

Cats, Other Pets Gain Popularity at Weddings

Poll reveals trend in adding pets to wedding ceremonies.

By Soraya Gutierrez

Posted: May 17, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

Don't be surprised to see both a cat and a flower girl in the next wedding you attend, a poll suggests. Here comes the bride, and she's holding a cat. First comes the dog, then comes marriage. These scenarios are gaining popularity among pet owners, according to a recent poll of about 3,100 people, which unveiled that 42 percent either say that pets did play a part or would play a part in their wedding ceremony.

It's no surprise that many people regard their pets as family members. Despite knowing how strong the human-animal bond is, the poll results were surprising, says Brian Iannessa, spokesman for Veterinary Pet Insurance.

He says the company posed the following question via its newsletter: "Did your pet(s) play a part in your wedding ceremony?" Results for the four possible answers were as follows: Yes. (15 percent) I've yet to marry, but if and when I do, yes. (27 percent) No, only humans took part in my ceremony. (47 percent) No, but I've been to a wedding in which a pet was involved. (11 percent)

Inspiration for the poll came from the emphatic way that people treat their pets as children, Iannessa says.

While dogs make the most common of the four-legged wedding attendees because they tend to be more sociable animals and can be trained to walk down the aisle more easily, other pets are making special appearances, including cats, ferrets and horses.

The most popular roles for dogs to play in weddings are the ring bearer, flower girl or welcome host, according to Christa Vagnozzi, senior editor of WeddingChannel.com. To make sure the dog wears the proper wedding attire, she suggests owners place a faux ring around the dog's collar or a collar of flowers for the walk down the aisle.

"Brides and grooms who can't foresee getting through their wedding day without all family members represented are finding ways to incorporate their pets into their ceremony," Vagnozzi says. "Not only is it a great way to have your four-legged friend with you on your big day, it's a great way for you to personalize your wedding."

To avoid any wedding-day disasters and help ensure pets will be as well-behaved as possible on the big day, she says people should take their pets to the wedding venue before the ceremony. This will help the pet become more familiarized and comfortable with the wedding location, she says, and it's a great opportunity to have them practice walking down the aisle.

"We've also heard of some brides and grooms hiring their dogwalker to dog sit their pet at the wedding," she says.

Tonya Guy-Williams, a VPI policyholder from Clements, Md., included her Husky mix, Klondike, in her wedding. Klondike served as the ring bearer and best man.

"He did fine with all of the people, and he never barked until the end when we think the sun started to get to him," Guy-Williams says. "He is our baby. No one who knows us was surprised that we would want him in our wedding. They were more surprised that we found a tuxedo that fit."

Hollywood celebrities are already in on the trend. Rebecca Romijn, Adam Sandler and Gwen Stefani are just a few of the celebrities who have included pets in their weddings.