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SUMMER 2026 | ISSUE 8



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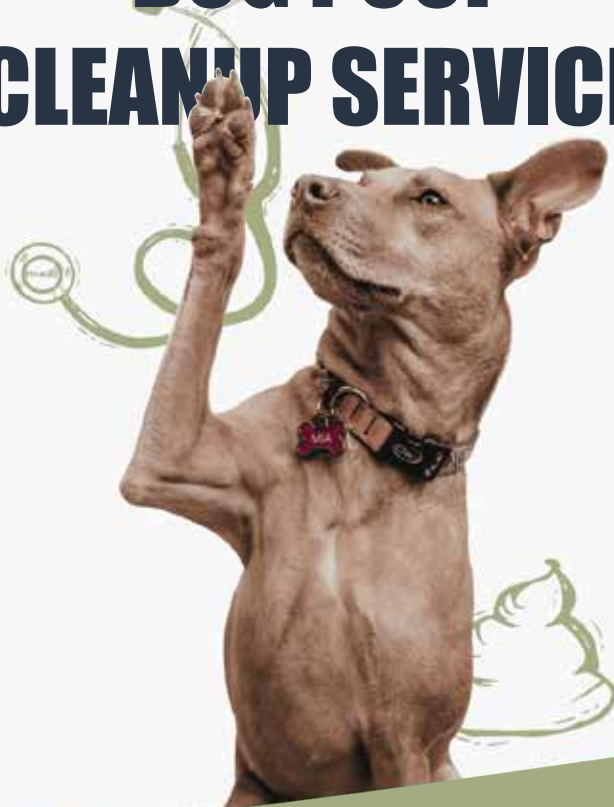
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MATT TACKETT, PUBLISHER
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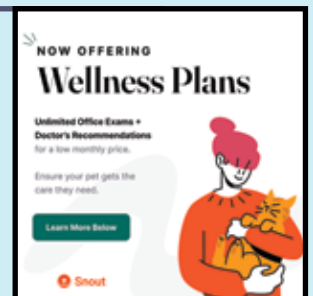
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The Cover Story: Doodles - No Sneezing and lots of Zoomies

By: Kira Tackett

For years growing up, the idea of a dog or cat living in our household was an impossible dream, kept at a distance by allergies in the family. Until 2021, when a teddy bear-shaped bundle of Goldendoodle named Jackson bounded into our lives through adoption.

Goldendoodles are a breed which arose in the United States during the 1990s, created through the crossing of Golden Retrievers and Poodles with an objective both practical and heartfelt: to combine the Poodle's intelligence, trainability, and allergy-conscious coat qualities with the Golden Retriever's famously friendly and loving disposition. Though the breed's precise beginnings remain somewhat uncertain, its appeal is easy to understand. Goldendoodles offer warmth, cleverness, sociability, and an endearing eagerness to connect. Over time, their popularity has grown enormously, and their gentle, outgoing personalities have made them valuable therapy dogs, offering comfort in hospitals and nursing homes as well.

They come in three size categories – mini, medium, and standard – depending on the Poodle parent. Mini Goldendoodles may weigh as little as 15–35 lbs, while standard dogs can reach 50–90 lbs. Because of this, it is important that a household, yard, or daily routine has enough room to accommodate the larger sizes, especially since – speaking from my own experience – Goldendoodles are very energetic. Our own Jackson doesn't seem to have an off button sometimes! Yet beneath all that exuberance is a remarkably intelligent dog, even if Jackson occasionally attempts to disguise this fact beneath selective innocence.

He is deeply attentive to tone, responsive to the emotional atmosphere around him and even clever enough to recognize each of us by name.

However, let us establish that no dog breed is entirely allergen-free. These dogs are just the ones with the least likelihood of triggering allergic reactions. Consequently, the presence of a hypoallergenic dog affords no absolute immunity for sensitive cohabitants; it simply implies that, in comparison to other breeds, the dog is considerably less likely to induce an allergic reaction. However, hypoallergenic dogs all have a few characteristics in common:

- They don't shed, which in turn creates less dander.
- Their specific coat structure impedes the build-up of dander particles.
- They maintain streamlined, single-layered coats, avoiding the prolific dander associated with dense undercoats.

The central idea here is never the fur we can see, but the microscopic dander we cannot – along with their saliva and urine. Furthermore, low-shedding does not mean low-maintenance. Goldendoodles and other curly-coated dogs require:

- Professional grooming every 4–8 weeks, often costing \$80–\$120+ per session.
- Daily brushing to prevent matting.
- Regular ear cleaning, nail trimming, and coat trimming.

While Goldendoodles dominate the doodle category, several other breeds are known for low shedding and may be better choices depending on the availability of their owners and the sizes of their property:

1. Poodle (Toy, Miniature, Standard): The foundation of most hypoallergenic mixes. Poodles have tight, curly coats that trap hair and dander, making them one of the most allergy-friendly breeds.

2. Labradoodle: A cross between a Labrador Retriever and a Poodle, originally bred as guide dogs. Like Goldendoodles, their coats vary widely.

