by Desmond Chan and Maeve Suar, Bubbly Petz was birthed from a need and a heart for animal welfare. Desmond, who holds a degree in business, economics and finance, took up grooming courses after his Shih Tzu, Chocolate, went through a traumatic grooming experience.

With a strong belief that animals deserve better, Desmond and Maeve developed the ethos and interiors of Bubbly Petz with the physical and mental well-being of their furry clientele as their main priority.





## FREEDOM RULES

Besides the absence of cages, other noticeable features about Bubbly Petz include the spacious studio and a massive viewing window next to it. “The studio was designed to enhance communication and transparency. We wanted to create a stress-free, cruelty-free environment, which is why there are no cages to lock up the animals at any time, and no restraints, or grooming loops around their necks,” shares Desmond.



## A CALM WAIT

Furkids that are waiting their turn to be groomed or picked up are never restrained. They are placed in a comfortable air-conditioned room housing an aromatherapy diffuser, a pee pad and magazines. Soothing muzak plays in the background. The room also serves as a waiting space for anxious paw-rents who can view the grooming process through a window between the room and the studio next door.



## QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

To ensure that every pet receives their undivided attention, Desmond and Maeve only see up to 10 clients a day. The salon also allocates separate days for dog and cat grooming. Thursdays and Saturdays are set aside exclusively for felines, while the rest of the week are allocated to poodles.





## LIFELONG LEARNING

With certification from various grooming schools in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, as well as a cat grooming certification from the National Cat Groomers Institute in America, Desmond has effectively equipped himself to cater to canines and felines of all breeds, sizes and ages. He is also Singapore's first internationally certified feline master groomer—no mean feat considering cats are infamously difficult to groom. "Attaining a certification requires a lot of time and hard work, but I enjoy the process of practising and improving my techniques and skills," shares Desmond. In addition to skill certifications, Desmond and his team keep updated on humane, low-stress handling techniques, as well as defensive grooming techniques, so as to enable them to better handle pets of all temperaments—even aggressive ones. †

## ECO-WARRIOR

"We believe that compassion extends to not only our pets, but to all other living creatures as well. Therefore, we strive to lead and inspire a cruelty-free, sustainable lifestyle," says Desmond. Hence, Bubbly Petz sells only cruelty-free, eco-friendly products that are plant-based whenever possible. "A lot of research and effort has gone into ensuring that what we sell at Bubbly Petz is cruelty-free and environmentally friendly," adds Maeve.

*Bubbly Petz is located at 266 Joo Chiat Road. To book an appointment for your furkid call 6348 6872 or 9656 3786, or email [info@bubbly-petz.com](mailto:info@bubbly-petz.com). Appointments have to be made a month in advance. Opening hours: 10am-7pm (Mon, Wed, and Sun); 12pm-9pm (Fri to Sat). Closed on Tue.*





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# making the cut

**Despite vets extolling the virtues of neutering or spaying a pet, many paw-rents think it's an act of cruelty (it's not). Still apprehensive about sterilising your furkid? We help bust the most common myths.** BY GILLIAN LIM

**W**ould you remove your pet's reproductive organs? Paw-rents who choose not to claim that this procedure is not only risky and unnecessary, it will also alter their furkid's personality and bring about a plethora of health issues. However, paw-rents who do sterilise their furkids argue that this routine surgery lengthens the life of their pet and minimises the risk of cancers associated with the reproductive system.

Despite the overwhelming support for sterilisation from vets and governments alike—like Laval, a Canadian city, that rolled out a legislation this year requiring all dogs and cats above six months to be sterilised unless they're exempted by the vet—paw-rents still hesitate to get their furkids spayed or neutered because of misconceptions about the procedure.

We speak to local veterinarians

to get the story straight. Here are the most popular myths and facts about sterilisation—can you tell which are true and which are false?

## ABOUT THE SURGERY

**The surgery will be painful for my pet.**

**Myth.** Your furkid will be put under general anaesthesia for the surgery, so it will be unable to move and won't feel pain or discomfort. "Modern veterinary anaesthesia is considered safe," shares veterinarian Dr Daphne Low from Mount Pleasant Animal Medical Centre (Farrer). "Anaesthesia works by using chemicals that act on the brain to induce a temporary state of enforced unconsciousness. Plus, your pet will be administered with pain relief medication before and after surgery."

**It's dangerous to put my pet under anaesthesia.**

It depends on whether your furkid has

any existing health conditions that might make the surgery riskier. However, anaesthesia risks are minimal for healthy pets. A study conducted in 2008 by British veterinarians, led by Professor David Brodbelt, tracked 98,036 dogs and 79,178 cats that underwent anaesthesia. Results showed that the mortality rate was only 0.05 percent for healthy dogs and 0.11 percent for healthy cats.

“General anaesthetic risk is relatively small these days, as anaesthetic drugs are quite quickly metabolised, which makes them a lot safer to use,” shares Dr Philippa Spellman, the leading veterinary surgeon of Amber Vet. “This is coupled with thorough anaesthesia monitoring by trained veterinary staff, along with monitoring equipment to measure vital signs.”

#### **Surgical complications might happen.**

**Fact.** As with any surgery, it is possible for a variety of complications to occur. “If some ovarian tissue is left in, there’s a possibility of ‘stump pyometra’, which means the stump of the leftover uterine tissue becomes infected with pus due to the continual production of female hormones,” says Dr Low. “However, surgical complications are usually minimal,” adds veterinarian Dr June Tan from Frankel Veterinary Centre. A few examples include seroma, which is the swelling of the incision site due to an adverse suture reaction, and hemorrhaging due to the suture slipping.

#### **My pet is too old to be sterilised.**

**Myth.** While the anaesthetic risk does increase with age, sterilisation can still be performed for older animals, especially if they are healthy. “It is not so much the age, but rather the health status of the pet,” says Dr Low. “As with any surgical procedure, a thorough physical examination, medical history and blood tests will be done to ensure the animal is fit to undergo anaesthesia.” Dr Tan agrees: “As long as the pet’s vitals are normal and monitored closely during surgery, sterilisation can still be performed on older patients, especially so if they’re suffering from



diseases like prostatitis or prostate enlargement in male dogs and pyometra in female dogs or cats.” Traditionally, vets recommend pets to be sterilised when they’re at least six months old—that’s when most of them reach puberty. If you’re unsure whether your pooch is healthy enough to undergo anaesthesia, speak with your veterinarian and request for blood work.

#### **Sterilisation is too expensive.**

**Myth.** The cost of spaying or neutering is based on a few factors: gender, size, your veterinarian’s fees, and other variables, such as whether your female pet is in heat or if your male furkid has undescended testicles. While local clinics charge anywhere between \$50 and \$500 for the surgery, it is a relatively small fee if you consider that it’s a one-time surgery that brings about many health benefits throughout your dog’s lifetime, such as the reduced risk of reproductive cancers.

