



Dog sitters don't just sit

Need someone to care for your dog while you're on vacation? Consider hiring a pet sitter. In addition to feeding and walking your pooch, many professionals offer extra services such as watering plants and picking up newspapers. Try these organizations to find a qualified in-home caregiver:

■ National Association of Professional Pet Sitters (www.petsitters.org; 856-439-0324): This trade association offers an online searchable database by city, state, or ZIP code.

■ Pet Sitters International (www.petsit.com; 336-983-9222): Dog owners can search the organization's member listing of nearly 8,000 businesses nationwide.

—M.M.

23,000 dogs compete at Crufts



DAWNE DEELEY

Westminster may be the greatest, but there's no doubt the Crufts dog show is the largest. It has the Guinness World Record to prove it. The 2008 event lasted March 6 through 9 in Birmingham, England, with more than 160,000 spectators watching competitors representing nearly 40 countries. Close to 23,000 dogs competed this year. The most popular breed of the 177 varieties registered was the Golden Retriever with 534 entries, while the Kuvasz was represented by just one.

Highlights included the show debut of the Kooikerhondje — a mid-sized Dutch breed used for centuries as an all-purpose dog.

Visitors from the United States made their mark by winning two groups: an American Cocker Spaniel, Ch. San Jo's Born To Party, picked up Gundog honors, while Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Ch. Caraway Celebrate Life, came out on top in Terriers. (The Gundog group is similar to the American Kennel Club's Sporting Group.)

Other notable winners: Shiba Inu Ch. Janeryls In The Line of Fire (Utility); Beagle Ch. Dialynne Maximus (Hound); a smooth-coated Chihuahua from Gibraltar, Ch. Gibeltarik Happy Go Lucky (Toy); Samoyed Ch. Vandream Imperial Hermioni by Berezniki (Pastoral); and the Working victor, Giant Schnauzer Ch. Jafrak Philippe Olivier, a two-time group winner. Third time's a charm, as Best in Show judge Clare Coxall chose the Giant Schnauzer, making him Supreme Champion of Champions at Crufts 2008.

—Dawne Deeley



COURTESY ANDY BERG

Animal ambulance can save lives

In November 2007 while Jennie Florez was away from home, her Dachshund Molly began shaking violently and bleeding from her nose.

"I was afraid if I picked up Molly I'd hurt her," says Sofia Frias, Florez' daughter.

This was a job for Animal Ambulance, an emergency pet-care service based in Southern California. Within 30 minutes, an ambulance equipped with oxygen, a ventilator, and an intubation pack arrived at Frias' house. Two registered veterinary technicians worked to stabilize Molly, then carried her out on a stretcher and drove to the nearest animal hospital.

In addition to responding to at-home emergencies, Animal Ambulance performs home euthanasia and transfers critically ill animals from one hospital to another. "We also help a lot of senior citizens who have large dogs they can't lift," says Andy Berg, owner of Animal Ambulance.

The service costs roughly \$300 per trip, and has an average response time of 35 minutes. Pet emergency transport services are also available in New York, Boston, and Chicago.

Frias remains grateful to Animal Ambulance. Although Molly died about a week after being rushed to the hospital, Frias says she knows by taking advantage of Animal Ambulance's services, she did everything she could for Molly.

"They were a godsend."

—Beth Ford Roth