

Temperature-controlled pet beds, once considered a luxury, are increasingly considered an investment in a pet's health and comfort. **By Julia Ann Charpentier**

Climate-Controlled Pet Beds



Before pets were counted as members of the family, a decorative kitty pillow or a heavy-duty dog mat sufficed as a sleeping spot. Anything more was extravagant; anything less was the floor. Today, however, people are willing to invest in temperature-controlled pet beds for various reasons: relief from arthritis pain, to keep a pet warm or cool during seasonal fluctuations, or simply to give companion animals their own piece of furniture.

"We want to make sure that we're offering luxury and comfort, and that we're treating our pet as a living member within our families," said Charlotte Havelly, pet lifestyles director for PetSafe, by Radio Systems Corp. (Knoxville, Tenn.). "We sit on nice furniture. We like soft fabrics. We like a little bit of luxury. We offer that for our dogs and cats as well."

Options abound for the smart retailer who wants to meet this increasing demand. Before you start stocking shelves, though, learn the differences between beds that offer comfort and beds that are therapeutic. Learn how different heating and cooling technologies work and how much electricity will be used. The more you know, the better you can help customers make quality pet bed investments.

The Cutting Edge

The latest innovations in temperature-controlled beds stray far from the traditional plug-in mat.

Radiant heat therapy, for example, is provided via a ceramic hybrid carbon filter that mimics the sun warming the

earth in Fauna Sauna Heated Spa Beds by Wavemaker L.L.C. (Berkeley, Calif.). "Just as a dog or cat loves to lie in the sun, they are naturally drawn to the warmth of the Fauna Sauna because that's what it feels like to them—like a sun bath," said co-owner Lisa Tarver. "That's because the sun warms the earth with far infrared heat at virtually the same wavelength as the Fauna Sauna."

Heat is emitted through side and top panels of the beds, so animals don't come into direct contact with the heat source. This technology is currently popular in high-end health spas, which utilize far infrared radiant heat because it's believed to have therapeutic qualities. (See "Benefits of Radiant Heat Therapy.")

The beds require a lot more electricity than a traditional heated pet bed—nearly 200 watts—and are designed for shoppers seeking a unique, high-end piece of pet furniture. The Regent and Carlyle are the largest, with heated panels built into the sides. The Pierre is for small dogs and cats and has panels in the back and top.

At the opposite end of the energy spectrum, the all-season, reversible WarmSense beds from Paus (Ironwood, Mich.) use no power at all. Instead, Mylar reflects the energy radiated from a pet to keep the animal warm. To further appeal to the eco-friendly set, the beds are filled with polyester fiber made from recycled plastic bottles. The Cuddle Nest, Gusseted and Ortho beds, available in various sizes, also employ High-IQ Freshness: smart molecules in the fabric that trap and neutralize odor.

Paus markets to "pet parents," according to pet division manager Fara Erspamer. "We have had a good year despite the [economic] downturn. I think people are being selective in their spending dollars and understand that pet products are an investment," Erspamer said.

Traditional, With a Twist

Heated pet beds aren't new to the market, but they are generating more interest than ever. "Especially with the trend of having little dogs—toy dogs—that whole trend lends itself to having heated products year-round, even for the dog world," said PetSafe's Havelly. Most heated pet beds now on the market come with an updated take on safety, reduced energy consumption or comfort.

Some heated beds create uncomfortable "hot spots." Allied Precision, based in

Benefits of Radiant Heat Therapy

SUNLIGHT WARMS YOUR face on a cold winter's day because far infrared radiant heat warms the body, not the air. A number of companies have figured out how to mimic that, making far infrared heat popular in high-end health spas.

At least one company has harnessed that technology for use in pet beds. Lisa Tarver, co-owner of Wavemaker L.L.C. (Berkeley, Calif.), believes her company's Fauna Sauna Heated Spa Beds can help pets suffering from things like arthritis, joint pain and skin irritation.

"In nature, warm-blooded animals receive heat radiantly—from the sun. There really aren't examples of warm-blooded animals seeking out other types of heat," said Tarver. "Since most pets spend the majority of their time indoors, they generally don't get enough infrared energy from the sun. This infrared energy supports their digestion, their immune system, helps remove toxins from the body—it really supports their metabolism overall."