## **HEALTH ISSUES**

#### **It doesn’t do anything for my pet’s health.**

**Myth.** By neutering or spaying your pet, you’re eliminating the possibility of developing diseases related to its reproductive system, such as pyometra (uterus cancer), mammary or ovarian cancer, and greatly reducing the chances of breast cancer, as well as other genital and hormone-related diseases.

#### **My pet will gain weight because of it.**

**Myth.** While it is true that your pet’s

metabolic rate might decrease after sterilisation, surgery alone will not cause it to gain weight. “This will only happen if the owner is unaware that his pet has a lower metabolic rate post-sterilisation and continues to feed it the same amount of calories,” says Dr Tan. “Any weight gain can be reversed by controlling your pet’s diet and regular exercise.”

**It’s better for my dog to have one litter before I spay her.**

**Myth.** “Spaying your female pup before her first or second heat—before she turns a year old—offers the best protection from diseases such as ovarian cysts, uterine tumours, mammary tumours and pyometra,” says Dr Low.

**I have only one pet, so if I leave it unsterilised, the health risks will be lesser.**

**Myth.** Your pet will still face the same risk of developing diseases related to its reproductive system. If you’re worried about unwanted puppies or kittens, that possibility will always be there unless you sterilise your pet. “Even if your animal is the only pet in the household, there may be occasions where it may need to interact with other unsterilised animals,” shares Dr Low. “That leads to a chance of unplanned mating or other undesirable social behaviour towards other animals or humans.”

## BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

**My pet’s personality will change.**

**Myth.** Removing its reproductive organs will reduce its energy requirements, and the removal of testosterone in male dogs will cause it to be tamer, but that doesn’t mean that its personality will change. “Many people believe that sterilising their pet will help it calm down and be better-behaved,” says Dr Spellman. “Unfortunately, behaviour is more a result of how the pet is trained, and what and how it’s been exposed to its environment in the first few months of its life.”

**My pet will miss his/her reproductive parts.**

**Myth.** Your pet probably won’t even realise that his or her reproductive organs

have been removed. “This is just another common example of human emotions being incorrectly attributed to our pets,” says Dr Tan. “They don’t feel depressed about it, not like humans. Animals tend to go about their doggy business just the same as always, even post-sterilisation.”

## BREEDING

**Show dogs can’t be sterilised.**

**Fact.** But only for conformation events. “The original purpose of dog shows was to exhibit and evaluate dogs that would be used for breeding purposes and gain championship titles,” shares Dr Low. However, the American Kennel Club stipulates that sterilised pets can still participate in events such as obedience, rally, junior handling and herding.

**My pet is so special. I want to breed him/her so I’ll have a puppy just like him/her!**

**Myth.** Your furkid’s litter will have a very slim chance of being an exact copy of it. Even professional breeders cannot guarantee that a litter will inherit a particular characteristic.

**My dog has such good genes. I want to pass it on.**

**Myth.** Being descended from a show pet lineage does not guarantee the health and quality of your pet. In fact, pedigree and show dogs can still develop undesirable congenital traits. “Genetic disorders can still surface in future generations, especially if both parents have recessive genes,” says Dr Low. ❌



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# agility for all pups

**Dog agility is no longer just a competitive sport for selected breeds. Even your pint-sized pooch can benefit from it! Here are some reasons why you and your pup should take the leap.**

**BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA**

**I**f dog agility evokes images of a Border Collie leaping through hoops and speeding up ramps under the watchful eyes of an audience, it's time to turn that notion on its head. While it's true that dog agility originated as a timed competitive sport where dogs and handlers navigated an obstacle course that required well-trained canine competitors to jump, sprint and weave, an increasing number of paw-rents are participating in the sport as a recreational activity. Here are some reasons why you should hop on board the dog agility bandwagon.

## **BUILD A BOND**

Dog agility relies on the trust and communication between paw-rent and furkid. Urging a dog from one end of the course to the other without the use of treats or rewards, dog agility deepens the connection between handler and pooch. The dog has to learn to listen to its handler's verbal cues or observe hand gestures, and act upon it. "The owner must trust his dog and the dog must

learn to read its owner's signals and body language," says Jazz Ng, chief trainer at APawz Dogsports Academy. At the same time, paw-rents can learn their pup's strengths and weaknesses. Working together to overcome obstacles will naturally foster a closer bond.

## **ALL DOG BREEDS CAN PARTICIPATE**

The sport doesn't discriminate against any dog breed. While Border Collies and Shetland Sheepdogs are some of the more common breeds that participate in dog agility, Ween Sze Teoh—a member of the Singapore Kennel Club's dog sports committee, secretary of the Clean Run Agility Club in Singapore, and trainer with SuperNova Dog Sports Academy—says that she has seen Poodles, Toy Poodles, Miniature Schnauzers, Mauzers, Cavoodles, Labradoodles and Singapore Specials in agility trials. Of course, it is important that your pup isn't pushed to its limit as it may get injured. "The nature of a dog's physical body must be taken into



account. For example, heights of obstacles may be lowered for breeds like Pugs, or dogs that have hip dysplasia,” says Ween Sze. An obstacle course can be tailored to suit the needs of each dog.

### AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

There are no limitations on the age of the dogs, but Jazz recommends that the minimum age of the pup be between 10 and 12 months old so that their growth plates are already fused. Obstacles can be removed to suit the dog according to age and needs. Ween Sze adds that old dogs can participate too. Jumping obstacles can be lowered for them so that they can hop over easily without hurting themselves. With age comes a plethora of ailments, so it's best to bring Fido to the vet for a check-up before proceeding. Older dogs also tend to have some difficulty hearing, hence, handlers might have to work more on using their body language to signal their dogs instead of using verbal cues.

### EXERCISE BUDDIES

Dog agility provides an excellent workout for both paw-rent and pooch. Running to each obstacle and jumping through tyres and over hurdles help Fido to build muscle tone and core muscles. Meanwhile, walking up the A-Frame, dogwalk (balance beam) and teeter (seesaw) boost endurance and balance. Obstacles like the tunnel and chute build a dog's confidence as it has to go through a confined space quickly. Psychologically, dog agility trains canines to listen to their handlers and focus on their body language when navigating the course. Paw-rents also benefit physically and mentally, as handlers need to understand the course, map out the best route for their pups, and run with and do twists and turns alongside their pooches.

### UNDERSTAND THE COURSE

Here are three key obstacles in an agility course and how they benefit your pooch:

#### 1. THE WEAVE

**What it is:** Comprises six to 12 poles that are placed in a straight line 0.5 to 0.6m apart. The dog has to weave through the

poles without knocking down any.