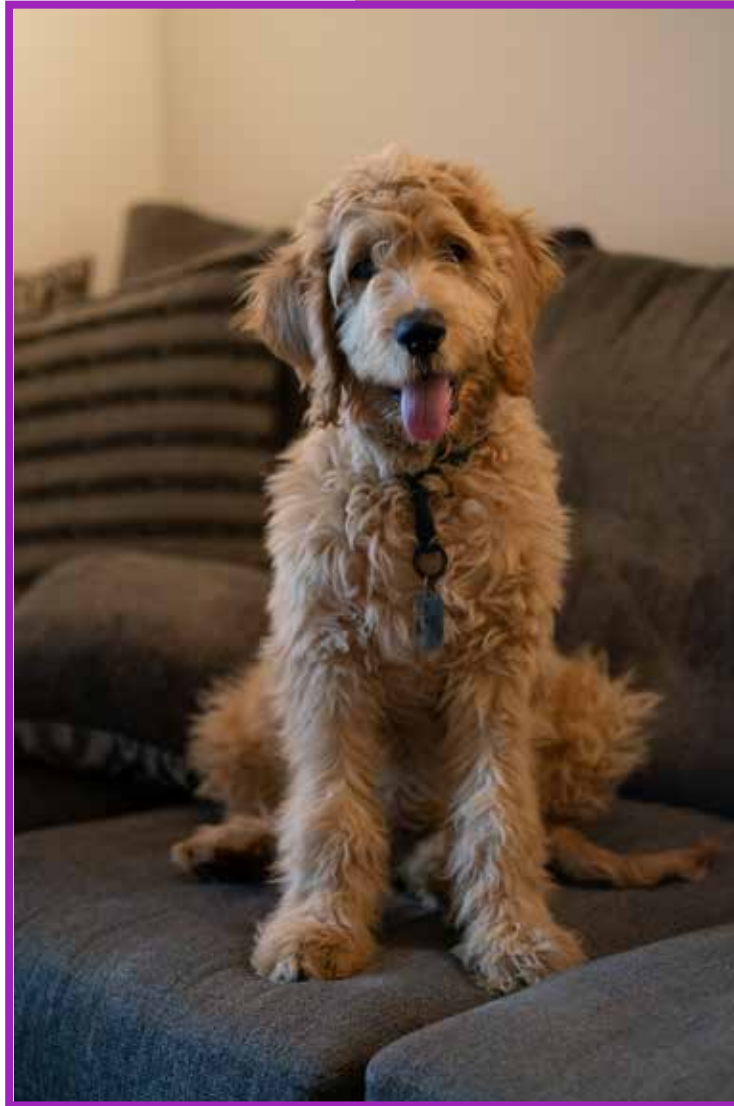
3. Portuguese Water Dog: Known for their curly, low-shedding coat and athletic nature.

4. Bichon Frise: A small breed with a soft, curly coat that sheds minimally.

5. Schnauzer (Mini, Standard, Giant): Low-shedding wiry coats and strong, loyal personalities.

6. Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier: Single-coated terriers that shed less than double-coated breeds.

7. Yorkshire Terrier: Silky, hair-like coat that sheds very little.





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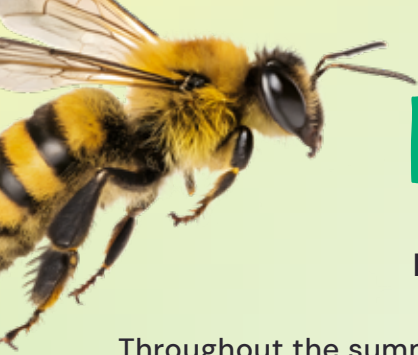
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BUGS OF SUMMER

By: Kira Tackett

Throughout the summer months spanning June through August across Hamilton County, Butler County, and adjacent territories, you will begin to notice the air becomes more alive with all things flighted and crawly. Whether traversing the trails of Sharon Woods, lounging within a Fairfield Township domestic retreat, or navigating the pathways of Winton Woods, insects integrate seamlessly into the sensory architecture of the landscape. Bolstered by empirical logging through iNaturalist alongside my own observations, here are the bugs that define a Cincinnati summer and the roles they play in the region's ecosystems:

1. FIREFLIES (LIGHTNING BUGS)

- Where you'll see them: Fairfield Township neighborhoods, Winton Woods, Voice of America Park, Miami-Whitewater Forest.
- Fun Facts: Their presence is a sign of healthy habitat, especially in areas with native plants and low pesticide use. In many firefly species, adult females exhibit neoteny, meaning they reach sexual maturity while retaining their larvae forms.
- Peak time: June – July evenings

2. MOSQUITOES

- Where you'll see them: Anywhere with standing water (birdbaths, gutters, puddles, creek edges, etc.)
- Fun Facts: While annoying, they're also a key food source for bats, swallows, and dragonflies – and only the females feed on mammal blood. The males feed on nectar and are recognizable by their larger antennae.
- Peak time: All summer, especially after storms



3. DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

- Where you'll see them: Glenwood Gardens, Sharon Woods creek, Little Miami River, Lake Isabella
- Fun Facts: Dragonflies are Cincinnati's natural mosquito control. Damselflies – which are slimmer, more delicate cousins of the dragonfly – their presence is a sign of clean waterways, something the Little Miami River is known for.
- Peak time: June – August afternoons

4. EASTERN-EYED CLICK BEETLES (ALAUUS OCULATUS)

- Where you'll see them: Around rotting logs and decaying wood in forests.
- Fun Facts: Easily identified by the two large, false "eyespot" on its back.
- Peak time: June – August afternoons

5. HOUSE CENTIPEDES (SCUTIGERA COLEOPTERATA)

- Where you'll see them: Outdoors, they hide under leaf litter, rotting logs, and rocks. Indoors, they gravitate toward humid areas like basements, bathrooms, crawl spaces, and floor drains to hunt for pests.
- Fun Facts: Despite looking frightening to most, they are perhaps the top-tier form of natural pest control available in Ohio. Due to their high metabolism they must consume several insects every single day, in comparison to most arachnids who only eat once or twice a week.
- Peak time: All summer

6. MAYFLIES

- Where you'll see them: Along major waterways like the Ohio River, yet residents also report swarms of them gathering around gas stations as they are attracted to the immense light.
- Fun Facts: These insect's lineage stretches back more than 300 million years—older than the dinosaurs! Mayflies are sensitive to pollutants and rely on pristine environments to thrive, serving as bioindicators of clean water systems.
- Peak time: July–August