Prior to making pet beds, Wavemaker created radiant heat products for universities and veterinary facilities. "While we are the first and only company to offer radiant heat products for animals, we have been able to base our product designs on years of scientific research," Tarver said.

Tarver, who sees radiant heat therapy



Fauna Sauna pet beds mimic the sun's rays by emitting far infrared radiant heat, believed to be therapeutic.

as preventive medicine, said animals know instinctively how close to lay to the emitter, what part of the body needs it and when it's enough. "Since we know that dogs and cats don't sweat through the majority of their bodies, they should never be in an enclosed heated environment," Tarver said. "That's why we develop all of our Fauna Sauna products with an open-air design and provide only non-contact heat so that there is never any danger of an animal overheating."

—Julia Ann Charpentier

Elburn, Ill., countered this old problem with new designs. Its outdoor-use plastic pet mats feature a heating element that floats in the center to spread the heat evenly. Its indoor-use beds have a heat source embedded within three layers of foam, according to Tom Reusche, the company's vice president. The amount of heat emitted depends on how deep the heater is placed in the layers.

Allied Precision's beds also are the only ones on the market with a transformer enclosed, bringing energy use down to 24 volts. "This just gives the retailer another option as far as a winter, year-round product," Reusche said, "and they will find that as far as keeping animals off furniture, a heated bed really does the trick."

For households with multiple cats

or dogs, K&H Manufacturing Inc. in Colorado Springs, Colo., offers the new Thermo-Pet Cuddle Cushion. "A lot of people that have cats would be buying multiple cat beds and putting them side by side because a lot of cats like to be together," said Larry Cobb, vice president of sales. The bed runs on 4 watts of electricity, he said, less than half of what it takes to run a night light and less than 8 cents a month if it's plugged in constantly. "You're right for the environment. You're right for your electric bill. And you're doing the right thing for your animal."

K&H, which makes both indoor and outdoor pet beds, is best known for the Lectro-Kennel, a company staple for more than 40 years. "A lot of veterinarians and breeders use our Lectro-Kennel for



The Thermo-Pet Cuddle Cushion runs on 4 watts, less than half the energy it takes to run a night light, according to Larry Cobb, K&H Manufacturing Inc.'s vice president of sales.

post-surgery and after whelping, and we even have an accessory that will regulate the temperature so you can cut the temperature down a little bit if they're unable to get off the heat source," said Cobb.

PetSafe has updated the traditional heated pet bed, too, adding things like orthopedic foam centers, vibrating massage, removable heaters and

machine-washable covers. The Universal Pet Bed Warmer is the company's biggest seller, but its 9- and 14-watt Heated Wellness line of sleepers and cushions and its recently launched pad draw consumers looking for a few bells and whistles. In February, PetSafe will release a heated pad in three sizes that has a dual temperature control, which can be set at 90 degrees or 102 degrees.

When creating new products, PetSafe keeps one eye on technology-driven consumers and the other on safety, especially for families with children. "Because the kids are there, we also have built our products to a child-safety standard. We not only look at what our products are, but we go into what the end use is," Havelly said.

Safety is a common theme among heated bed makers. Petmate Pet Products, a division of Dorskocil Manufacturing (Arlington, Texas), has low-voltage designs with a set temperature of 102 degrees. The 6-foot power cord is PVC-coated and chew-resistant, and comes with a circuit breaker plug for safety. Petmate has heated beds for dogs and cats, plus a specialized orthopedic bed for old and arthritic pets.

Retailers should emphasize the link between electric blankets for people and heated beds for pets, said Chris Galloway, Petmate's senior category manager. "Heated bedding is purchased by the consumer who thinks of his or her pet as part of the family," she said. "This consumer wants the pet to have similar comforts to other family members."

