

Reading Lesson

B1 Services: Pampered Pets

Reading

Read the text about the pet care business. Do we take better care of our pets than we do of ourselves?

Pampered Pets

Like most pet owners, Heidi Richardson wants what is best for her animals. Heidi estimates that she spends about \$150 per month to keep her two Labrador dogs, Toby and Jax, happy and healthy. This includes fresh (not canned) food, visits to the dog-grooming salon, dog biscuits, vet appointments, and day care for them when she is at the office. "I like spending money on them. They're so cute, aren't they?" says Heidi as she looks at a picture on her phone. "I love them."



Information from a new report shows that Heidi isn't unusual. The US pet care market is growing fast as more people become pet owners. In 2017, the last time numbers were available, there were about 90 million pet dogs in the US and 95 million pet cats. This helps to explain why there is a growing demand for pet care products such as pet food, pet furniture, and pet toys. Seventy-nine percent of dog owners say they love spending money on their dogs, with most pet owners spending about \$500 on their pet in a 12-month period.

So, what pet care products are the new generation of pet owners buying? As in other markets, technology is changing the way pet owners care for their animals. There are automatic feeding bowls so owners can feed their pets when they are away from home. Webcams mean that owners can watch their pets round-the-clock. Smartphone apps can check pets while they are in doggy day care. These apps also check a pet's health, keep a record of the food they are (or aren't) eating, and how much play time they have. They can also help an owner find their dog when it is missing.

Another pet care business that is growing is the mobile dog-grooming business. This is a service where someone visits your house and washes and cuts your dog's coat. "Many owners and their pets prefer it because it's easier than going to the dog-grooming salon where the dogs can get stressed," says Nikita Carter, owner of *Posh Dogs*. Nikita advertises her business in vets' offices and local pet stores. "Business is really good," she says. "This year, my profits are up by 55%. There is a great future in pet care!"

dog-grooming salon (n): a place where dogs go to get their coats washed and cut

round-the-clock (phrase): 24 hours a day, seven days a week; all the time

automatic (adj): (for a machine) working on its own; not controlled by a person

