


WOO-WOO



WOOFERS



The pet wellness industry is taking off in Colorado, where you'll find lots of ways to give your pooch some extra pampering.

by **STEPHANIE WILSON**

I'm sitting at my desk **IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING STRUGGLING TO WRITE THE ANECDOTAL OPENER TO THIS STORY. THERE'S SOFT MUSIC PLAYING, SO SOFT I CAN HEAR GIDGET'S CONTENT SNORES COMING FROM THE PINEAPPLE DOME SHE SLEEPS IN WHEN I'M AT MY DESK.**

If the music were too loud, she would stomp as much as a chihuahua could out to the living room to get in her pressure-activated heated bed, engulfed by the soft white throw blanket I got for me to use. Gidget saw it, she liked it, she wanted it, she got it.

This is the way it works. The nails on my fingertips are past due for a manicure (Gidget got hers done today). My dinner was peanut butter spooned from the jar. Gidget dined on a gourmet blend specially formulated to deliver the exact level of antioxidants, vitamins, fiber, probiotics, and minerals she needs for optimal health. After dinner, she got a bath and a towel massage before tucking into the pineapple. That's when I sat down to start writing.

I work hard so my dog can have a better life. The meme is real.

HOOMANS AND FLOOFERS

I wouldn't have it any other way. Gidget may be a furry freeloader, but she's my furry freeloader and I love her hard. Because she is awesome. All dogs are. Fight me: I'm an elder millennial, and I've got a generational army of pet-pampering 20- and 30-somethings to back me up.

Millennials have been accused of killing a whole host of things*. Really, we're just redirecting our limited discretionary funds to things we deem more worthy than, say, an intrinsically worthless shiny stone that De Beers'

*I typed "millennials killed" into the search bar and autocomplete results included "mayo," "Hooters," "golf," "romance," and "malls." We should be thanked, all of those needed to go—yes, including romance as defined by the patriarchal archetype, but that's a different topic for a different day. We're talking about dogs here.

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marketing firm convinced Americans is a token of love and esteem that lasts forever. (Read: millennials are killing diamonds.)

Millennials *do* spend money on pets. This year, the US pet industry is projected to rake in \$75.28 billion, up more than 30 percent since 2010 according to the American Pet Product Association (APPA). A majority of millennials (76 percent) would be more likely to splurge on luxury items like expensive treats or a custom bed for their pets than for themselves.

"The pet care industry is booming, as people around the world—especially millennials—blur the line between human child and animal," according to *Business Insider*. The senior brand manager of Purina, Ryan Gass, suggests that millennials are putting off marriage and having children, turning to pets to "fill that void" but I don't know what void he's talking about, so we're moving on.

Millennials' love for their pups is so intense, it's spawned its own language. Us *hoomans* chase our *heckin floofers*, iPhones in hand, snapping pics of their *snoots* and *bleps* to share with *frens*, posting with captions about the *goodest boy* in the world.

This has all led to a rise in what more serious folks call the "humanization of pets." Sounds ominous. But it indicates how much our lives and our our pets' lives are intertwined—and therefore following the same trends. And what's trendier or more millennial than wellness, wellness everywhere?

In 1979, veteran journalist Dan Rather quipped during an episode of *60 Minutes*, "Wellness...that's a word you don't hear every day." Fast forward 40 years, and we're hearing the word so much every day it's almost lost all meaning. The fresh "pet wellness" phrase could mean pets are doing well overall or it could mean pets are judging you for not drinking kombucha.

Don't worry, dogs don't judge. But they are getting more probiotics in their diets, just not from kombucha. Probiotics in pet foods sales grew by 139 percent last year, according to the Nielsen market report, "Trends in Pet Care Mirror Those of Pet Owners." We eat super foods, our dogs eat super foods; we take CBD, our pups take CBD. We get massages, our dogs get massages. We have fitness studios where you can work out with your dog, acupuncture for pets, doggy day spas with swimming pools you can rent out for puppy parties.

