

Give Your Dog a Sweater

By Steve Dale for *The Dog Daily*



Joan and John spare no expense on the comfort of their Tibetan Terrier, Boots Montgomery. In fact, Boots Montgomery has a section of the front hall closet that's all her own. "After all, it's where mommy and daddy keep their jackets," Joan says. Boots, too.

Here's the wardrobe Boots Montgomery has in that closet: From Harrod's in London, Boots Montgomery has a real Burberry trench coat that cost \$300, and also from Harrod's a vinyl slicker for \$50; she might also be seen strutting around town in a gray and maroon fleece coat, about \$75, from a swanky pet supply store. When the frost bites, she's prepared with two heavy sweaters, each costing around \$35.

Fashion may or may not be important to canines. It probably depends on the dog. Most important is the purpose canine couture can serve. Certainly Greyhound, Whippet, and Saluki owners realize how little body fat their sighthounds have. When the temperature dips into the 30s, a jacket is required. These dogs really can't tolerate the cold.

What isn't known is that when the weather turns downright frigid, even some bigger dogs are far happier with some warm attire.

Rhodesian Ridgebacks, Weimaraners, Boxers, and Dalmatians are among the breeds who appreciate a coat or a sweater. Lots of mid-size and smaller canine models would also appreciate a wrap to keep warm -- the Basenji and Beagle among them.

"Toys dogs can't physically retain body heat," says Darlene Arden, author of *The Irrepressible Toy Dog*, (Howell Book House). "I get calls about toy dogs having housebreaking accidents in the winter. Well, what a surprise -- it's 20 below and you let the shivering little dog out in the yard. In less than a minute, the dog scratches to come back in - - or runs back inside through a doggy door. And guess what? The dog didn't do its business outside. How would you like going to the bathroom with no clothes on when it's 20 below?"

Of course, not all dogs need a jacket or sweater. It never seems *too* cold for a Malamute, Samoyed, or Siberian Husky. For the rest, Joan Montgomery says, "I believe most dogs come to enjoy wearing their coats. Wouldn't you enjoy something that keeps you warm? They're not stupid! I believe all owners should consider a sweater or jacket when it's cold outside."

Depending on your size and your dog's size, you can simply dress your dog in one of your old sweaters, especially if it has a zipper or buttons. Cut the arms so they reach about halfway down your dog's front legs, and then zip or button it across his back.

If you wear a sweater, though, you might as well look good. "Dogs like to look fashionable," says Alice Lerman of Barker & Meowsky, a sort of Neiman Marcus for pets in Chicago (www.barkerandmeowsky.com).

"They love the attention they get strutting down the street looking oh so good. I have a client with two Pugs -- Rugby and Benny -- who now like clothes so much they try to put on 'their parents' clothes."

Joan believes Boots Montgomery is the best-dressed dog on her block. For example, the sweater colors were chosen because Boots Montgomery looks so good in them. And Burberry was chosen, well, because Boots Montgomery deserves the best. No cheap knock-offs for this pup.

Lerman explains, "Pink is the 'in' color this year, but not for the guy dogs. Their big color is charcoal. Cable knit sweaters are trendy, and so are Argyle sweaters." Lerman adds that from around New Year's Day through February she sells hundreds of sweaters and jackets. "Of course, many dogs have more than a single outfit," she says. "After all, something may be in the laundry. Layering is a good idea, with a turtleneck under the sweater."

"If you insist, fashion is fine," says Arden. "But it's really about keeping the dogs comfortable."