

**Do you prefer cats or dogs? Pets are an important part of many British families.**

What is the number one favourite pet in the UK? If you think the answer is 'dogs' – you are wrong. There are 8.6 million cats and 8.3 million dogs in Britain, according to recent figures. Pet statistics experts predict that there will be more dogs than cats next year as dogs become more and more popular.

**Dogs as accessories**

We like to spend time with our pets. The Queen is famous for her corgis (short-legged, friendly dogs) and is often photographed with them. Nowadays some dog owners are more extreme – a few TV celebrities even take their dogs shopping or to restaurants in their handbags. Chihuahuas, pugs and Yorkshire Terriers are especially popular as 'handbag dogs' because they are so small.

**Dog holidays**

People are not just buying their pets the latest clothes and accessories – they are also giving them holidays. Many UK hotels and holiday parks now welcome dogs as guests. What about dog owners who go abroad for their holidays? They can leave their pets at a dog hotel or dog spa while they are away. Some dog spas even provide their canine guests with a TV.

**Dogs are for life**

The British charity, The Dogs Trust, finds homes for thousands of lost and abandoned dogs every year. Their famous slogan 'A dog is for life and not just for Christmas' was created in the 1970s to teach people about the responsibility of owning a dog. The Dogs Trust told British people not to give dogs as gifts or treat them like toys. 'Handbag dog' owners – are you listening?

**Dogs on TV**

Victoria Stilwell is the host of the popular TV programme called It's Me or the Dog. In the show Victoria helps dog owners with their pets' bad behaviour. She tries to find solutions to problems such as a Dalmatian (a black and white spotted dog) who thinks he owns the house and won't let the family sit on the sofa, dogs that will only eat ice cream and biscuits and even a bulldog (a small, muscular dog) who uses the owner's bed as a toilet. Yuck!

**Fashion for dogs**

You can shop online or on the high street for the latest in dog clothes and accessories. Specialist shops sell items such as dog boots, dog fancy dress costumes, dog coats, dog dresses and dog pants (yes – pants!).

We asked some dog owners to give us their opinions about dog fashion.

'Why do dogs need clothes? They have fur! I would never buy clothes for my dog. Ridiculous!'

**Brian, Leominster**

'We bought our dog a new collar and a lead at Christmas.'

**Amanda, Birmingham**

'I think dog clothes are cute. I have a coat for my little dog although I don't carry her around in a bag. Dogs need lots of exercise.'

**Elaine, Liverpool**

'My dog wears a bandana. Is that a fashion accessory?'

**Steve, Bristol**