

All I want for Christmas

by Robbie Pattison

I'm not one of those people who likes to buy Christmas gifts for their pets. For one thing, I have a feeling Salukis might be difficult to shop for, rather like my father, who invariably spent the week after Christmas exchanging all the presents the rest of the family had spent hours selecting for him.

Buying or making food gifts for a Saluki is problematic. Likely as not, he'll turn up his nose at meticulously prepared home-cooked treats made from 100% organically grown ingredients, though something illicit stolen from the counter is, of course, another matter altogether. I remember a Christmas shared with my first Saluki, 'Jay,' who entertained him-

self when he was left unattended by eating an entire box of After Eight dinner mints, first carefully extracting each wafer from its individual paper wrapping. I was at the time blissfully unaware that chocolate could be hazardous to a dog's health, but apparently he had a cast iron stomach, because he suffered no ill effects. Thinking back, I suppose it would have been worse if he'd snagged the Christmas turkey, but by the time December rolled around we'd had Jay several months and learned from sad experience to take at least a few precautions.

What about a nice new dog bed? A waste of money.

Your Saluki has already claimed the pillow next to you on your bed, and he's not going to be convinced to shift his pointy right hip bone from its favourite spot, lodged in your left ear. A new dog toy? Everyone knows how difficult it is to find toys Salukis consider to be of the remotest interest.

A handmade hound collar adorned with bells and tassels and a jaw-dropping price tag would be absolutely perfect, but you bought that last summer at the Saluki specialty and there was no way you were going to wait till Christmas to try it on him.

No, Saluki gift buying can be a challenge, though there is always a chance you might luck out and somehow come across just the thing.

I remember the year my father received from one or other of his exasperated relatives a tomato red sweater with what I can only describe as silver tinsel threaded gaudily through the weave. He exclaimed with genuine delight when he opened the box. Mind you, he only ever wore the sweater once a year – at Christmas

time, but it was good to know that the possibility of finding something to please him did exist. I'm sure the ideal Saluki gift is out there somewhere too, but I'm happy to let others look for it.

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