



Spot & Me

By Laura Frisch January 16, 2011

THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES

Buyers Beware: Pocket Pups

Pocket Pups and toy designer breeds have problems all their own.

What is a "pocket pup" you may ask?

I am not speaking to the "pocket Beagles" that were bred to be carried in saddlebags in the 1800s around England for hunters on horseback.

The dogs I am writing about this week are under five pounds as adults. They come in various breeds: poodle, Yorkshire terrier, chihuahua, and various mixes.

You may have seen them being toted around by famous starlets in little purses or even in their pockets. You may have also seen them around town, since there are pet stores and breeders in Chicago that sell them.

But buyers beware, according to local veterinarians, just as they come with a high price tag between \$1000-\$2000, they can also come with expensive doctor bills.

Dr. Brooke Bartell of [Animal 911](#) warns of their proclivity to low blood sugar which can lead to coma or even death, along with delicate limbs that often break and problems with liver shunts.

These medical emergencies can land many pocket pups in the veterinarian's office with bills more than \$1,000 and owners with broken hearts. Special care must be taken from the moment an owner gets their tiny puppy, as I wrote a couple weeks ago, feeding the dog several small meals throughout the day and making sure they get enough fluids.

They are also too fragile to be around rambunctious young children without supervision. These dogs can not be outside in hot or cold weather for long periods of time.

Cari Meyers of The Puppy Mill Project said, "My first experience with a 'pocket puppy' was an accidental encounter with a woman who was holding one while visiting a shelter I worked at." She continued, "The dog was...wrapped in layers of sweaters and blankets...It turned out the the owner bought her from a pet store and two days later the dog almost died."

Meyers and her group has investigated these types of dogs. "The thing that people need to know is that these dogs are bred from two runts to make an even smaller dog...and prone to all kind of disease and genetic problems," she said.

When asked about these extremely small dogs at the [Morton Grove Animal Hospital](#), Dr. Katie Bertoglio said she has seen a decrease in new puppies coming to her office.

She said that she often saw pocket pups in her office in 2007, but since then the numbers have gone down. Bertoglio did not know whether that was due to their medical issues or the declining economy.

I was curious if I could find some of these little dogs and took a trip to our local [Paws Pet Place](#) on Golf Road in Morton Grove, where they specialize in small dog accessories.

Owners Kim and Nicole Anderson said they see some of these dogs at their store, buying such items as bows, coats, toys and food. Although they see more dogs in the eight to 15 pound range, they do have many products for the five pound crowd as well.

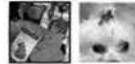
Kathy Hortiz, the groomer at Paws, has worked on some of the miniature dogs, but most of her clients are between eight to 20 pounds.

With special care these pocket pups can live a normal life, but it is definitely a risky move. My own experience with designer toy dogs is our 12-year-old rescued Maltese chihuahua mix who at eight pounds can hold her own with the big dogs and kids. But we do have to take care and watch her when the dogs and kids play rough.

Do you have any pocket pup tales? Tell us in the comments.



PHOTOS (2)



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