**Physical benefit:** Strengthens the heart and lungs of the canine.

**Mental benefit:** Improves Fido's coordination and alertness, as it has to run between the poles at a great speed.

#### 2. THE HURDLE

**What it is:** A bar is placed between two upright fixtures and the dog has to jump over it. Ranging from 1.2 to 8m in height, the bar can be adjusted to suit the size of the dog. The dog has to be able to jump over the bar without knocking it over.

**Physical benefit:** Strengthens leg and core muscles. The stronger Fido's muscles, the easier it is for him to leap over the bar and land safely.

**Mental benefit:** Increases concentration and builds confidence in pups that are apprehensive of crossing over objects.

#### 3. THE DOGWALK

**What it is:** Also known as the balance beam, a dogwalk is made up of three 0.2 to 0.3m-wide planks (connected end to end) supported by two 1.2m raised supports.

The dog has to go up one plank, cross a thin platform, and then descend. The dog has to touch the tip of the descending plank in order to pass the obstacle.

**Physical benefit:** Improves the balance and nimbleness of the pooch.

**Mental benefit:** Builds confidence, trust, bravery and alertness in your furkid, as he has to manoeuvre a thin, elevated platform with only your commands as encouragement. ★



# Always be my baby

by Gillian Lim



## Newborn babe

Although Bobby is six years old, I think of him as a baby, I mean puppy. He was an ex-breeding dog, so he spent almost his entire life cooped up in a cage. I knew that a domestic life was new to Bobby, but it never occurred to me that I would have to teach my pup what a bed or leash was, or that toys, the human touch, and kindness were things he didn't have to be afraid of. I believed he was fragile, impressionable and needed our constant surveillance and guidance, so I set out to be the most nurturing paw-rent I could possibly be. I literally hovered over him while he devoured his kibble because I wanted to make sure he was eating (that clearly

wasn't the issue); I spent half an hour every night petting him to sleep; and I manually moved his paws when he was afraid to go for walks.

Going to work was a terrifying experience because the Bobster would be all alone at home. What if he gnawed on our dining chairs or shredded the couch? Did he know that his water bowl was right beside him? Did he know he was in a safe space now? I remember cancelling all my appointments for the first two weeks after we brought Bobby home, so I could spend time with him. On the rare occasion that I brought him out for a playdate and he was out of my line of sight for a minute, I'd ask

It's been 10 months since Bobby the Pug joined the family, and yes, paw-renthood is as glorious as the Internet paints it out to be. The minute I come home, Bobby dashes as fast as his stubby legs can take him to greet me with slobbery kisses. Our previously quiet home is now filled with happy snorting and the telltale pitter-patter of his paws as he scouts each room. There's zero privacy now because the fatty needs to know where we are at all times—and he's so adorable we just let him. There's just one thing that the Internet left out: The overwhelming anxiety that comes with being a new paw-rent.

ILLUSTRATION: JERRY KING

in a panic: "Where is my dog?"

After three peaceful, uneventful months passed, I eased myself into paw-renthood. That's when catastrophe struck.

## *The choking incident*

Last November, I received a WhatsApp message from my brother who was on Bobby duty that evening: "Next time when we're feeding Bobby, we need to be present and we need to feed him in small portions."

As usual, our greedy Pug wolfed down dinner at lightning speed the minute my brother put his food bowl on the floor. To us, this was a normal occurrence. He had choked on a handful of kibble here and there, but it was nothing he couldn't regurgitate. As my brother stood up to walk away, Bobby's entire body suddenly stiffened and toppled to the side with his legs awkwardly sticking out. He wasn't breathing or coughing, and that's when my brother dove in to do the Heimlich manoeuvre on our dog. After a furious round of tugging, Bobby let out a tiny gasp of air, vomited a huge chunk of dry food all over his feet, sat there quietly and quietly licked his face.

I immediately bought a slow feeder for Bobby, but it was an epic fail. In his desperate attempts to stuff his face with food, he ended up inhaling the kibble instead. We tossed out the feeder. Now, we soak his kibble or feed him small portion by small portion—of course with someone hovering over him throughout his entire mealtime.

## *The onion episode*

You'd have thought that three months after the choking incident, we'd have learnt our lesson and kept anything edible out of Bobby's reach, but we conveniently forgot about a basket of onions, garlic and chives on our kitchen floor.

I had gone for a short trip to Malaysia with my mum to visit our relatives, so Bobby was left in the care of my dad and my brother. While I was playing a rowdy game of mahjong, I saw my phone light up with a text message from Dad: "Bobby snuck into the kitchen and ate almost a

whole onion." Onions can purportedly cause a dog's red blood cells to rupture, which may result in anaemia and possible organ failure. I started freaking out. Being miles away from home didn't help.

Despite my dad's insistence that Bobster looked fine, I ordered my brother to bring him to the vet right away. "Bring the onion along so the vet knows how much he ate," I commanded. An hour later, my brother was reporting to us live from the vet clinic. The clinic was packed, but once the vet took a look at the onion, Bobby got to skip the long queue and had vomiting induced to purge the toxins. After the ordeal, my brother sent us a photo of the fatty happily walking out of the clinic, tongue out and tail wagging.

Knowing that these near-death accidents happened when I wasn't home, I am inclined to believe that I am Bobby's good luck charm. Needless to say, our kitchen's had a makeover since to ensure anything vaguely edible is out of Bobby's reach.