7. ANTLIONS

- Where you'll see them: In dry, protected, and sandy or powdery soil, particularly under building overhangs, near foundations, and along dry forest floors. Sharon Woods has many reported findings.
- Fun Facts: While they are most notable for their larvae form with large jaws and the sand pits they make to trap ants in ode to their name, their adult forms are a lot more dainty looking almost like dragonflies despite not being closely related. They belong to a completely different insect group called net-winged insects.
- Peak time: May–September

8. BEES & WASPS

- Where you'll see them: Pollinator gardens, backyard flowers, parks with native plantings; Neighborhoods with pollinator-friendly landscaping like those near the Cincinnati Nature Center see especially high bee diversity.
- Fun Facts: Bumblebees, honeybees, and native solitary bees visit coneflowers, bee balm, and black-eyed Susans in gardens across the region. Wasps, including paper wasps and yellowjackets, are also pollinators and become more noticeable in late summer but play important roles controlling caterpillars and other pests.
- Peak time: All summer

9. GIANT NORTH AMERICAN MILLIPEDE (*NARCEUS AMERICANUS*)

- Where you'll see them: Around rotting logs and decaying wood in forests with high humidity. Their population is incredibly abundant in the East Fork State park area.
- Fun Facts: They are the largest species of millipede in North America, and are known for curling into a spiral shape when threatened. They are also capable of releasing toxins, but these are not harmful to humans – they only temporarily discolor the skin.
- Peak time: All summer, especially the days after it has rained

10. BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

- Where you'll see them: Cincinnati Nature Center, Ault Park, VOA Park, backyard milkweed patches
- Fun Facts: Cincinnati's parks support a wide range of butterfly species thanks to native plant restoration, including Monarch butterflies and their caterpillars. Moths, including the spectacular luna moth, appear around porch lights on warm nights– luna moths lack mouth parts and live in their adult forms only to mate.
- Peak time: June–September

11. CICADAS

- Where you'll see them: Trees in any neighborhood, forested parks, creekside trails, especially in older neighborhoods and parks like Mt. Airy Forest and Sharon Woods.
- Fun Facts: As nymphs, periodical cicadas stay underground for precisely 13 or 17 years, while annual cicadas spend about 2 to 5 years beneath the soil. And if you walk underneath a swarm of cicadas and suddenly feel wetness on your head, it is likely one of them peed on you! Because they subsist on a diet of watery tree sap (xylem), they must consume up to 300 times their body weight daily to extract enough nutrients which results in frequent urination.
- Peak time: July–August evenings



ANGELS PAWS: TREATING OUR PETS LIKE FAMILY UNTIL THE END

by: Kira Tackett



Bidding farewell to a pet is a profound heartache we consciously contract the moment we welcome them into our lives. We trade a lifetime of unconditional love for the inevitable agony of letting them go. Knowing the end awaits does nothing to dull the sharp edges of the grief when it arrives. They are our family. When I was forced to part with my aged feline, Eddie, in 2021, it registered among the most desolate days of my existence yet, there existed ways to soften the blow, particularly acts of grace one can extend to a pet during those fragile, vulnerable hours. Angel's Paws provided an invaluable anchor for me during that harrowing time.

Operating within the greater Cincinnati area, Angel's Paws provides an integrated system of end-of-life care for pets and the people who love them. Geographic logistics restrict their mobile Ohio operations predominantly to the Interstate 275 loop or a twenty-five-mile radius from their Blue Ash headquarters, alongside complementary home-visit provisions across Northern Kentucky (though Indiana remains outside their service tier). Families outside the travel area may receive services in a home-like setting at the organization's Blue Ash facility. Its facility is located at 11341 Grooms Road in Cincinnati, Ohio. Rather than asking a family to bring their beloved pet into a sterile and frighteningly unfamiliar clinical setting for their final moments, such services include pet hospice, in-home euthanasia, private cremation, ceremonial return of remains, grief counseling, support groups, memorial services, and educational resources. And rather than treating these services as unrelated transactions, the organization presents them as stages within a continuous journey, one that begins when a family first confronts an animal's declining health and continues beyond the animal's death. Angel's Paws describes itself as an organization born from a pet parent's loss. Founder and CEO Tammy Wynn developed the concept after the words "pet hospice" came to her and prompted her to reconsider how veterinary end-of-life services were traditionally delivered.

Recognizing that pets are indeed family members as well, its model is explicitly inspired by human hospice, in which medical

comfort and family communication are treated as interconnected concerns. The organization's team includes veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, licensed human therapists, chaplains, administrative professionals, aftercare personnel, and volunteers. When a pet receives a terminal diagnosis, family members may be asked to make complicated choices while experiencing intense anticipatory grief. They may struggle to determine whether an animal is still enjoying life, whether symptoms can be managed, whether treatment is prolonging comfort or prolonging decline, and when euthanasia may become the most merciful option. Pet loss can be profound, yet it is sometimes minimized by employers, acquaintances, relatives, and social institutions. A bereaved person may hear that the animal was "only a pet" or be encouraged to adopt another immediately. These responses can intensify grief by suggesting that the relationship was interchangeable or that sorrow is disproportionate. Angel's Paws attempts to meet all these overlapping needs through a multidisciplinary team rather than expecting one professional to perform every role.

End-of-life care does not conclude at the instant of death; the handling of a deceased animal's remains holds profound emotional significance for grieving families, especially during the fragile hours immediately following euthanasia. Angel's Paws administers private cremation alongside a ceremonial practice designated as a "chapel return". The organization guarantees meticulous respect throughout the crematory procedure, ensuring cremains are returned to loved ones with care. Additionally, tactile mementos such as the pet's paw print impressions captured in clay, alongside bereavement groups and private rituals, furnish diverse avenues for articulating an enduring bond. These provisions empower families to recognize that sorrow and profound gratitude can harmoniously coexist.

