

Photographing Pets and Their Owners

A skilled, enterprising digital photographer can turn their hobby into cash in many ways. So you're looking for ways to start making money from digital photography. Here's a tip that sure to get orders rolling in. Here is Article 3 in our Making Money Series: Photographing Pets and Pet Owners.

Think pets. Think proud pet owners. Think events that involve proud pet owners taking their pets out to public places.

Then contact the organizers of these events and make a deal to provide a digital photography service. Promote your services in such a way that the event organizers understand how your presence enhances the event. You might also offer to provide event photographs in exchange for setting up a photography booth from which you will take orders, or you might agree to pay them a set fee or a percentage of your profits.

What are the possibilities for a digital photography service to pet owners?

1. Pet Shows

Big cities hold pet shows from time to time, most typically cat shows, dog shows and horse shows. Find out when the next pet show is happening in the city nearest you, and then contact the organizers with your offer to be on site taking photographs. You could be required to pay for a booth at the show. A booth is to your advantage, since you will have a "home base" from which to promote your service.

In case you have doubts about this .. let me tell you a story! I once owned a pedigreed ragdoll cat that I showed at cat shows. Cat owners who show their animals in competitions are fiercely proud of their animals. They groom these pets to within an inch of their lives, go to great expense decorating a special holding cage for the animals and fuss like a new grandmother with her first grandbaby.

They will pay money to have their pet photographed - especially while the judging is happening and most definitely if a prize is awarded. This is an opportunity that begs for an enterprising digital photographer like yourself to show up and start taking orders.

Run a Google search for cat shows, dog shows, etc., to learn the dates and locations. Alternatively, search for cat, dog and horse associations and inquire about shows.

2. Take Your Pet to Church Day.

Some churches offer a special blessing day, inviting members of the congregation to bring their pet to an Animal Blessing service. Contact the pastor and see what kind of deal you can work out. These pets will be dogs for the most part, since cats are less keen on accompanying owners in public.

3. Swim with Your Dog Day

In my community, the recreation centers publicize a Swim with Your Dog Day on the day before they drain the pool for its annual cleaning. Does your local recreation center do this? Could you suggest it to them? Need I say more?

4. Contact Your Local Pet Shop

Negotiate a deal in which the pet shop advertises your presence on a certain day or time. Pet owners can bring their animals in for digital photographs on that day. You show up, take orders, photograph the pets, and arrange a delivery method. The pet shop benefits, the pet owners benefit and you benefit. The animals probably get plenty of treats for posing, so they're happy too!

You will do best if you can set up a private area somewhere in the shop when you take the photographs. Nervous, excitable animals are best photographed in quiet surroundings. Lighting is also a consideration. Avoid using a flash if possible, or if you must, do not point the flash in the animals' eyes.

When photographing young animals, it's a good idea to provide some props and toys. You might have to engage the animal in an activity before he rewards you with a good pose.

4. Approach Animal Breeders

People who breed pedigreed animals such as cats, dogs, horses, birds and other species have contact with new and potential pet owners. These pet owners spend big money on a pedigreed animal. They have no qualms about paying for good photographs of their young pup or kitty. Provide the breeder with coupons promoting your service. Offer some photographs or a finder's fee as an enticement if you receive an order from one of the breeder's customers.

Also, understand that many animal breeders ship their animals to owners located all over the world. Try to negotiate a deal with the breeder to include a few photographs as part of the package the breeder sells to a new owner.

In exchange for marketing your service as part of this overall package, you might offer to take some photographs of the breeder's environment and the animals for sale. She can use these photos on her web site or on other promotional materials.

The pet industry is thriving, and photographing beloved pets is an excellent way to make money from digital photography.