

Pet owners'™ dedication to their animals apparently only intensifies over the holidays. A total of 21% of Oklahoma pet owners say they will spend more on their pooch than their partners this Christmas, according to a recent survey by California-based Innovet Pet Products. That figure doesn't faze Robbie Hicks, president of Southern Agriculture, which has seven animal product stores in the Tulsa area. "We usually have an uptick during the holidays," he said by phone. "We put Christmas out early. We've had Christmas in our store since November. Our biggest days where we really see a spike is right around Christmas Eve." Innovet Pet's™ survey, which connected with 2,500 pet owners, also found that 37% of Oklahoma pet owners admit to having dressed Bowzer up in Christmas-themed clothing at some point, and 29% admit to signing Christmas cards with a pet's™ name. "Pets are loving, loyal companions," Dave Louvet, CEO and founder of Innovet Pet, said in a statement. "Hence, it's™ perhaps no surprise that many people choose to splurge more on their pets than their partners." Big holiday items at Southern Ag include dog breed Christmas ornaments, dog toys, treats and rawhides, Hicks said. "I get a lot of people in here that say 'I'm shopping for my kid's™ dog,'™ because their kid's™ in college and they have their dog or cat and are taking care of it," he said. "Or they have a kid who moved away and didn't™ want to take the animal. They are like their adopted family." Much of the Christmastime spending is focused on smaller breeds, the lap dogs that are "treated like a child," Hicks said. "Not that your larger breeds aren't™ treated that way, but when you're holding a dog, those are the ones you're putting in a sweater. You're not going to see a lot of Labs in a sweater." Aside from pampering pets with toys and clothing, a total of 29% of pet owners say they feed their dogs some of their Christmas meal. Innovet, however, warns that some foods can be harmful to domestic animals. Foods that owners should avoid feeding their pet include raisins, sultanas, currants and grapes, all of which

can cause vomiting, diarrhea and in extreme cases, kidney failure. Walnuts and macadamia nuts can harm an animal's digestive, muscle and nervous systems. Moreover, on top of being a choking hazard, the seeds, stones and pits of fruit such as apples, peaches, plums and apricots contain cyanide, which is poisonous to pets. "Despite treating our pets as part of the family during the holiday season, it's important to remember that some foods are only suitable for human consumption and can be extremely toxic to your pets," Louvet said. Featured video Rhett Morgan 918-581-8395 rhett.morgan@tulsaworld.com Twitter: @RhettMorgan

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