A well-orchestrated farewell cannot render a loss painless, nor can it calibrate the final hour to perfection or banish every subsequent doubt. It can, however, envelop an unavoidable heartbreak in tenderness, and that is the absolute least our cherished companions deserve.

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Kalina - Fultondale, AL

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At the heart of Rowe Woods, the Cincinnati Nature Center hosts a remarkable group of residents who serve a purpose far greater than simply being observed. These are the ambassador animals - individuals who, due to injury, imprinting, or other circumstances, cannot return to the wild but instead take on the role of educators towards the public eye. Under the care of trained naturalists, they help bridge the psychological gulf between human visitors and Ohio's indigenous fauna, illuminating the pressing conservation crises of the region. Each inhabitant embodies a distinct narrative, psychological profile, and ecological lesson native to southwest Ohio. Their integration elevates the sanctuary from a static observation post into an immersive academy where patrons of all demographics encounter the untamed world close enough to touch.

The Raptor Pair: Unicorn and Zihna

Two of the newest ambassadors arrived thanks to a partnership with the Glen Helen Raptor Center. Deemed permanently unreleasable, these birds now reside within Rowe Woods inside a specialized raptor mew (a birdhouse designed to house one or more birds of prey) constructed by staff and volunteers. Among them is Unicorn, a gray-morph male eastern screech owl hatched in 2011. He is known for his fierceness, operating as a master of arboreal camouflage. His daily routine reflects remarkably modest preferences of an afternoon slumber, morning basking, and a steady dietary intake of two to three mice - rather simple pleasures for a bird whose species plays a vital role in controlling insect and rodent populations.



Beside him resides Zihna, a male red-tailed hawk born in 2012. Red-tails are among Ohio's most iconic raptors, often seen perched along highways or soaring in wide circles over fields in constant search of hapless rodents. Zihna, who loves food and is currently training with handlers, represents the strength and adaptability of these birds. His presence helps visitors appreciate the multitude of challenges raptors face in such an urban world, from habitat loss to collisions with vehicles and power lines.

The Reptile Trio: Bert, Ernie, and Crush

Bert and Ernie, two male eastern box turtles hatched in 2010 and 2012 respectively, are beloved for their

contrasting personalities. Bert often attempts to climb the walls of his enclosure, whereas Ernie engages with a toy duck or indecisively contemplates his rock pit without committing to entry. Such idiosyncrasies captivate visitors, powerfully challenging the persistent misconception that reptiles lack distinct individuality within conservation discourse.

Adjacent to them resides Crush, a female red-eared slider hatched in 2000. Noted for her loud swimming and vigorous belly flops, Crush represents a species commonly kept as pets but frequently released unlawfully into the wild. Her narrative accentuates the critical necessity of conscientious stewardship and illuminates the severe ecological repercussions of injecting non-native species into native aquatic systems.

The Serpents: Peppermint and Rattison

While serpents frequently provoke visceral psychological reactions, the Cincinnati Nature Center's ambassador species illuminate these animals through a new light. Peppermint, an amelanistic corn snake born in 2004, is gentle and enjoys being held. His striking pigmentation and docile temperament make him an ideal introduction to snake ecology and the role these reptiles play in controlling rodent populations.

Conversely, Rattison, a gray ratsnake hatched in 2011, manifests a more mischievous profile, delighting in games of peekaboo and attempting to scale his enclosure boundaries. As native Ohio arboreal navigators frequently inhabiting forests and agricultural structures, ratsnakes utilize such dynamic behaviors to dismantle entrenched phobias, cultivating instead the curiosity and respect such fascinating creatures deserve.

Native Fish of Ohio

Inside the Rowe Visitor Center, patrons are afforded glimpses of aquatic organisms typically concealed within the turbulent currents of southwest Ohio. Rainbow darters, fantail darters, and southern redbelly dace navigate the lucent waters, their resplendent reproductive pigmentation acting as biological barometers of aquatic vitality. They also function as bioindicators, confirming the pristine and flourishing state of the sanctuary's aquatic ecosystems. The Nature Center even hosts events all year long (except for in the Winter) dedicated to guests feeding these species!

Conservation is no passive spectator sport; the Cincinnati Nature Center encourages public partnership beyond mere observation, to extend a compassionate hand outwards and support their care. Donations help maintain habitats, provide food and medical care, and ensure that future generations can learn from these remarkable creatures for years to come.



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Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches- How Animals Transform Learning in the Classroom

by: Kira Tackett

While academic environments are frequently recalled through homework or their classmates, for some, the presence of a class pet makes it all the more memorable. Be it the traditional hamster, a turtle or as in my personal experience, for example, Madagascar hissing cockroaches, they are surprisingly effective teaching tools. Furthermore, the stewardship of a living organism cultivates a sense of responsibility in a way few other classroom activities can. Feeding, cleaning, and monitoring an animal's well-being encourages students to think beyond themselves. Even small tasks such as refilling a water dish or checking habitat temperature build habits of care.

For many children, especially those who may not have pets at home, this is their first experience with animal stewardship. While this sense of empathy is still developing, they learn that living creatures depend on them. They learn that gentleness matters. They learn that everything deserves kindness.

These insects are exceptionally well-suited for this role due to their resilience, minimal maintenance requirements, and docile natures - notably, they pose no risk of biting. Students who might be nervous around animals often find confidence in caring for insects, whose maintenance is far less demanding. The experience can reshape how they view creatures that are usually feared or dismissed. Class pets also strengthen classroom culture. They become shared points of interest; something everyone can talk about, observe, and care for together. (How many cockroaches are in the colony? What can they eat?). The pet becomes a hub for interdisciplinary learning.

