

PARTING SHOT

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



The Astoria Column, seen from the road in October, was lighted pink to mark breast cancer awareness.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

ODDITY

Pets dress up for more than Halloween

Dogs have busy social lives, little shame

By SUE MANNING
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Wally the Welsh corgi used to get dressed up to go trick-or-treating for Halloween, often as a banana, once as a dinosaur.

But Wally, owned by Marc and Cynthia Dalangin of Wharton, New Jersey, doesn't go trick-or-treating anymore. Like a lot of busy dogs, he has too many other engagements. And as a budding Instagram celebrity, he needs a wardrobe full of costumes to choose from.

As dogs have filled their social calendars, they've had to fill their closets too. They're not just dressing up once a year on Halloween. These days, dogs and their owners are getting invited to parties, parades, meet-ups, pumpkin patches, picnics, Christmas tree farms and many other themed outings.

Wardrobe demands

As a result, canine costumes have become more than just something dogs wear once to a party. It's essential for dogs and cats who are up-and-coming social media celebrities to have a varied wardrobe. With their likes and followers growing faster than speeding bullets, their fans want new photos all the time.

Two years ago, Wally left the simple banana costume behind when he underwent a lifestyle and wardrobe makeover. Now he dresses like Elvis Presley ("King Corgi") and Michael Jackson ("Thriller Corgi") and has become a rising star on Instagram, with 63,000 followers, and Facebook, with 12,000 likes.

Wally's transformation coincides with the pet costume industry's coming of age. And business is booming.

The National Retail Federation estimates that 20 million pet owners will dress their pets this Halloween, spending \$350 million on the costumes.

The online marketplace eBay had 1.5 million pet costumes for sale on Oct. 21 out of 800 million items listed for sale, with 159 million active customers in 200 countries, said Zoher Karu, vice president of global optimization and data for eBay.

Pet costumes represent 2 percent of Costume SuperCenter's sales. The company



Marc Dalangin via AP

Wally, a Welsh corgi dressed in a Batman costume for Halloween. Wally has dressed as a banana, a dinosaur, Michael Jackson and Elvis. He doesn't go out anymore. People come to see him instead, or visit him on Instagram, with 63,000 followers, and Facebook, with 12,000 followers.

sells nothing but costumes and accessories on eBay and other sites.

No ceiling on pet spending

"There does not seem to be a ceiling on what people are willing to spend on their pets," said Michael Esposito, the company's business development and affiliate marketing director. The majority of their pet costumes sell for \$14.99 to \$24.99. You would never know

the costume only required a 10th of the fabric needed for a human costume, he said.

"Costume SuperCenter has seen its pet costume sales double every year for the last three years," Esposito said. He expects the trend to continue.

Halloween costumes for pets and people tend to follow news headlines and movies. The latest "Star Wars" movie isn't out yet but demand is already high for Darth Vader and Yoda costumes.

"In March next year, Batman and Superman two of the most iconic superheroes will face off on the big screen, but we are already seeing the competition play out in stores and online this Halloween season with these two costumes neck-and-neck, topping our best-selling list," said Eran Cohen, chief customer experience officer for PetSmart.

It's close, but the Batman costume is actually outselling the rest of the field, Cohen said.

Batman v. Superman

The top five best-selling costumes on eBay for pets are Superman, lion, panda, Batman and necktie. For adults, the top five costumes are Batman, Frozen characters, Alice in Wonderland, Star Wars characters and French maid. Spider-Man came in 10th.

The children's list put Mario and Luigi (Mario Bros.) on top, then Star Wars, Batman, Frozen and a witch. The Minions, Spider-Man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Minnie and Mickey Mouse and Power Rangers round out the kids list.

Another popular pet costume consists of a figure that appears to be riding the dog, like a storm-trooper riding a dewback, a reptile from "Star Wars."

Still have the banana

Cynthia Dalangin has been in charge of Wally's wardrobe expansion, buying from eBay, PetSmart, DIY sites and garage sales. Wally has a particularly large collection of bowties because they set off his ears so well. She gets a lot of ideas from Pinterest and Etsy.

Most sellers said they stock pet costumes year-round because birthdays, Christmas and New Year's are all good holidays for partying and photographs. And keeping up one's on-line profile with fresh photos is a year-round job. Wally went as Batman on Oct. 17 when he joined 56 other corgis at a pumpkin patch at Conklin Farms in Montville, New Jersey. A minion is next.

If Wally accepts all his invitations, he might have to rotate through all his costumes, including Captain America and an outfit themed on "Breaking Bad." And if he comes up short, "we still have the banana," Dalangin said.

A dog in a Supergirl costume for Halloween. The pet costume industry has come of age. Excluding pet stores, retailers have only just begun to look at pet costumes as a trend.

PetSmart via AP



A dog dressed for Halloween in a Batman costume. PetSmart via AP