

New Photo Markets

RIGHT IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD



MALIBU

THIS PHOTO ILLUSTRATES THE POSITION THAT PETS HOLD IN A HOUSEHOLD ... THEY OFTEN HAVE THE SAME PRIVILEGES AS FAMILY MEMBERS.

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(August Photo Contest Entry)

A tiny Shih Tzu stares at you from its Pet Pocket (worn by the

etc. However, do not depend for the internet to bring in your neighborhood business. But if you advertise your internet address on business cards and brochures, the internet site can certainly promote your business with your neighbors.

Props can be used to enhance pet photos. For instance a large male dog might look great in a bow tie for a photo to be used as an invitation to a party. A cat with a champagne glass filled with milk could be an invitation to drop in for drinks. And so it goes. Once you use a few props, an avalanche of ideas will begin to form.

In the beginning, pricing should be very reasonable. Remember, you are expanding or building a new business. It's important to get your name out, have a great portfolio of pet photos and cover your costs up front if possible. Profits will come in due time so do not be discouraged if you can break even for a few months.

On another note take into consideration that many people who appear to own pets are actually in business. They may be breeders, trainers or simply provide foster homes for pets. Their need for photos may far exceed the average pet owners. That group could be a goal for further expansion in your pet photography business.

Few industries grow at more than \$1 billion per year and those that do usually cannot be accessed by the freelance photographer. With the enormous growth of the pet industry, there is certainly a niche for the skillful, aggressive pet photographer. Ω

Spending expected to be \$29.5 billion in 2002 and reach \$31 billion in 2003! Sounds like the US military budget, right? Guess again. Those numbers come straight from the American Pet Products Manufacturing Association (APPMA), a trade association. They also report that food and supplies rank second and third respectively, behind services related to veterinary care as the greatest expenses for pet owners.

This is an astounding amount of money spent each year by pet owners which reveals the importance of pets in family life. APPMA also reports that today 62 percent of U. S. households own pets compared with 56 percent in 1988, the first year that the association conducted a national pet owner survey.

So what does this mean for photographers? A ready made market for pet photography right in your own neighborhood! That could range from pet portraits to pets at play for custom designed greeting cards etc.

How does one get started? It's probably the easiest market ever to conquer. Pets are everywhere -- right on the street where you live. Your neighbor's white cat may be doing a ballet on your deck when you wake up in the morning. The two long-legged greyhounds drag their 105 pound owner down your street for their daily walk.

owner) at the local park.

Owners are flattered when you ask for permission to photograph their pet. In return, present them with one of your best shots and let them know you specialize in pet photography.

Take any opportunity available to shoot the pet with its owner or their children -- these make great holiday photos or custom greeting cards for families and friends.

Once you have a few really good pet photos, you can easily develop one, two or three ways to advertise your services as a Pet Photographer. The most effective first step could be business cards with a close-up pet portrait staring straight at the viewer. The usual contact information would also appear on the card. Distribute the cards to everyone in your family, neighborhood and where you work.

Next could be a simple brochure that you can design on your home computer with three really good pet images plus a simple price list and contact information. Also, if you can provide specialized greeting cards etc, that custom service should be explained, but not priced. Note that free quotes are available. This same information could appear on a post card and be mailed to pet owners.

Finally, you might design a home page on the internet with several pet photos, price lists, contact information