


Pet lovers unite!

Dogs jumping, cats playing, birds riding a bike and ferrets racing are a few of the exciting activities to see at the Pet Expo

Once you enter, you and your pet will be greeted with a panorama of so many pet events you won't know where to start. For dog lovers, there are agility exhibitions, grooming demonstrations and a Buckeye Dock Dog competition, where dogs compete to jump the farthest into a pool of water. This exciting event is what caused the roar of the crowd I'd heard outside. If you stand too close, prepare to get wet!

For cat lovers, the Amazing Acro-Cats will perform on stage all three days, plus play a variety of musical instruments! Horse rescue organizations will have horses on hand to pet and videos of many horses that need homes. In the Bird World area, you'll find live demonstrations on how to handle and harness a bird. Hang around long enough and you may be entertained by watching a bird ride a bike.

A petting zoo and pony rides are favorites with younger children. Last year, a long-horned steer



Who loves who more? Longtime volunteer for PetPromise Dave Huddle with his adopted dog Gigi.

Story and photos by NIKKI HEATH

It's a giant pet party! If there's ever a place to spoil your pet, learn about pets, see new pets or pet a pet, this is the place to be.

I attended last year's Columbus Pet Expo at Veterans Memorial in downtown Columbus and was stunned at its size and scope, and this year's event from March 26 to 28 promises to be even bigger. Attend and you'll see not only dogs and cats but also horses, alpacas, ferrets, birds and reptiles. Plus, there are all manner of exciting events to watch or even to participate in.

You may well sense the excitement, just as I did when I heard the roar of the crowd from inside as I approached the building. Lots of people were headed inside, their own pet in hand. Yes, you are welcome to bring your own pet, as long as it's well-behaved, a year or older, up-to-date with its shots and in a pet-friendly enclosure such as a stroller (see the Web site for a complete list of rules and to obtain a liability waiver that must be signed).



This little girl wanted to pet the ferret.

named Sancho was available to have his picture taken with you. This year, your kids can get a photo with a real live Easter Bunny.

If you don't already have a furry loved one, you may find it difficult not to start the paperwork to adopt a new one while you're at the Expo. There will be more than 30 animal rescue groups on hand with some of their rescues and information on how to adopt others.

And if there's something you want for your pet, you'll find it here. More than 100 exhibitors will be carrying items you didn't know you needed until you see them. There are dog and cat treats, clothes, leashes, toothbrushes, beds, cleaning supplies, training books, mugs and key chains, including ones with photos of every breed of dog imaginable.

Last year, I saw animal trainer Joel Silverman from Animal Planet give some pointers on training. His dog, Foster, showed off as he held a postcard in his mouth, climbed steps to a mailbox, opened it, inserted the card, closed the door, then put up the flag. Joel will be back this year with his favorite dogs to entertain you. He is also selling his newest book, *What Color Is Your Dog?*

At the seminar stage you'll find lectures on topics such as "Pet First Aid and CPR Overview," "Coping with Pet Loss" and "Dental Care for your Pets" to name just a few. Jerry Lee Parker, "The Smoothest Horse Trainer in the Business," and other local professional horse trainers will give seminars on a variety of equine training techniques.

New activities this year include:

- The North American Kennel Club will hold its National Competition of Rare and Ancient Dog Breeds on Saturday and Sunday. Unique dog breeds that you have never seen before will vie for top placement.
- Craig Rogers and his K-9 Revolution Frisbee Dogs, as seen on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, will perform shows several times a day.
- Bwana Jim's Reptile Show will offer an exciting adventure into the world of reptiles and other exotic creatures.
- The Columbus Pet Expo Fashion Show will feature the latest fashions and accessories for your pets on the runway stage. Some

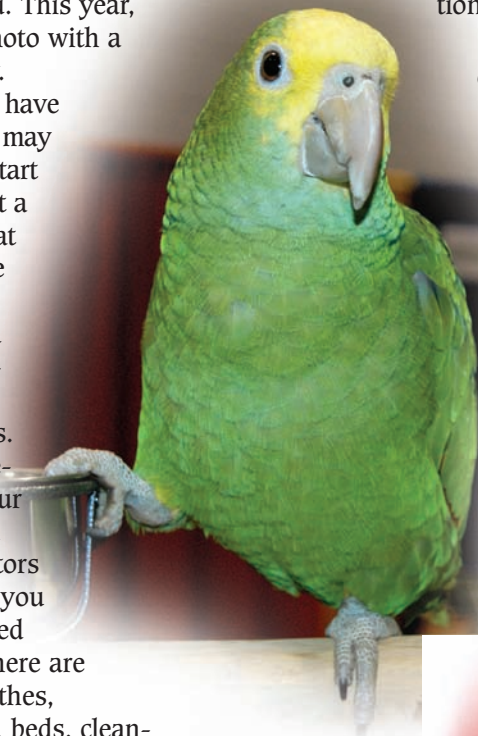
of the wonderful rescue animals that are up for adoption will model the latest fashions.

- Be sure to bring an outfit for your own fashion-conscious pet for the Dress Up Your Pet contest, held on Saturday and Sunday (visit the Web site for contest times and rules). Win exciting prizes and have the winner's photo included in the Columbus Pet Expo Photo Gallery.

So if you love your pet or need a pet, check out the Columbus Pet Expo! □

Nikki Heath is the graphic artist for Country Living.

Columbus Pet Expo, Franklin County Veterans Memorial, 300 W. Broad St., Columbus; Friday, March 26, 12 p.m.–9 p.m., Saturday, March 27, 10 a.m.–8 p.m., Sunday, March 28, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Check www.columbuspetexpo.com for directions, discount ticket offers and information on rules governing your pet's attendance.



Volunteers needed!

People age 18 and older wishing to become a volunteer at the Columbus Pet Expo should go to www.columbuspetexpo.com to sign up. All volunteers will receive a Columbus Pet Expo T-shirt and a free pass for the Expo. There will be opportunities to help in the Kids' Fun World doing crafts, face-painting and overseeing games and contest. There will also be opportunities to help with the Pet Fashion Show, the Dress Up Your Pet Contest and the Non-Profit Animal Rescue Auction. More fun and interesting jobs are listed on the Web site www.columbuspetexpo.com.