## *Let it go*

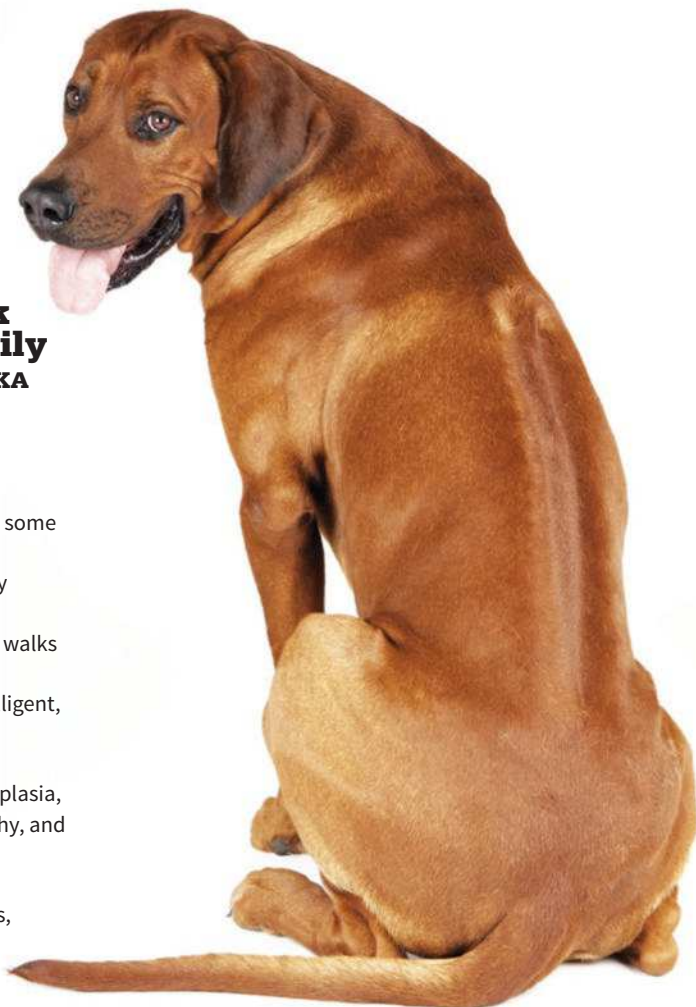
For the longest time, my co-workers had been asking me to bring Bobby to the office. But I was anxious. "Bobby is still very scared of unfamiliar places and loud sounds," I said. When I finally brought the little guy to work, I couldn't help feeling like a Mum sending her little one off to school for the first time. I shadowed him around the office so he didn't feel afraid, and I made him sit in a chair beside me when I couldn't keep an eye on him. I even half-joked that I should put a bell on Bobby's collar so I'd know where he was every single moment of the day. Despite my paranoia, my colleagues assured me that my worries were unfounded. "He's so curious and confident. You're such a helicopter paw-rent," a colleague teased. That set me thinking: "Was this all in my head? Look at the fatty taking a nap in the sun. Maybe the anxiety was really unwarranted. Maybe I should take a chill pill...or maybe I should get a CCTV to spy on Bobby while I'm at work." After all, no matter how old he gets, my first furkid will always be my baby. 🐾

# dino dog

**Originally bred to take down lions, the Rhodesian Ridgeback is now a popular family dog.** BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA

## FAST FACTS

- **Size** Large; 32 to 29kg.
- **Colours** Light wheaten to red wheaten; some have a black muzzle, ears and eyes.
- **Grooming frequency** Moderate; weekly brushing of fur.
- **Exercise** High energy level; needs daily walks of at least 30 minutes.
- **Temperament** Loyal, quiet, highly intelligent, playful, and protective.
- **Lifespan** 10 to 12 years.
- **Health issues** Elbow dysplasia, hip dysplasia, dermoid sinus, degenerative myelopathy, and bloating.
- **Suitable for First-time owners** No.
- **Suitable for families with children** Yes, but only with older children.
- **Suitable alone** Yes.



**n**o, it's not a dinosaur. It's the Rhodesian Ridgeback. Previously referred to as the African Lion Hound, this dog can be identified by the signature "ridge" on its spine. The ridge is formed from two whorls that grow against each other, making the hair protrude like a fin on the spine of the canine.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback was initially bred by Boer farmers in South Africa who needed a dog that could withstand the extreme African temperatures and terrain, survive with little water, protect land and be a guardian to the family. These dogs were also used to keep lions at bay in the African Plains.

By crossing canines from Europe like

the Great Dane, Mastiff, Greyhound and Bloodhound with a half-wild dog kept by the pastoral Khoikhoi people, the farmers created the Rhodesian Ridgeback—a breed with a distinctive ridge down its spine, starting from behind its shoulders and running all the way between the rise of its hips.

Although initially bred to be a hunting hound, these pooches rarely bark. They will, however, if they sense a potential threat. They are fiercely loyal and protective of their families, and love affection. They tend to be wary of strangers and will even put themselves between their paw-rent and the unknown person to protect them.

These pooches are also very

independent and intelligent. Therefore, they need toys that will help to stimulate their minds. Because of their hunting roots, they have a high prey drive, meaning that they are likely to give chase to small animals or strays. However, these pups do very well with other dogs and cats that they are socialised with.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback loves to run and play, and needs at least half an hour of daily exercise to keep it mentally stimulated and healthy. This breed is generally healthy, but it's essential that they come from a reputable breeder who breeds dogs above the age of two. Rhodesian Ridgebacks are susceptible to elbow dysplasia, hip dysplasia, dermoid sinus, bloating and in rare cases, degenerative myelopathy. They are known counter surfers and will eat anything edible in sight, so food has to be kept out of reach or they may become susceptible to obesity.

Their fur is short, shiny and odour-free. However, their nails need to be trimmed regularly and their teeth brushed at least once a week.

While this is a beautiful dog, they are unsuitable for first-time or timid owners and families with toddlers. 🐾

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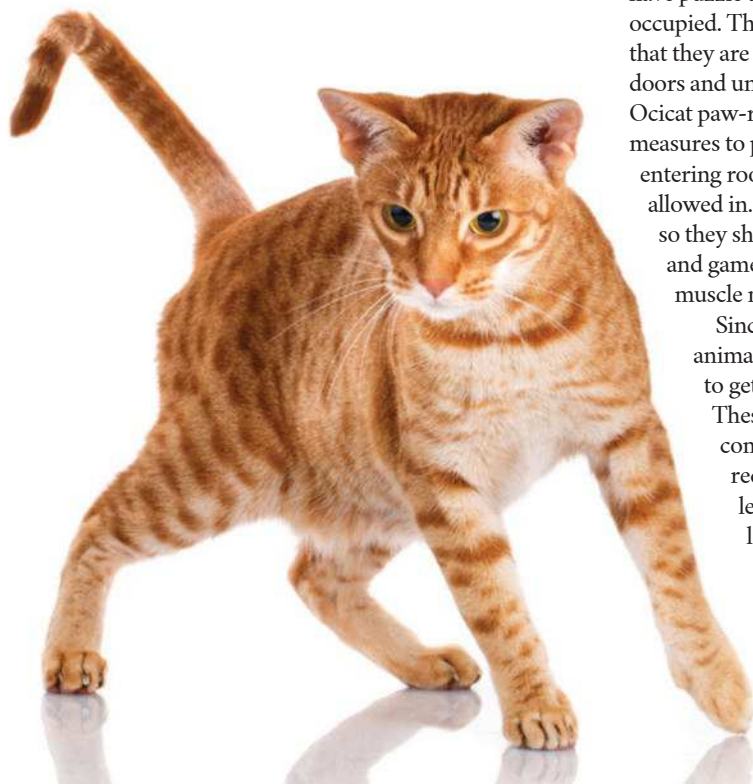
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# not so wild

**The Ocicat may sport a Cheetah-esque coat, but this sweet kitty is a lovely, domesticated feline that enjoys the company of humans.** BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA

## FAST FACTS

- **Size** Medium; 3 to 15kg.
- **Colours** Blue, chocolate, cinnamon, fawn, and silver.
- **Grooming frequency** Moderate; weekly brushing of fur and teeth, and trimming of nails.
- **Exercise** High energy levels; can be taken for walks. Brain-stimulating toys should be given.
- **Temperament** Highly intelligent, playful, sociable, loyal, affectionate, and curious.
- **Lifespan** 10 to 15 years.
- **Health issues** Progressive retinal atrophy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, renal or liver amyloidosis, and early periodontal disease.
- **Suitable for First-time owners** Yes.
- **Suitable for families with children** Yes.
- **Suitable alone** No.



