

Beer for dogs? Hotels cater to pets and their people

By Harriet Baskas, NBC News contributor

September 12, 2012, 4:02 pm

NBCNews.com



Courtesy Bowser Beer For travelers' thirsty pets, some hotels offer Bowser Beer: a malty, non-alcoholic brew that replaces hops with chicken or beef broth.

Some travelers choose a hotel for the complimentary continental breakfast and free Wi-Fi. If dogs ruled the world, they might choose a pet-friendly inn where the welcome amenities include a bottle (or two) of dog-friendly beer.

Bowser Beer — a malty, non-alcoholic brew that replaces hops with chicken or beef broth — was cooked up by Jenny Brown of 3 Busy Dogs in 2008 as something to go with the peanut-butter pretzels (Bowser Bits) she'd been marketing for pooches.

“Some people give the beer to their dogs with ice or poured over a bowl of dog food. But lots of dogs drink it right out of the plastic bottle,” Brown told NBC News.

Bowser Beer is stocked at many pet shops in six-packs, but

Brown says many pet-friendly restaurants and bars have added the product to the menu for their “Yappy Hours.” Now the FireSky Resort and Spa — a Kimpton Hotel in Scottsdale, Ariz. — and some of the more than 25,000 “pet-friendly” lodgings listed on sites, such as BringFido and in the AAA PetBook, are tucking the beer into amenity kits handed to guests checking in with their pets.

At the boutique Le Parc Suite Hotel in Hollywood, Calif., pets receive a welcome note signed by pet relations director, Bella (a Boston Terrier), as well as a kit that includes water and food bowls, a pet-friendly magazine and a bottle of Bowser Beer.

“Beer for dogs is a cool product,” said Barry Podob, the hotel’s director of sales and marketing. “And adding it to our welcome kit gives us a competitive edge over other hotels. The payoff is that we’re known as a very pet-friendly hotel.”

Offering an amenity that shows customers that your hotel “gets it” can “grab a potential guest’s attention,” said Katie Davin, director of hospitality education at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. “And a special amenity such as Bowser Beer or Westin’s Heavenly Dog Bed may be a differentiator.”

In microbrew-crazy Portland, Ore., the pet-friendly Hotel Monaco includes Bowser Beer in its special pet-package rates and offers it on the complimentary menu during nightly hosted wine hours, where dogs are welcome.

“We see pets as an extension of our guests, so we do everything we can to make them as welcome and comfortable as possible,” said general manager Craig Thompson. “The dogs like it and the owners like that we make that extra special effort to welcome their pet to the hotel.”