

Archive

Money's No Object for Pampered Pets in America

October 31, 2009 06:06 AM

It's sometimes said that Americans treat pets like members of the family. That's not always true. In many cases, we treat our cats and dogs and lizards and fish, birds and snakes and ferrets and hamsters better than we treat our families.

Spending on pets in the United States has doubled in a decade, to more than \$34 billion a year. Remember all the news coverage of the Gulf War, when reporters kept talking about "oil-rich" Kuwait? Well, our annual spending on pets is greater than Kuwait's gross domestic product figure!

Now to be fair, most Americans just buy ordinary kibbles and kitty litter. But wait until you hear what some of the outrageous and extravagant things others of us buy for our pets.

Should we start with the nail polish? The ermine vests? The gold-plated doggie bowls? The pet clothing collection with the Harley-Davidson motorcycle company logo? The Ralph Lauren "pucci collars"? How about the gourmet salmon, toothbrushes and toothpastes for cats?

We spend \$11 billion a year on veterinary care -- including all kinds of "heroic" procedures like liver transplants, usually reserved for desperately ill humans. Who knows how much we shell out on caskets and burial plots for Fluffy and Rascal and Spike.

And of course there was the ultimate in adoration of our furry friends. As you may have heard, a woman in Texas spent \$50,000 for one animal -- little Nicky the Second. He was the first kitten cloned-to-order from the DNA of the beloved, but dead, Nicky the First.