**C**ontrary to its appearance, Ocicats aren't as wild as they look. Surprisingly domestic, this cat breaks the stereotypes associated with most felines—it enjoys swimming and going for walks! The Ocicat was accidentally bred in 1964 by Virginia Daly who intended to mate her Abyssinian with her Siamese cat to create an Abypoint Siamese. The result was a kitten that looked a lot like the small South American wild felid, the Ocelot. Tonga, the first Ocicat, was eventually neutered and sold as a pet.

Though most Ocicats are spotted, they also come in various patterns such as ticked, classic tabby, solid, and pointed. These cats also have an agouti coat, which means that each strand of hair is colourful with the exception of the tail.

Ocicats look wild in appearance, but possess a dog's personality. Some of their favourite activities include retrieving toys and walking on a leash, which are very canine-like traits. Additionally, Ocicats are deeply loyal to their owners and extremely friendly. They love to follow their paw-rents around and don't mind being carried. Should there be a guest in its owner's home, this kitty will gladly walk up to ask for pets and cuddles!

Intelligent and active, Ocicats should have puzzle toys to keep their minds occupied. These felines are so intelligent that they are perfectly capable of opening doors and undoing latches. Therefore, Ocicat paw-rents have to take extra measures to prevent their furkids from entering rooms or areas they're not allowed in. Ocicats are also very muscular, so they should be kept active with walks and games that will help maintain their muscle mass.

Since Ocicats are highly sociable animals, it would be a good idea to get two of them together. These kitties crave attention and communication, and so would require a companion. As natural leaders, they may even become leaders of the pack, with even dogs following their lead.

This feline breed is generally healthy, but has

the potential to develop physical problems that stem mostly from its parent breeds—Abyssinian and Siamese. Some Ocicats have been known to suffer from progressive retinal atrophy, which leads to blindness. Ocicats can also suffer from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which is a common heart disease in cats. Diseases they may inherit from their parent breeds include renal or liver amyloidosis and early periodontal disease. Therefore, it is important to brush this kitty's teeth frequently (at least once a week). Since this breed is muscular, it's not prone to obesity.

The Ocicat has a short and smooth coat, so grooming is relatively fuss-free. It usually needs to be brushed just once weekly. Giving baths to this cat shouldn't be a problem either because unlike most cats, this kitty loves water! Ocicats are great pets for first-time owners and for families with children. As this feline is very loving and not at all ferocious, it'll get along with anyone in the family. The breed also adapts well to different environments, making it a great furkid for anyone who frequently moves. ♣

## OUR PICKS



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This treat ball is a great way to stimulate Puss mentally and physically. Simply fill the ball with your kitty's favourite treats and adjust the difficulty to a suitable level. A more challenging level helps to hone your cat's problem-solving skills. Available at [kohepets.com](http://kohepets.com).



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# tiny and talkative

**Found on the slopes of the Andes Mountains, these tiny critters love to "talk" to their paw-rents and fellow Degus.**

**BY CHRISTIANN PRIYANKA**

## FAST FACTS

- **Size** Small; 170 to 300g.
- **Colours** Yellowish brown with a pale yellow spot above and below each eye, and a black-tipped tail.
- **Grooming frequency** Low; provide a dust bath.
- **Exercise** Active; needs exercise outside of the cage as well.
- **Lifespan** 6 to 9 years.
- **Health issues** Diabetes, cataracts, overgrown teeth, and diarrhoea.
- **Suitable for first time owners** No.
- **Suitable for families with children** No.
- **Suitable alone** Yes.



**S**mall, adorable and fluffy, Degus are one of four species of rat-like South American rodents found primarily in the lower western slopes of the Andes Mountains. They are one of the most common mammals found in Central Chile. Its name derives from the language indigenous to Chile, Mapudungun.

Unlike most rodents, Degus are diurnal. They are active during the day, especially in the mornings and late afternoons. These rodents are extremely intelligent and can adapt to different sleeping patterns. Degus have outstanding vision and can even see ultraviolet light.

Degus form close bonds with their owners, especially when handled daily. They need to be rewarded with treats during handling, so they don't nip their owners. These critters can recognise their paw-rents and others of their kind by sight and sound, and will even stand up to greet

them upon recognition. These lovable pets are even known to groom their paw-rents to show their affection. They also love to be stroked.

Communicating using up to 15 unique sounds, Degus chatter, squeak and make warbling noises—depending on their mood—to tell each other and their paw-rents how they are feeling.

While this critter has an adorable tuft of fur at the end of its tail, it is not just for aesthetic purposes. When feeling threatened in the wild, a Degu will drop the fur on its tails in order to distract predators. Although this phenomenon is interesting, it is painful for the animal, as it will chew the end of its tail in order to prevent any sort of infection. Hence, it is important not to lift this rodent by the tail, as it could cause distress. It also needs to be held close to its handler's body because it dislikes having its legs dangle.

With continuously growing teeth, it



is important to provide Degus with chews so they can constantly gnaw on something. Since they like to chew, it is recommended that they be housed in metal or secure enclosures. Otherwise, they might chew their way out.

As Degus are sensitive to dietary sugars, they may develop diabetes. They may also suffer from cataracts, diarrhoea, and overgrown or impacted teeth.

A highly active creature, it is recommended that your Degu has some supervised exercise outside of its cage. In terms of diet, this critter is strictly herbivore. Avoid fresh fruits, as they contain too much sugar.

While Degus are adorable and fun to keep as pets, they are not recommended for anyone under 16 years of age as they are not easy critters to care for. It is also important to note that Degus are considered to be exotic pets, and while Singapore has limitations on such pets, Degus are not found on this list. Regardless, it is crucial that you check with the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore before adopting one. 🐾

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### LIVING WORLD NIBBLERS WOOD CHEWS KIWIFRUIT STICKS

Overgrown teeth can cause discomfort and pain in your Degu, so provide him with these natural kiwi fruit branches to gnaw on. Available at [nekojam.com](http://nekojam.com).



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## wild things

**I have two eight-month-old mongrel brothers. They are both very destructive and impossible to control! They rip our shoes into pieces, chew on the teak legs of our dining table, and dig up the garden. They even bit and dug a huge hole in my sofa. I'm desperate as I'm unable to manage them. What should I do?**

**P**uppies are always innocent, especially considering how small and cute they are in the beginning. But as they grow bigger, teething kicks in. When this happens, they find the urge to ease the discomfort by chewing on things. However, if they're not given the appropriate toys to chew on, they will find their own. Sadly, it always ends up being your household furniture. If this issue is not nipped in the bud early, it evolves into a permanent bad habit. Even when teething is over, your dog will find joy in chewing up anything he can set his mouth on.

