

READING

a Read the first paragraph again and write true (T), false (F) or not given (NG).

- 1 British owners spend £4 billion on their pets every year.
- 2 One quarter of owners buy their pets presents.
- 3 More pets than before have psychological problems.
- 4 Some owners have a problem knowing what to buy for their pets.

b Read the rest of the article. Which of the following apply to which pet (or none of them)?

- 1 his/her owner buys him/her clothes
- 2 his/her owner wants to make him/her look nice
- 3 he/she provides friendly company for his/her owner
- 4 his/her owner takes him/her on expensive holidays
- 5 his/her owner knows he/she is overindulgent
- 6 his/her owner takes him/her to the hairdresser

PET HEAVEN?

In some parts of Europe and the US, many pet owners see their cat or dog as a member of the family. In the UK, owners spend an amazing £4 billion annually on keeping their pets fit, well and entertained. In one survey, it was found that up to 40% of owners said they bought gifts for their pets, including Christmas and birthday presents. Owners happily pamper their pets with increasingly lavish lifestyles, including toys, furniture, accessories, 'gourmet' food and other treats. There are also pet psychologists for those with problems, pet passports for those who want to travel and a whole range of services on offer. There are hundreds of retail outlets offering owners a vast array of products. But many pets have everything they could ever ask for (or bark for?). The question for many owners now is: what do you give to the pet that has everything? We asked some owners what their pet got for his or her last birthday ...

Marion Dowdeswell and 'Pixie': Marion lives on her own in Edinburgh, UK, with her dog, Pixie. 'Pixie really is my best friend,' says Marion. 'He's such a lovely dog and my constant companion. I'd be lost without him, so I think I just treat him like I'd treat anyone I love.' For his last birthday, Marion bought Pixie a bed costing over £300. She admits that it was too much money to spend on an animal. 'I know it's a bit over-the-top,' she says, 'but he does love it!' Marion says she doesn't only indulge him on his birthday. Last week, she got a set of 'doggie boots' to keep Pixie's paws warm and stop him from slipping on wet ground. 'Probably a luxury, but why not occasionally?'



Sylvia and Brad Phillips and family and 'Beauty': The Phillips family from California, US, acquired Beauty three years ago when some friends emigrated. 'We didn't really know much about dogs then, and at first we didn't know how it would work out,' says Sylvia. 'But right from the start, she just made our family complete and the kids adore her. They're always finding new things to buy for her. She probably is spoilt but it's fun.' Last year, they got her a present they were really excited about: a necklace made of lake pearls which cost about \$70. 'She doesn't really wear it because it seems to irritate her, but we took some great photos!' says Sylvia.

Claudette and Pierre Leroi and 'Mignon': Claudette and Pierre live in Paris with their Yorkshire terrier, Mignon. Because Mignon is a long-haired dog, Claudette says that it's necessary to take her to the hairdresser's regularly. 'I take her to the beauty parlour once a week to have her fur done. I don't think it's a luxury really.' Mignon has her fur washed and brushed and sometimes cut and even curled. On special occasions, like her last birthday, for example, Mignon had the fur from the top of the head pulled back and tied as a ponytail, while the rest of her fur was cut short. 'She looked so cute – like a little Barbie doll,' says Claudette. She gets the dog anaesthetised to do these things so that she stands still for long enough, but Claudette thinks it's worth it.

So, is this pet indulgence gone mad? Or is it simply spoiling a valued member of the family?