And, importantly, class pets create genuine scholastic joy. I have fond memories of entering my six grade science teacher's



room wondering what the animals - in this case, the hissing cockroaches - are doing today. I would save a little bit of my lunch, like a couple slices of apples for them and watch in fascination as they ate. That excitement, even shared during breaks and carried home to families, is the spark that keeps the fire of engagement burning long after the final bell.

Classroom animals must, of course, be introduced responsibly. Teachers must account for allergies, phobias, sanitation, secure housing, local regulations, disease prevention, humane handling, holiday care, and the animal's own welfare. Systematic reviews have emphasized that the educational promise of animal-assisted programs must be accompanied by proper risk assessment and explicit consideration of animal well-being. The animal should never be treated as a disposable teaching apparatus; its needs are themselves part of the lesson.

With this in mind, such classroom pets possess the capacity to challenge ingrained assumptions. Many students begin the year squeamish about insects, only to end it proudly holding a cockroach in their hands. The same could be said for snakes and lizards - creatures seen as 'gross' and whose skin is falsely believed to be 'slimy'. This shift builds scientific confidence and the understanding that unfamiliar things are not necessarily frightening, and in this understanding, knowledge can replace fear. Madagascar hissing cockroaches are perfect ambassadors for this lesson. They are clean, slow-moving, and surprisingly charismatic. They teach us that even the most unexpected creatures hold a place of honor in the natural world, leaving behind a legacy of memory that, much like my own experience, lingers as a beautiful perspective-altering anchor.





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PET SPOTLIGHT: FRESH TIDES AQUATICS IS TURNING THE TIDE FOR LOCAL AQUARISTS

By: Sharon Boyles



When you walk into Fresh Tides Aquatics in Mariemont, you immediately know that this place is something special. The store is clean and bright. You receive a friendly greeting and personable, knowledgeable service. The aquatic plant and fish stock are healthy, happy, and obviously well-kept. The store is beautifully decorated with live plants. It's very evident that for owners Neal Burke and Tori Beck, Fresh Tides Aquatics is a labor of love.

Tori, originally from Wisconsin, has a degree in marine biology and when working in a fish store in Hawaii, she discovered a love for that role. "I moved to Ohio after graduation and continued working in fish stores," she says. "And I've had all kinds of different saltwater and freshwater tanks at home, mostly under 75 gallons. I'm breeding guppies at the moment."

Neal is originally from New York, and he's been keeping fish since he was a kid, with the exception of his time in the military. "You can't keep fish when you're in the military, because of deployment, but I kept reading books and things throughout that time," he says. "The fish world is always changing, and I kept up with it so it wouldn't be a shock to me when I got out."

Neal and Tori decided to open Fresh Tides

Aquatics after feeling that it was time to move on from their positions at a fish store in the Springdale area. Neal approached Tori with the idea, and on February 14, 2026, Fresh Tides opened its doors. *"You don't realize how many people have a fish tank until you have a store," Tori shares. "It's a lot more than I ever realized. I wasn't sure when we opened how many people would come to the shop."*

One of the ways Fresh Tides Aquatics is different from the average fish shop is that they're very big on the education side of aquatics. *"We want to build a community of people who are interested in knowing more about fish and who want to go beyond 'it's just a fish,'" Tori says. "Our experience and knowledge go a long way, and we're working to bust a lot of the old-school myths, like aquariums are dirty and smelly and that fish don't live long."* In this age of AI, Neal cautions against using it to get your aquatics information. *"Talk to someone with the actual experience of keeping fish," he recommends. "AI is useful for some things, but it doesn't always achieve the nuance that you need."* Tori shared a story about someone who came in looking for an aquarium plant recommended by AI, and it turned out that although the plant was beautiful, it didn't actually

exist. So, get your information from your friendly neighborhood fish store instead!

Passionate and knowledgeable about their work, the deep care that Tori and Neal have for all things aquatic really shows up and makes this store unique. *"We want to sell a good product, so our customers have a good experience,"* Tori says. Neal adds that they are vigilant about the health of their fish, and they can usually tell if a new shipment contains fish who are likely to have an issue. *"Our intuition is almost always right with that. If the fish is behaving a little off, that's a sign of something that might show up down the road, after the fish is sold,"* he explains. *"So, we don't sell any fish too quickly. We will quarantine and medicate until a fish recovers. We make sure we're setting out good, strong fish for people."* This practice does cost money, but Tori and Neal care about every animal that comes into their shop, and they will do what is needed to give them excellent care.

Fresh Tides customers also receive excellent service and care. Neal and Tori will take the time to talk with a customer, understand their needs, make personalized suggestions, and discuss best practices. Neal mentioned that they will sometimes need to redirect people who come in wanting

a monster 'tank buster' fish that may not be appropriate for their home and tank size. *"There's always something more appropriate we can steer people to,"* Neal says. *"We try to keep stock that is right for aquariums. We don't keep fish that will survive if they're thrown into a river or lake, like red-tail catfish or channel catfish, or even a goldfish. They're not an appropriate fish, and I'd prefer to leave them in the wild. We try to be ethical in what species we recommend for people's tanks."* There are definitely better

options out there, and Fresh Tides Aquatics focuses on helping aquatics people be successful and stay in the hobby for the long run.

Besides selling shrimp and nano fish (fancy bettas, dwarf cichlids, schooling fish, etc.), Fresh Tides Aquatics also offers aquarium plant supplies, fertilizers, substrate, maintenance supplies, frozen food, aquascape décor, driftwood and rock, filters, heaters, lighting, and rimless tanks, as well as some aquatic-themed jewelry and books. The store is currently well stocked with everything you need for your setup, and Neal and Tori are on the move to expand their stock of aquarium plants (which have been increasing in variety and popularity since 2018), create more tank displays, and write more blog posts for their website.