To prevent and stop this bad habit, you will need to start better managing your home. You will have to stop giving complete freedom to your dogs. If you are unable to watch them, they need to stay in a confined area such as a room, playpen, or crate. While in their confined areas, they must be given things to do. Puzzle dog toys, dog chews, and other types of toys should be given so they do not get bored. When you decide to let them out to

play, you must monitor them at all times. Give them useful toys even when they are outside. These bad habits are caused by boredom. If they have something better to do, they will not need to find something to occupy themselves with, such as destroying the beautiful teak legs of your dining table.

Another thing that contributes towards your current predicament is littermate syndrome. By adopting two puppies at the same time, they tend to bond very well with each other and basically ignore everything or everyone else, including you. They do everything together and it is very hard to get their attention. With the confinement approach, you will have to separate them if you want them to listen to you. They will have to be fed, walked, played with, and trained separately.



**EXPERT: MAUREEN TAY**  
Certified professional Dog Trainer –  
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## pee-s help

**My two-year-old Maltese recently wet her bed in her sleep. She's completely housetrained and even did her potty before bedtime. There was no blood in her urine, but she's never lost control of her bladder like this before—especially not in her bed and not in such huge amounts. Could this be a urinary tract infection and if so, what other signs should I look out for?**

**T**ypically, the signs of a urinary tract infection include frequent urination but in small amounts; sometimes straining to urinate; and/or urinating with blood.

As there was no blood in her urine and this is the first time she's wet her bed to this extent, there might be other reasons behind her incontinence. These include a weak urethral sphincter (for spayed or desexed female pooches), congenital causes like ectopic ureters in younger dogs, weak bladders and short urethras that might occur in some female dogs.

It would be helpful to get more information on the dog, such as whether she's lost control of her bladder previously—no matter how small the amount—and whether she was awake or asleep when it happened. For example, if she was sound asleep, it might be due to a condition called urethral sphincter mechanism incompetence (USMI). I would normally recommend an examination of the dog and at least a urinary analysis as

part of the process for investigation of urinary incontinence.

There are several treatments for this condition. Firstly, you can give your dog medical support by hormonal supplementation if the cause of the urinary incontinence is muscle weakness. Depending on the type of ectopic ureters (whether it's within or beyond the bladder wall), you can consider sending your dog for surgery or minimally invasive endoscopic laser ablation. For furkids that have weak bladders or short urethras, it might be more challenging due to conformation problems. As for USMI, there are surgical options, such as operating on the urethra or urethral collagen bulking, which is a minimally invasive endoscopic procedure.



**EXPERT: DR DAN MARINCAS**  
DVM, NZNVE,  
GP(Endo), PG SAAE  
Doctors Beck and Stone

# seeing red

**Whenever my cat gets stressed, she has bloody poop. The blood is bright red and sometimes there's a jelly-like mucus. No bacteria or parasites were found in her poop sample. The vet says the stress makes her bowels irritated. What can I do to help her cope or ease her bowels?**



If there is bright red blood in the poop, it indicates that there is bleeding in the gastrointestinal tract, which comprises of the food gullet, stomach, small intestines and large intestines—with the latter lying closest to the anus. Hence, bright red blood in your cat's stool indicates that the problem is in the large intestines.

A jelly-like mucus may be produced when the large intestines suffer from an inflammatory process or infection. When you see this in the poop, it further confirms that there is an issue in the large intestines.

If bacteria and parasites have been excluded, stress may have induced excessive production of gastric juices, which led to an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. If severe, ulcers may form, leading to chronic bleeding and perforation of the gut, which can be

fatal.

Your feline can be placed on a bland, easily digestible diet that is minimally irritating to the stomach and intestines. You may also consider hypoallergenic prescription diets available at any veterinary clinic. Medication to protect the stomach and intestines, as well as to reduce gastric acids, can be given.

When strangers come to visit, introductions and contact should be made gradually and without force. Provide a safe place for your furkid to hide if she wishes to.



**EXPERT: DR TAI YESUN**

BVSc (Sydney), MVS (Murdoch)  
MRCVS CVA GDBA  
Veterinary Surgeon  
Certified Veterinary Acupuncturist  
Nam Sang Veterinary Clinic

**I**t is best to find out how the crack happened because chipped teeth can be a serious condition that could lead to pain and infection. Do look around her cage and accessories inside the cage. Look out for excessive biting and chewing of the cage bars, litter trays, food bowls or any toys that are not rabbit-safe. Remove any suspicious items.

Also, avoid fruits or treats that are high in sugar, such as bananas. The sugars are not good for your bun's digestive tract and can result in disturbances in gut function. In addition, bananas are high in potassium, which can cause further complication to its kidney and muscle functions.

Chipped teeth can lead to pain as your rabbit bites and chews on her food. Although they may not show it, rabbits are very sensitive to pain, which may result in discomfort, reluctance to eat and consequently, abnormal defecation and worse, gut stasis. It is, unfortunately, not safe to file the teeth by yourself at home, so please consult your vet immediately. It is especially urgent because you also mentioned that there is a speck of brown

at the crack of each tooth. This may indicate dried blood, residual food or even possible infection that is tracking along the nerve and blood vessel of each tooth. Such infection can lead to dangerous tooth root infection that can result in abscess and bone infection.

The vet will give your bun a complete dental examination that may include a illuminated scope that goes into your rabbit's mouth to survey the teeth. This can be done without sedation. However, if there is suspicion of infection that involves the tooth roots, then sedation or general anaesthesia will be required. Dental and skull x-rays may also be performed to check the integrity of the dental roots, dental sockets and the bone around it. Your vet may also perform dental filing and reconstructive repair work to correct the uneven dental crowns. Antibiotics and pain relief are often prescribed to prevent infection and further discomfort.



**EXPERT: DR GRACE HENG**  
Veterinary Surgeon B. V (Sydney)  
Resident Veterinarian at The Joyous Vet



## teeth peeve

**My bunny was licking (instead of biting) her bananas recently, so I checked her teeth and realised her top incisors were badly chipped. It looks like there's a speck of brown on the break of each tooth. Surprisingly, she still eats her hay and pellets fine. Is filing teeth at home a viable option, and how serious must her condition get in order to justify a trip to the vet?**

# fighting fits

**My four-year-old Jack Russell Terrier had a seizure a week ago. After passing out and waking up disoriented, she was back to her normal self. It was the first and only time it has happened so far. What could be the possible causes of a seizure in a normally healthy dog, and what should I do when it happens?**

**A** seizure is a neurological disorder that results in uncontrolled muscle activity. There are three parts to a seizure episode:

1. Pre-ictal phase: This is when the animal might have a change of behaviour, as if it knows that something is about to happen. This behaviour may last for seconds to hours and is not easy to spot.
2. Ictal phase: This is the seizure itself, whereby the patient typically falls to the side with a loss of consciousness and his/her muscles contract spastically. The head is usually drawn backwards and urination/defecation normally occurs. Owners often describe this as the patient paddling and swimming on the ground. This phase usually lasts for seconds to approximately five minutes. Some dogs may have prolonged seizures and this is considered dangerous.
3. Post-ictal phase: This comes after the seizure episode. Patients will typically be disoriented, tired and confused.