Comparing Climate-Controlled Pet Beds

Company	Products	Technology	Special Features
Allied Precision	Outdoor plastic mats, indoor heated beds, outdoor cooling beds	Floating heat source, layered foam, fabrics that retain water's cooling properties	Eliminates hot spots. Enclosed transformer reduces voltage.
K&H Manufacturing Inc.	Lectro-Kennel and Thermo-Pet Cuddle Cushion	Low-voltage conductive heat	Styles available for multiple pets and indoor or outdoor use.
Paus	WarmSense pet beds	Reflected radiant heat energy	Requires no electricity.
Petmate Pet Products, a division of Dorskocil Manufacturing	Petmate heated beds, pillows and orthopedic beds	Low-voltage conductive heat	Therapeutic beds are good for old or arthritic pets.
Radio Systems Corp.	PetSafe Wellness pads, beds, sleepers and bed warmer	Low-voltage conductive heat	Options include vibrating massage, orthotic foam fill, removable heaters and machine-washable covers.
Wavemaker L.L.C.	Fauna Sauna pet beds	Far infrared radiant heat.	Same technology used in human spas and salons because of therapeutic benefits. Animals do not come into direct contact with heat source.

—Alli Ann Chesporter



The Paws WarmSense Cuddle Nest, filled with polyester made from recycled plastic bottles, uses Mylar to reflect body heat radiated by pets.



The Kool Mat by Allied Precision, designed for outdoor use, traps water and uses its cooling properties to bring down a dog's body temperature.

'Cool' Technology

Warming beds are plentiful—some manufacturers make them exclusively—but other companies recognize the need for cooling beds, for large dogs that spend most of their days outside, for example. Water is typically used as the cooling agent.

Allied Precision makes the Kool Mat, meant for outdoor use. When water is poured over it, the cushioning retains the liquid and its cooling properties. "What this does is basically take the dog's heat and bring it down into the mat," said Reusche.

K&H's award-winning Cool Bed III uses water, too, but on the inside. The mattress has foam channels that move water in two directions beneath the pet. And, since the liquid stays inside, the bed can be used indoors as well. "If you keep your home mid-70s in the summer

months, that's 30 degrees cooler than the body temperature of the dog, and there's sufficient water within this to work really effectively," said Cobb.

Trying to sell pet beds in the summer is nearly impossible, Cobb said, but the Cool Bed III does well.

For customers who want one bed for the entire year, K&H's All Season Snuggly Sleeper comes with a summer mattress and a winter mattress with a heating element.

The company uses what Cobb calls "extreme" research methods—like a walk-in freezer in its distribution center—to test products. But what really works, he said, is using the products they make. "I have a farm in northern Illinois and the president of the company also has a facility in northern Wisconsin, and we literally test and put calibration devices on everything to check and see how they

perform under real-world circumstances," Cobb said.

Cobb's field testing is done by four cats that sleep on a heated bed in the barn, and two Dobermans, one of which is 10 years old. "After a long, hard run, boy, does she go to the heated bed. It's interesting to watch and see how the animals interact with the products and really understand it myself," Cobb said.

Retailers, too, should understand how the beds they stock work. Like a high-quality human bed, pet beds are no longer a frivolous luxury. Pet owners want to give their dogs and cats the same comforts they give themselves, so offer them an alternative to an old rug by the hearth. Just make sure they understand it's an investment in their pets' comfort and well-being. ■

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CRUZY PETS HAPPY THANKSGIVING! Crusty Doggy Crusty Cat Rusty Doggy Crusty Little Kitty By Denzer and Rodriguez

WE HAVE A LOT TO BE THANKFUL FOR! WE'RE PART OF THE FAMILY NOW!

WONG WONG

ISN'T THIS THE SAME THING WE HAD LAST YEAR DEAR?

I'M THANKFUL WE'RE HAVING TURKEY FLAVORED PET FOOD INSTEAD OF A TURKEY!

YEAH, WHO NEEDS DRUMSTICKS ANYWAY? OH, WELL, UH TOMMY LEE, OR CHARLIE WATTS, OR

HEY, WATCH THE FOUL LANGUAGE!

WHERE'S TOM?

IF I WAS A TURKEY, I'D BE DOING THE TURKEY TROT!

I'M STUFFED THAT WAS AN ARROW ESCAPE!

NO TURKEYS WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS CARTOON. YOU MIGHT GET A COUPLE OF THESE JOKES, BUT MOST OF THEM ARE REAL TURKEYS.

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