

New Trade Show Brings Luxury to L.A.

■ By Marissa Heflin, Pet Style News

The Luxury Pet Pavilion, which made its debut during Pet Fashion Week in August in New York City, is coming to Los Angeles on Feb. 23-24, 2008, as a stand-alone trade show.

The Luxury Pet Pavilion was launched to give buyers and sellers a place to conduct business so they can take their time and not be in a hurry or bump into each other in booths like other trade shows, said creator Stephanie Ellis, chief executive officer of Pawniquely Yours, a Fort-Lauderdale-based company specializing in hand-crafted dog beds.

"I wanted to create an atmosphere to benefit the manufacturers and buyers where they can come shop, network and really have a total overall experience," Ellis said.

But just because it is labeled a "luxury" trade show doesn't mean only exhibitors with expensive products can participate. The trade show shouldn't discriminate because everyone feels they have a good product, Ellis said.

"Luxury to me is quality," she said. "It's not a

which includes a company description, a link to the vendor's website and a podcast interview.

"We want you to enjoy yourself at the pavilion by getting to know the vendors beforehand, educating you a little bit about shopping, getting you prepped by seeing some of the products and getting to know the manufacturers better," Reed said. "It provides a better shopping experience."

For the New York show, one of the vendors was dog food manufacturer Halo, Purely for Pets, based in Tarpon Springs, Fla. Why would we have a dog food manufacturer at the show? Because more people are interested in noncommercial pet food, especially after the recent pet food recall, Reed said.

In turn, more pet boutiques are beginning to sell pet food. They need repeat business, she added. By having that vendor at the show, retailers can choose whether or not to incorporate it into their store.

"We provide them with that option," Reed said. "Here, this is the trend, take it."

Reed said other trends include pet T-shirts (they



Luxury Pet Pavilion coordinators: from left, Stephanie Ellis, president; Tammy Hansen, vice president of operations; Charlotte Reed, director of marketing and media; and Kathie Hansen, executive assistant

cost factor. It can be a phenomenally made \$9 T-shirt that you can wash every other day and it's going to last you months. I think a lot of people relate luxury to cost and it doesn't have anything to do with one another."

The Los Angeles show expects to see about 75 exhibitors, but it still has room to grow, she said. So far, the lineup includes A Pet's World, Bark Vineyards, Beau Nouveau, Creature Couture, Decadent Digs, Diamond Dogs, Fairytail Couture, Happytails Canine Spa, Jax & Bones, Romy & Jacob, Ruff Ruff Couture and Silver Bones.

However, to have an effective shopping experience at a trade show, a little preparation work is needed, according to Charlotte Reed, the director of marketing and media for the Luxury Pet Pavilion and long-term pet industry trend watcher.

Prior to the show, retailers can pre-shop through the Luxury Pet Pavilion's website, www.luxurypetpavilion.com. Each vendor has its own Web page,

can serve as bulletin boards), multifunctional pet travel bags, pet furniture (you no longer need to hide your pet's bed when company comes over), the emergence of lux fabrics and matching and dog-themed jewelry. Leopard print is also making a comeback, Reed says.

The Luxury Pet Pavilion will also include educational programs. Details are still in the works, but the topic of buying trends, such as what months to buy for each season, is at the top of the list.

As for future shows, "We are going to travel and have as many shows as vendors want," Ellis said. "We are going to let them drive us. I think by the end of the day by letting them partake in all of this, it makes us successful because we have satisfied their needs."

The Luxury Pet Pavilion will help benefit Angel on A Leash, a therapy dog program created by The Westminster Kennel Club. Some of the sponsors include Pet Style News and Pet Product News International. ♦