## Causes of seizures

The most common cause of a seizure is idiopathic epilepsy. Other causes include a possible head injury, ingestion of toxins, or an underlying disease of the internal body organs, such as the liver, kidney, etc.

## Actions to take during a seizure

Always ensure that your pet is in a safe environment when the seizure episode happens. Make sure that its airway isn't

obstructed, and avoid touching your pet as it may inadvertently bite you. Most importantly, stay calm and take note of the incident and duration if possible so your vet has all the information he/she needs. If possible, record a short video for your vet to see.

## After the episode

Contact an emergency clinic to seek advice. A veterinary examination will be necessary to find out why the seizure happened, and management of potential future episodes will be discussed.



**EXPERT: DR CHONG LIP REN**  
BVSc (Sydney)  
Veterinary Surgeon  
Pets Avenue Veterinary Clinic





# natural calm

**My anxious 11-month-old rescue dog goes through rounds of panic and alert barking, and my trainer suggested giving it calming natural remedies like valerian root, Bach flower remedies and catnip extract. What natural remedies are safe to be given to my pooch and which would you recommend?**

**T**raining and behaviour modification or desensitisation is definitely the first choice, as this can produce lasting changes that actively change the dog's response to stressors. But, in some cases, the behaviour does not change, or only partially changes, and there is a need for further treatment. Orthodox medical approaches often use a combination of medications like benzodiazepines to quell anxiety, and may be combined with antidepressant

type medications (serotonin reuptake inhibitors). These can also be used in conjunction, or apart, from newer pheromone treatments like dog-appeasing pheromones, which mimic the scent given off by a female dog to calm her puppies. This product can be used as a spray or as a collar.

There are also several natural approaches to calming a dog. As mentioned, Bach flower remedies, in particular the common combination in Rescue Remedy, can be of great value in some dogs, and can be used specifically in times of stress, or anticipated stress (like a vet visit). There are also several safe herbs that can be used for calming, including skullcap, passion flower, valerian and camomile. These herbs are not fast-acting and will work over a period of days/weeks as a supplement, but using them long-term can negate their efficacy. A dose of 20 to 30mg per day of active herb is adequate. L-Theanine, an amino acid, is also quite useful at 25mg per day. Magnesium, in the form of a chelated (protein bound) mineral supplement is quite effective at calming a hyper-excited nervous system (approximately 5mg of active magnesium per day). Other supplements include gamma amino butyric acid at 25mg per day, and another amino acid, tryptophan (often supplied as 5 hydroxytryptophan), at 10mg per day. Tryptophan is a precursor of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that is important for mental calmness. And finally, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) at 2mg per day.

All of the above are safe to use in dogs, but none should be used for any great length of time, as they should be considered medicine and not nutritional supplements.



**EXPERT: DR BRUCE SYME**  
BVSc(Hons)  
Founder of Vets All Natural P/L



# ear me out

**Every time my Labradoodle gets his ears plucked, he will shake his head non-stop and once, he even got an ear infection. Is this normal? If so, how long will it take for him to stop shaking his head? Meanwhile, do you have any suggestions to ease his discomfort?**

**L**abradoodles have ear hairs growing from the insides of their ear canal. In order to prevent ear infection, it is recommended that excessive ear hair be removed to allow for thorough cleaning and ventilation.

Ear hair plucking is one way of hair removal. When hairs are plucked, the follicles may be left exposed and raw. It could lead to irritation and in some cases, bacterial infections. For most dogs, right after the plucking and cleaning, the skin inside the ears will be slightly red and sensitive, which usually eases within a few days. To ease this discomfort, you can flush your pet's ears with an ear cleaner made with soothing ingredients at least twice a

week. Use a clean cotton pad to swab the excess ear cleaning solution present in the ears after flushing.

For dogs whose ears are highly irritated or even infected after the process, owners can opt to skip the procedure and trim the ear hair with a pair of small round-tipped scissors instead. That way, the follicles in the ears won't get triggered and excess hair can still be removed to promote ventilation and for easy cleaning.

Ideally, ear maintenance should be a weekly affair. Paw-rents can first determine if their dogs have hair growing from inside the ear canals. If they do, it's recommended that you consult your groomer on the most ideal procedure of DIY ear hair removal as it could be a traumatic process if not done properly.

If the dog does not have ear hair growing from the ear canal or already had their excess ear hair removed prior, cleaning would help to maintain ear health and hygiene. Drip a few drops of ear cleaning solution along the side of the ear walls to allow it to flow into the ear canal; it's gentler as compared to putting it directly into the ear canal, and results in a less stressful experience. Before the dog shakes its head in response, massage the base of the ear canals behind the ears to allow wax to break down. Once the dog shakes its head, the dirt will be expelled to the outer sides of the ears which can be cleaned away with cotton pads or buds.



**EXPERT: DESMOND CHAN**

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Principal Pet Groomer of Bubbly Petz

# PETS BREAKFAST & BREED CLUB: POMERANIAN EDITION

**When** 24 February

**Where** Ah B Cafe, 110 Turf Club Road



It was fluff heaven at Ah B Cafe as over 30 feisty Pomeranians and their paw-rents attended our seventh Breakfast & Breed instalment. They gathered for a morning of mingling, tasty grub, educational talks, as well as live cooking and vacuum demos by Bosch Home Appliances. Each attendee received a Ritma Premier goodie bag containing Natural Core organic pet food (worth \$73 each).

The live cooking demo was executed by cooking instructor Chia Wee Loon, who's also known by his Instagram handle, Snowcology. Chia used Bosch's induction stove and oven to whip up a wholesome dog-friendly dish—Brocc-Cau-Nut Salmon—which comprised broccoli puree, cauliflower puree, butternut puree and salmon, which all the pooches greedily devoured!



Paw-rents tucked into the buffet spread of scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, ham and tarts prepared by Ah B Cafe, while furkids chose between freshly cooked salmon & pasta and lamb & pumpkin meat bowls, courtesy of Furry's Kitchen.




During their mealtime, veterinarian Dr Heng Yirui from Amber Vet revealed common health issues faced by Pomeranians, such as skin conditions, luxating patella and collapsing trachea. Next, trainer Maureen Tay from KasPup UniFURSity offered insight on how to handle fussy eaters and tips for conditioning this spunky pooch.