LAYING ON HANDS

Oh, yeah, and dog Reiki is a thing here, too. Gidget hasn't tried it yet; she—like me—thinks it sounds a little bit woo-woo.

This is how *Health* mag describes the basic principle: "Energy medicine (or biofield therapies) is the act of

channeling and manipulating the energy that courses through your body in order to heal it. This can be done with hands-on practices such as acupuncture and Reiki, as well as sensory-based experiences, like the use of crystals, sound baths, and aromatherapy."

In Denver, Zen Pet is all about these modalities. Run by Dr. Becca Klobuchar, the mobile holistic veterinary medicine's range of services is rooted in energy balancing and Chinese medicine.

"I began exploring holistic therapies in an effort to provide pets with additional healing options when traditional treatments were unsuccessful," says Klobuchar. "The intuitive treatment modalities I use approach pets' health from the physical, energetic, and spiritual perspectives."

The energy balancing service is based on the concept that all living things have their own energy field that, when not in balance, can lead to disease, emotional stress, and pain. During a session, the ancient practice of "laying on of hands" to transmits healing energy of the universe through the practitioner to the animal for healing effects.

While energy medicine is the farthest mystical extreme of the modern wellness world, there are some forms backed by science. Acupuncture, for one, and even Reiki. *Health* reports that a 2010 review of research in the *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine* found strong evidence that biofield therapies such as Reiki and therapeutic touch can alleviate pain.

The caveat: It could be placebo effect, and our pups aren't swayed by the power of suggestion. But if you think it's working for her, then the session is working—for you. It's called the "caregiver placebo effect," and there's nothing wrong with it. As long as it's used in conjunction with traditional vet visits—a supplemental part of a whole wellness plan.

CHIRO FOR CANINES

Dog chiropractic is another emerging field gaining traction as a beneficial supplemental treatment therapy. At Denver Central Chiropractic (DCC) in Centennial, Dr. Erin Moran is providing holistic health care to both people and pets—"holistic health care for you and your dogs." While it's still an emerging field, animal chiropractic at its core follows the same principles and practices as the human kind. She suggests you consider chiropractic treatments if your pooch is showing signs of pain: reluctant to climb stairs, difficulty getting up after laying down, constantly licking or chewing paws, walking differently.

"Dogs get the same back issues as people, and chiropractic is a great option to address those issues without the use of drugs or surgery," says Moran. "People get great

results from seeing a chiropractor, and I want people to know that their dog can experience the same benefits."

It's a non-surgical, drug-free option for correcting disorders related to a fixation in the spine or joint. When vertebrae become immovable through trauma, injury, or standard wear-and-tear, the joints between them become jammed, often affecting the nerves in the congested area. Those nerves are the communication link between the brain and the spinal cord, so when they are out of order, it can set off a cascade of effects that lead to pain and loss of function.

But pets can't tell us where they hurt or why they're limping, so treatments are a bit more complicated. When working with animals, Moran looks for abnormal or restricted movement, with a goal of restoring it to reduce pain and improve mobility.

"The results I've seen have been amazing," she says. Moran has helped dogs who have lost the use of their back legs because of slipped discs; after adjustments, they're able to regain use of their legs and walk again. She also treats arthritic dogs, "getting the pep back in their step so they can have a better quality of life."

Healthy pets can experience benefits of spine check-ups, too, she points out—especially active and athletic ones. The DCC website is clear that the practice is not meant to replace veterinary medicine. Rather, animal chiropractors work in conjunction with veterinarians, treating areas that often go unnoticed by traditional care.

And that pain in your back as result of hunching over your desk spoon-feeding yourself peanut butter while your pooch snuggles in your new comforter? As it turns out, living with a dog is good for human health as well. Having a pet lowers stress, reduces blood pressure, and may even help you live longer. So says science. So they deserve to live the same aspirational lifestyle to which we have made them accustomed. It's the least we can do to repay the unconditional love. **S**

Rebecca Treon contributed to this piece.