"A lot of stores get complacent," Tori observes, *"But we still get excited when we get a new fish or plant. We actually care about the animals, and we try to very much stay on top of everything. We want our store to be a nice place where you feel comfortable coming in to shop and get information. There's no warehouse vibe here, no humidity, no water all over the floor. We don't want that here, even though it's normal for most fish stores. The impression we make on our customers is important to us."*

And they are definitely making a splash in the aquatics community!

Fresh Tides Aquatics is located at 7211 Wooster Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45227. You can contact the store at 513-376-6048 or visit their website at www.freshtidesaquatics.com.



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The Importance of Year-Round Flea and Tick Protection for Your Pet - Why Consistency Matters More Than You Think

As a pet parent, you want nothing more than to keep your furry companion healthy, happy, and comfortable. Yet one of the most overlooked aspects of pet care is maintaining a consistent flea and tick prevention routine. Many well-meaning owners treat this as a seasonal concern or skip doses when they think the risk is low—a decision that can have serious consequences for their pets' health and wellbeing.

What Fleas Can Do • Flea allergy dermatitis (FAD) • Anemia • Tapeworms • Bartonellosis

What Ticks Bring to the Table • Lyme disease • Rocky Mountain spotted fever • Ehrlichiosis and Anaplasmosis • Babesiosis

Why "Seasonal" Protection Falls Short • Modern heating keeps homes at the perfect temperature for fleas and ticks to thrive 365 days a year. • In many regions, winter temperatures never drop cold enough to kill off the pest population. Did you know it has to stay below freezing for at least 30 consecutive days to kill the flea and tick population outdoors? • Raccoons, possums, and other animals can bring fleas and ticks into your yard even in winter. • A single trip to a warmer climate or a visit from an unprotected pet can introduce parasites to your home.

Bottom line: Veterinarians recommend year-round prevention for most pets, regardless of climate.

Written By: Susan Maple, Owner, Mary Puppins LLC



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Summer is one of our favorite times of year for pets and their people — dog park trips, patio hangs, hikes, and lake days for dogs; sunny windows, enrichment toys, and porch time for cats. But summer also brings a few seasonal risks, so a little planning helps keep pets safe and comfortable.

Dog Park Safety

Not every dog is a good fit for the dog park, even friendly ones. Before you go, make sure your dog is vaccinated, comfortable around other dogs, responsive to commands, and wearing a well-fitted collar or harness with ID.

Once there, take a minute to observe before entering — and watch for stiff posture, escalating growls, or one dog repeatedly chasing another. You know your dog best, so trust your gut. It is always okay to leave early.



TAYLOR YEATES, DVM, ACUTEPET MT. PLEASANT MANAGING VETERINARIAN



"Heat-related illness can escalate within minutes. If your dog seems 'off' after time outside, don't wait," says Dr. Taylor Yeates, Managing Veterinarian at AcutePet Urgent Care – Mount Pleasant.

Common Injuries

Even with careful supervision, accidents can happen. Contact a vet if your dog has a bleeding wound, persistent limping, swelling, or has been bitten, even if it looks minor. Bite wounds can be deceptive — the skin may look fine while deeper tissue is damaged.

Heat Safety

Pets overheat quickly in summer heat & humidity. Rule of thumb: if pavement is too hot for your bare hand after seven seconds, it's too hot for paws. Asphalt can top 140°F on an 85°F day. Avoid peak heat hours (10 a.m.–4 p.m.), bring fresh water, and never leave a pet in a parked car, even briefly.

Watch for dehydration signs: heavy panting, dry or tacky gums, weakness, or collapse. If something feels off, don't hesitate to give us a call. As Dr. Taylor Yeates, Managing Veterinarian

at AcutePet Urgent Care – Mount Pleasant, puts it: "Heat-related illness can escalate within minutes. If your dog seems 'off' after time outside, don't wait — trust your instincts and get them evaluated."

Seasonal Fun

Dogs: early or late walks, shaded rest breaks, kiddie pools, and frozen treats.
Cats: window perches, puzzle feeders, catios, and lick mats with vet-approved treats.

While you're planning summer fun, don't forget prevention — warmer weather brings more fleas, ticks, and parasites. Not all products are safe for every pet, so check with your vet.

When to Seek Care

Bites, overheating, breathing trouble, or sudden behavior changes shouldn't wait. We know it's not always easy to tell what's urgent — that's what we're here for. If you're concerned, we're concerned.



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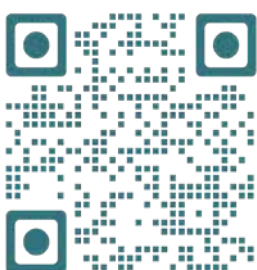
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LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

MEET CURTIS B., A MOST UNUSUAL CAT

By Sharon Boyles

Black cats are typically considered bad luck, but it was a lucky day for Mt. Washington resident Jennifer Sullivan and her cat, Curtis B., when their paths crossed.

"I never thought I would own a black cat because of all the superstition around it," Jennifer says. "But he's handsome. When the light hits him a certain way, you can see how handsome he is, and his eyes really pop because of his black color. I call him my permanent Halloween decoration," she laughs.

Jennifer and Curtis B. met when Jennifer, a cat lover, was looking to adopt a cat, and in particular, a declawed cat. "A declawed cat requires a smaller deposit at my apartment community," Jennifer explains. "And, as my daughter said, declawed cats need love, too!"

But it wasn't quite a case of love at first sight. Jennifer went to meet Curtis B. at his foster home and recalls that he growled every time he walked around. His foster said that he had been dumped on the doorstep of OAR (Ohio Alleycat Rescue), and left there in a cardboard box with a tiny hole in the top. This understandably, might have caused some issues for Curtis B., and when he continued growling all the way to his forever home, Jennifer wondered what she'd gotten herself into. Once he was home, Jennifer confined him to one area at first so he would feel more secure, and for a while, he just hid under the bed. Eventually he started to explore a little farther afield and adventured to the walk-in bedroom closet. "When I saw him lay down in there and roll around on the carpet, I knew it was a good thing. And it was good from then on," Jennifer recalls.

