

New Year Resolutions

All the newspapers and magazines are full of tips for improving your life in 2008 by following your New Year Resolutions. You may have little energy left after going to the newly-joined gym, with swimming before work, a spinning class before going home and following a diet of steamed fish and vegetables with mineral water. But perhaps making a few small changes to your routine with your pet could help improve the health of both of you just a little. It has been shown people relax more when stroking their pet at home, associated with the release of endorphins, and also show lower blood pressure. So, here are a few resolutions to involve you more with your pet in 2008.

Spend a little more time each day grooming your pet

The Company of Animals produce a range of soft rubber brushes called 'Zoom Grooms'. These are described as being *"made of soft rubber with gentle rubber fingers which penetrate your pet's coat removing loose hair and dirt as well as massaging the skin."* They really are a magnet for loose hair and you will be amazed at just how much hair comes out but they do not snag or catch, like other brushes or combs and so dogs which otherwise hate being groomed will start to enjoy it. Many owners who have bought one of the Zooms report their pet will find the Zoom Groom, carry it to their owners and drop it at their feet! The massaging action calms both cats and dogs and will build a bond between you. At £5.00 per brush you cannot go wrong, give it a go. Ask at your usual vet or go to the website at www.companyoofanimals.co.uk

Exercise

Nobody needs reminding about the health problems associated with being overweight, the increased risks of diabetes, osteoarthritis and cardiovascular disease. If you are a dog owner why not make a resolution to increase the amount of exercise you both take and also choose a different route? The benefits you gain will also apply to your four-legged friend since dogs not only gain the same benefits from exercise, but they also, in the phrase coined by Graeme Garden, get to check their "wee-mail", brightening up their day!

Toys

It is inevitable your pet will have to be left alone from time to time and toys can help

prevent some of the behavioural problems [for example, nuisance barking, separation anxiety, boredom and destructiveness] which follow a lack of stimulation. The Company of Animals offers a range of tough rubber 'Kong' toys, made of a hard natural rubber. They are almost indestructible and once the hollowed out centre is filled with tasty paste dogs find them irresistible, spending hours chewing away quietly as they try to get the last morsel of the paste. You can also encourage play as they bounce unpredictably and so your dog will channel its hunting instincts into harmless play. The Company of Animals website even has some recipe suggestions for home-made pastes you can use at home, including Banarama, Philly Steak and Veggy Kong Omelette.

Create a hidey-hole for your cat

Although cats are just as fond of Zoom Grooms as dogs, they don't view walks with the same enthusiasm. Cats do, however like peace and quiet and the hustle and bustle of Christmas, family and friends coming round, people staying over and the normal routine of the household can lead to your cat experiencing a degree of anxiety or even stress. Cats like to 'Hide at Height' and so one simple thing you can do is to get one of the cardboard boxes left over from Christmas, cut a small porthole in it, put your cat's blanket in it, raise it just a couple of feet off the floor and they will have a sanctuary where they feel secure. Don't forget toys for cats as well, though sometimes a ball of scrunched up paper will keep them just as busy as a catnip mouse.

So, as a final New Year Resolution, what about "*Pets and owners helping each other to lead healthy and happy lives*"?

Happy New Year.