



FABJOB GUIDE TO
**BECOME A
PET SPA OWNER**



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1. Introduction

1.1 Why Open a Pet Spa?

Are you a creative and caring person? When you visit friends or family, are their pets drawn to you when they sense your love for all creatures great and small? Perhaps you already share your home with a few pets, or have one special someone in your life — a noble, beautiful purebred, a four-legged bundle of fur and kisses, or maybe a silky, purring lap companion.

If you love pets and interacting with them, and are looking for a fun and profitable way to make a career out of working with animals, becoming a pet spa owner is a fabulous way to make your dreams a reality.

1.1.1 So Many Options

One of the best things about becoming a pet spa owner is that there are many business options for you to choose from, so you're sure to find one that's right for you. For example, if you are already a trained groomer or plan to become one, your pet spa can be a small outfit with just the basics to do one pet at a time. You could possibly work from home part-time, and grow the business gradually as your client base expands, or just keep things small and manageable.

Or, can you picture yourself instead at the head of a busy pet spa, supervising baths, styling and massages for a constant stream of furry friends? If you want to hire a team of groomers and spa assistants, your pet spa can be a big and busy facility with many pets and owners coming and going all day long.

And if you're not even sure you want to set up a brick-and-mortar (physical) pet spa, that's fine too — in fact, some pet spa services are set up in a team of mobile grooming units (or just one), to bring the styling and spa services right to the clients' homes.

Like day spas or hair salons for those of us with two legs, pet spas offer clients a menu of services designed to improve a pet's appearance, health, and well-being. Pets can have their fur washed, brushed, and trimmed; their nails clipped; and their teeth brushed, as well as any other spa services you may offer. Pets go home after a spa session clean, energetic, and smelling great.

Not all pet spas offer the same services, and you can choose a menu of services that best fits the style of your pet spa and your clientele. We'll talk about each of the following pet spa services in this guide, and you may have your own unique ideas to add as well:

- Pet massage or touch techniques
- Pet pedicure
- Hydrotherapy
- Teeth brushing
- Toenail polish or fur coloring
- Doggy facial

- Hair “styling”
- Doggy workout (on a doggy treadmill or other dog-specific fitness equipment)
- Aromatherapy or special bath soaps

While you’ll see mostly dogs as a pet spa owner, be prepared for the occasional Persian or other pampered cat that passes through your doors as well. If you have a large client base, you could choose to specialize in cats only if the market was there, or a certain breed or size of dog (e.g., only “toys,” only shih-tzus, etc.) This flexible career can be custom-made to fit you perfectly.

1.1.2 A Booming Industry

Lots of people share their lives with pets, and where there are pets, there is a need for pet spa services. All pets need occasional grooming, and some breeds of dogs and cats in particular need frequent — even monthly — trips to the spa. How often a pet visits a spa for grooming is up to the owner’s preference, but every four to eight weeks or so is an average.

Pet stylist Jay Scruggs started Here Comes the Groom, a mobile grooming business, back in June of 1996. “We are now at the point where we no longer take new customers, and we have an extensive waiting list to get an appointment,” he says of his twelve-year success story.

According to the 2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey, 63% of U.S. households own a pet, up from 56% in 1988. So in addition to revealing that 71.1 million homes in the U.S. have pets in them, the survey also shows that pet ownership is on the rise. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has also identified animal care as a growth industry — in fact, they expect it to grow faster than the national average for all occupations through 2014. The BLS says:

“Pet owners — including a large number of baby boomers, whose disposable income is expected to increase as they age — are expected to increasingly take advantage of grooming services. As many pet owners increasingly consider their pet as part of the family, their demand for luxury animal services and willingness to spend greater amounts of money on their pet will continue to grow.”

In addition to more people owning pets, it turns out we're also pampering them and spending money on them like crazy. The American Pet Products Manufacturers Association estimated Americans' annual spending on their pets at \$40.8 billion as of 2007. This impressive figure has more than doubled since 1994, when annual spending was estimated at \$17 billion.

The pet spa environment today is all about personalized special services like massage or hydrotherapy, as well as making owners feel like they've made the best choice for their pet. In this business your clients come back several times a year, and the relationships you build will keep this happening. You'll also look for ways to make your pet spa services stand out from the pack.