Potentially contributing to Curtis B.'s difficulties is something that every cat owner should know about.

Declawing a cat can set them up for a more challenging life. They're aware that their claws are missing and this creates a sense of vulnerability because they've lost one of their major defenses against the world. Also, if the surgery was not done properly, there can be chronic problems and anxieties. **Declawed cats also experience more stress than cats who can keep their claws.** Jennifer mentions that it took Curtis B. four years to warm up to her, but now, he's a playful, interesting, and interactive little black cat who is 10 years old but acts like he's four years old.

But is interesting exactly the right word to describe Curtis B? *"He's weird."* Jennifer laughs. *"He's unusual. I've never had a cat who tries to engage me in play with him. He actually plays peekaboo and wants me to come and find him. He's gotten vocal, and he's just learning to use his voice, which is great because I think he had to be very quiet in his former home. He's a treat diva and very routine oriented, and he's very aware of when I'm away. I can see him on my Ring camera, and I can see that he's wondering what's going on. Other cats I've had haven't cared at all. He's much more noticeable and present, more so than my other cats."*

She adds that she's never seen a cat find so many different places to sleep but then stay with the same sleep spot for a long period of time. *"He's the most unusual cat I've ever had, and I've had three cats,"* she says. *"It could just be the way his life was, but I'm not sure."*

But Curtis B.'s life has improved to the extent that he can now serve as an impromptu role model and source of inspiration for Jennifer. *"He's inspired me to just chill out,"* she shares. *"And slow down. His nature is very calm, and he has a way of sauntering down the hall, like hey, it's no big deal. When he wants to lay down across my legs, the only way he can do that is if I chill out. He really gets me to slow down and not be moving and grooving all the time."* In this hectic world, that's not a bad thing!

And what, you may be wondering, does the B. stand for in Curtis B.'s unusual name? No one knows exactly, and Curtis B. isn't telling!

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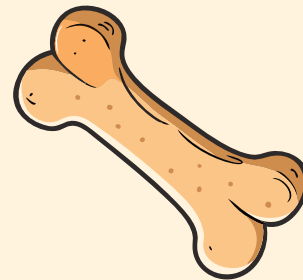
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- Optional: 1–2 tablespoons cornstarch or flour to help bind the dough

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the rolled oats, pumpkin puree, mashed banana, and applesauce. Mix until a dough forms. If the dough is too wet, add more oats; if too dry, add more pumpkin or applesauce.
3. Lightly flour a clean surface and roll the dough to about ¼ inch thick. Use cookie cutters to cut shapes, or form small balls and flatten them by hand.
4. Place the treats on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake for 20–25 minutes until firm and lightly golden.
6. Allow the treats to cool completely before serving.

I would recommend making them bite size or use a mold for the dough.....make sure your dog can eat oatmeal before making it..



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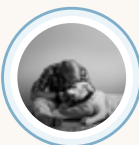


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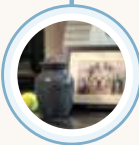
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Pet Prosthetics - Bringing New Hope & New Life

by: Kira Tackett



Over the preceding decade, veterinary orthotics have begun to evolve rapidly. What was previously categorized as a niche and specialized field has transformed into a dynamic frontier of animal biotechnology, catalyzed by 3D printing, digital scanning and bespoke fabrication protocols. Today, companion animals throughout the nation, and even right here in Ohio, are reaping the restorative benefits of prostheses that are demonstrably lighter, more comfortable, and more precisely fitted than ever before!

Historically, orthopedic appliances for companion animals relied on cumbersome media such as forged metal, heavy leather, and inflexible plastics. However, these compounds are notorious for excessive weight and all the discomforts that come with them. Consequently, numerous patients encountered insurmountable barriers to adaptation, requiring continuous recalibration or just abandonment of the devices altogether. Contemporary additive manufacturing has fundamentally revolutionized this paradigm. Pioneers like 3DPets harness have changed this landscape. Their workflow begins with either an in-office 3D scan or a mold created at home using DIY methods. The scan is used to design a custom harness and limb, which is then printed and fitted to the pet. The result is a lightweight, breathable, flexible device that matches the pet's unique shape and mobility needs.

This approach solves one of the biggest historical problems in pet mobility, which is poor fit. Generic wheels and rigid braces long failed because nature never made an average creature; she made only individuals. By honoring this truth through custom crafting, they achieve over 98% perfection,

wrapping broken bodies in comfort and giving the earth back to those who thought they could no longer walk upon it.

The prosthetics revolution is not limited to dogs. 3DPets and similar innovators have expanded their work to include pigs, goats, tortoises, alpacas, llamas, and even elephants, demonstrating how adaptable 3D-printed solutions can be across species - one notable example here is ODot, an East African grey crowned crane at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. After an old fracture left her unable to use her left wing normally, she repeatedly struck and reopened an abrasion near her wrist. In 2023, zoo staff and an engineer developed a custom 3D-printed plastic "wing cap" prosthesis that wrapped around and protected the injured area. Following adjustments, it stayed in place, allowed the wound to heal, and helped ODot return to the zoo's Heart of Africa savanna with other cranes.

As scanning technologies become more accessible, even through smartphones, and 3D printers continue to advance, custom prosthetics will likely become more affordable and widespread. Academic engineering faculties and veterinary institutions throughout Ohio are exceptionally situated to accelerate this trajectory, propelled by expanding interdisciplinary collaboration. Spanning from national pioneers such as 3DPets to engineering students designing prosthetics for cherished companions, the field is accelerating rapidly toward a horizon where physical trauma or physiological disability no longer prevents an animal from living their best lives.