Demonstrating how to clean up after this heavily shedding breed was Joey Piyong, Bosch's marketing communications manager, who conducted a vacuum demo using their cordless handstick Zoo'o ProAnimal vacuum cleaner. Walking away with the title of Best Hair and also the Zoo'o ProAnimal vacuum cleaner (worth \$799) was three-year-old Hachi. "We're really excited about winning this prize because Hachi sheds a

lot, and our room has a lot of fabric so we always need to clean up the fur everywhere,” says his paw-rent, Amanda Lee.

Lucky draw winner Sabrina Soh won a \$100 Serenity Spanish Bar & Restaurant dining voucher. Sabrina shares: “My husband Admond and I really enjoyed today’s event. It’s the first time we’re participating because it’s breed-based, which is why I brought my Pom, Luffy. He totally enjoyed the food because he finished his entire meal within 30 seconds!”

 To check out all the action that went down at the Pomeranian Breakfast & Breed, find us on YouTube @PETSmagazine!



PHOTOS - JESSICA CHAN



## A VALENTINE'S FAIRYTAIL @ CHIJMES

**When** 10 February 2018

**Where** The Lawn, CHIJMES

With a mass pet wedding and exciting agility and obedience workshops conducted by SuperNova Dog Sports Academy, A Valentine's Fairytail @ CHIJMES was a lovely way to celebrate the universal day of love. For hearts that were ready to embrace another family member, there were adoption drives by animal welfare groups Angie's Pets, HOPE Dog Rescue, Love Kuching Project and Uncle Khoe's k9. When night fell, attendees caught a movie under the stars with their loved ones and furkids on The Lawn while enjoying a picnic specially curated by Carnivore Brazilian Churrascaria. It was a truly paw-fect Valentine's Day!



## URBAN ANIMAL FARM

**When** 18 March 2018

**Where** Pasir Ris Elias Community Centre

For the second instalment of the Urban Animal Farm, the organisers partnered with Love Kuching Project and Cat Welfare Society to create a cat welfare educational booth. During a game called 'Scoop the Poop', children were quizzed on cat welfare and received prizes for answering correctly. Deputy Prime Minister and Grassroots Advisor to Pasir Ris West, Teo Chee Hean, also joined in the merriment. The event was spiced up with stage activities such as a pet fashion show, dog obedience workshop, canine massage demonstration and a food temptation trial. Attendees thoroughly enjoyed the animals' hilarious antics, whether it was resisting the delicious treats in the food temptation contest or strutting their stuff during the best dressed contest.

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# paws-perous new year

**Congratulations to these 10 furkids  
and their paw-rents!**

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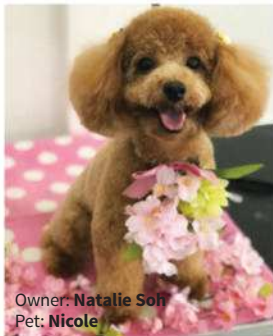
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Pet: Brownie



Owner: Pearly Wong  
Pet: Prada and Pommy

# the furry paw-tector



**Does your furkid have something precious they won't let anyone else touch? Snap a photo of your furkid with his/her favourite plaything, and stand to win a \$49 gift set comprising a gorgeous #PAWRANAKAN bandana and Dogs Dig It Fresh Anchovies Powder with NutriBoost (goji berries and chia seeds), courtesy of Good Dog People.**

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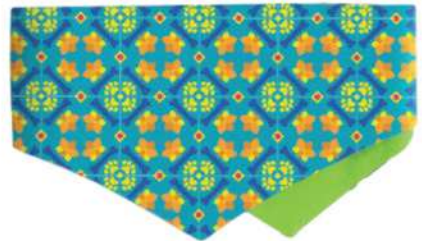
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# A BONE TO PICK



## MAY THESE FOUR BE WITH YOU

We wish these cute critters from  
*Star Wars* were real.



### 1. Porg

With its roundish body and doe-like peepers, the Porg is a sea-dwelling bird that can be found on the island of Ahch-To, where Luke Skywalker exiled himself to before the Battle of Crait. Chewbacca tried to eat one, but couldn't because it was staring at him with big, puppy eyes.

### 2. Vulp

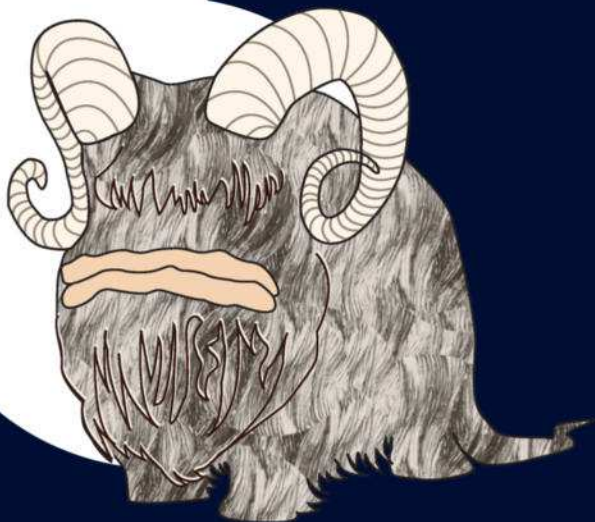
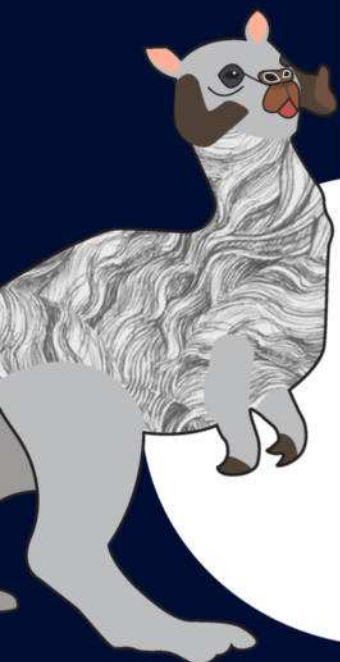
This fox-like creature used to live in burrows beneath the planet of Crait. After the Rebel Alliance left their outpost on Crait, the Vulptices began to roam free. The animal has crystalline fur resulting from a diet of Crait's mineral surface.

### 3. Bantha

Although huge and intimidating at first glance, Banthas are, in fact, peaceful and gentle. These hairy mammals were domesticated and used by the Tusken Raiders as mounts. Their blue-hued milk can be drunk or made into yoghurt, ice cream and butter.

### 4. Tauntaun

The Tauntaun is a non-sentient lizard that's a hybrid of a Llama, Ram and Tyrannosaurus. Found on the snowy plains of Hoth, these creatures were used for patrol duty by the Rebel Alliance. Jabba the Hutt kept a stuffed Tauntaun head in his palace beside a frozen Han Solo. 🐾





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