The makeup of pet spa owners and stylists is changing too. "More highly educated and sophisticated people are entering the field as a second or third career change. Also more and more men are entering the field, which is currently female-dominated in the United States," notes industry veteran Melissa Verplank, co-founder of Whiskers Pet Resort and Spa.

1.1.3 Benefits of the Career

There are many great reasons why becoming a pet spa owner is a dream career. Here's an overview of the benefits you'll enjoy in the pet care industry.

Work with Animals

The obvious reward of working with beautiful and lovable animals has to come first on this list. Pets are fun, entertaining, and interesting creatures to work with. "There is no better feeling than arriving at a client's house and having their dog get so excited to see you," says Eddie Jacoby of Town and Country Mobile Pet Services.

While many animal lovers are drawn to veterinary work, not all can continue when they realize how sad it can be to work with sick or injured animals all day. It's not that the work of a vet or vet tech isn't wonderful and needed, but it's not for everyone, particularly those who are very emotional or sensitive. Opening a pet spa is an alternative career

path that still offers daily interaction with people and their pets, in an environment that you create and control.

Be Your Own Boss

When you start your pet spa you'll determine your own hours, and set your own policies. You'll also decide when you're going to take those well-deserved days off. As the owner you'll have the choice of doing all of the spa care yourself for a personal touch, or handing off some or all of the hands-on work to a well-trained team of bathers, assistants, and groomers for greater efficiency and profit. Sometimes you'll have busy times that require long days, but a career as a pet spa owner definitely offers more flexibility than most.

Be Truly Appreciated

No more working for someone who doesn't value or reward you for your many talents. More than once in this career you'll hear clients tell you that they appreciate your work, that you saved the day, and that they don't know what they would do without you. You will be trusted and appreciated by the pets you care for, and you will see firsthand the difference you make in their lives. Choosing a pet spa is like choosing a daycare for children — pet "parents" will be careful in who they trust, and both loyal and grateful when they find a fabulous pet spa like yours.

Unlimited Income Potential

As you read earlier, the market for pet spa services is booming right now, and you've got unlimited potential to grow. You can add to your client base until your appointment schedule is full, and then add employees to increase your earning potential. In time your pet spa could open up more locations, or establish franchises across the country or around the world.

You Can Start Right Now

According to a recent survey by Petgroomer.com, 68% of people surveyed considering a career in the pet spa industry had never worked with pets in their lives. In this business you can start simply with a

love of animals, and then build the skills from there. And unlike some industries, pet spa business opportunities are not limited to urban centers. In fact, 4 of every 5 future pet spa owners surveyed by Petgroomer.com planned to set up shop right where they were living now.

1.2 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Pet Spa Owner* is designed to help you get your new business started quickly and easily, by providing industry information, how-to guidelines, helpful hints on finding clients, and general advice on starting up. It will teach you how to take your interest in animals and your talent for earning their affection, and turn them into a profitable business.

Following this brief introduction, Chapter 2 (*Grooming and Pet Spa Basics*) will go over both common and unique pet spa services, and help you decide which ones your spa will offer. You'll read about three very different business models for your pet spa, and get information about deciding which one is right for you. And you'll get ready to own a pet spa with a wealth of resources you can use to learn about pet spas on your own, as well as some advice on pursuing formal training and certification as a groomer or spa service specialist.

Chapter 3 (*Planning Your Pet Spa*) answers the burning question: What do I do first? It takes you the next step along with advice and resources for business planning, start-up costs and financing, and investigating local licensing requirements, zoning, and insurance.

Chapter 4 (*Running Your Pet Spa*) is all about the nuts and bolts of pet spa ownership, from designing your workspace, to purchasing equipment and supplies, to hiring and managing staff, setting your fees, and getting paid. It covers day-to-day operations such as scheduling appointments, greeting clients at your spa, and in-spa hygiene, health and safety.

Chapter 5 (*Getting Clients*) will teach you how to best market your pet spa using paid methods such as advertising, websites and direct mail, as well as low- or no-cost tactics like press releases, sponsorships, and encouraging the all-powerful word of mouth referrals. The guide concludes with some final words of inspiration to launch you on your journey.

The information, resources and advice on these pages will save you hundreds of hours of research, so that you can start earning money more quickly. You'll avoid the common pitfalls, and make business decisions like an expert. So get ready, because armed with the knowledge this guide provides, you could be launching your new pet spa business just a short time from right now.