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Top 10 Reasons to Adopt an Older Pet

by: Kira Tackett

While welcoming any animal into your home is a compassionate choice, shelters are tragically overpopulated with older dogs, cats, and companions who are frequently overlooked in favor of puppies and kittens. It is easy to understand the initial pull toward youth, for families often seek a blank slate or a match for their children's boundless energy. Yet, those who open their hearts to senior pets discover something extraordinary in the form of a profound sweetness and an enduring loyalty, almost as if they are thankful for you adopting them - and here are furthermore reasons why you should consider adopting one:

1. Fully Formed Personalities: The chaotic unpredictability of youth gives way to a clear, established temperament. With a senior pet, what you see is what you get!

2. Attentive and Wise: Their longer attention spans make them remarkably receptive to guidance, and many arrive with a gracious understanding of household routines and tricks already mastered.

3. Boundless Devotion: Age never dwindles their loyalty. They still have a lot of love to give to their owners and new families!

4. Not as Demanding: Free from the relentless demands of high-energy youth, older animals are entirely content with a peaceful stroll or a quiet moment of connection, which is perfect for elderly owners, owners with physical disabilities, or families with not as much free time.



5. Settle in Quicker: Having known the stark contrast of a shelter, seniors settle into the safety and warmth of a real home with immense gratitude and contentment.

6. Fewer Puppy Messes: Most older animals already have the ropes when it comes to being bathroom trained and toy trained, leaving their new homes mess and chew-free.

7. Less Stress and Frustration: Puppies and kittens can be rather overwhelming to handle with training and working on behaviors. However, the anxieties and frustrations of molding young behavior are replaced by the serene, steady demeanor of a mature animal.

8. The Art of Relaxation: Much like retired seniors, they prefer the simple pleasures of life - a warm patch of sunlight, a soft bed, and your company - over frantic exhaustion.

9. Save a Life, Be a Hero: Countless older animals spend their twilight years waiting behind shelter bars for a family that may never come. Choosing them is an act of profound mercy that alters the course of a deserving life.

10. Still Adorable!: A touch of silver dusting their muzzle lends them a unique charm on its own. To be loved is to be changed, after all.



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Why Portraits Still Matter

How portraits of pets and their people preserve the relationships that shape a family

by Susan Gertz, Kindred Spirits Pet Photography

We have never taken more pictures of our families — including pets — than we do today. Our phones hold thousands of captures, and now artificial intelligence can create almost any image we can imagine. Clearly, we have **pictures**, and lots of them. But do we have **portraits**?

The difference is intention. Most phone photos are snapshots — informal, of-the-moment images that make wonderful memory keepers. A portrait is something else: it's planned. The making of it is an event. Clothing, setting, pose, and expression are chosen deliberately to reveal personality and relationship. The finished portrait is a shared vision between artist and subject, meant to be displayed and passed down.



The Three Eldest Children of Charles I, Anthony van Dyck, 1636. Royal Collection, Wikimedia Commons.



Child and dog, circa 1880. George Eastman House Collection

Portraits have featured pets with their people for centuries. In Anthony van Dyck's *The Three Eldest Children of Charles I* (1636), the future King Charles II stands with his younger siblings while two spaniels sit at their feet. Nearly four centuries later, the painting still hangs at Windsor Castle. We can wonder how much scampering and tail wagging happened as the artist worked to capture the scene!

Charles II became so closely associated with toy spaniels that his name lives on in the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a modern breed developed centuries later.

As photography spread in the Victorian era, it changed the method of portraiture, but not the intention behind it. Photographers and families planned for a portrait with the same care — and pets still held their place in the family story. A photograph from about 1880 shows a child in an elaborate lace collar with a dog sitting close by. We'll never know their names or how child and dog spent their time together. But more than 140 years later, people can still hold that photograph and wonder.

These historical portraits survive as physical objects — paint on canvas and photographs printed on paper. They can live on walls, in albums, and in our hands. How remarkable that we can still contemplate the lives of these children and dogs from generations ago by studying their portraits!

But how certain are we that our thousands of digital pictures will be available to our descendants 100 or 200 years from now? Devices fail. Passwords are lost. Accounts disappear. Technology changes.

When we choose to have a portrait made in this digital era, it is created with the same care as portraits throughout history. And it's given a physical presence in the world.

A portrait on the wall is not waiting inside a device to be found — it remains present in the life of the family.

I've been privileged to create pet portraits for hundreds of families. The sad truth is that we usually outlive our pets, and many families reach out after a pet I photographed has passed. In their heartbreak, they tell me what it means to see that portrait on the wall. I offer my condolences, and I always say the same thing: "I remember that day." **And I do** — not just the canvas, but the day itself.

Some days stay with me especially clearly:

- The day an impossibly old Miniature Poodle rode proudly in her aging owner's arms for their portrait together.
- The day a young woman's emotional support dog gave her confidence to step in front of the camera.
- The day a determined brain injury survivor walked in supported by her stability service dog in harness.

While they are still beside us, a portrait of our pet makes us smile. Years later, when our companion isn't with us any longer, it holds the bittersweet memory of the way they saw us as the most important person in their world.

A portrait cannot make their lives longer, and it cannot contain everything we remember. But a portrait can give those memories a place to gather.

A portrait with a beloved animal says:

This animal was here.

This bond was real.

This story is worth carrying forward.

One day, this portrait will be your family's treasure.

A portrait is not only for today. It is for all the tomorrows when someone wants to remember.



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Meet the Artist: *Susan Gertz is an award-winning portrait photographer, designer, and fiber artist whose work is shaped by a lifetime of creating in many media. She is drawn to the relationships between people and the animals who share their lives, approaching each portrait as both a work of art and a family heirloom. Clients work directly with Susan from the planning of the session through the selection of the finished artwork. Her studio is located in the Pendleton Art Center in downtown Middletown, Ohio.*



Scan to explore the gallery and learn about the portrait experience.





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