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Bailey is top dog - in name at least

The Boston Globe

By Matt Rocheleau
Globe Correspondent / September 3, 2009

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“Here, Bailey!”

In Natick, Wellesley, and Needham that name is the most likely to be shouted by a resident trying to retrieve a wandering pooch during a walk around town. And in Newton and Waltham, Bailey is not far from fetching the top spot in their lists of most common names for licensed dogs.

According to records of the dogs registered in the five communities, classic names for man’s best friend are few and far between.

See Spot run? Not in Natick, Wellesley, or Newton; though you might see Spots.

Lassie won’t warn Timmy or any other residents about trouble at the old mill, but perhaps the several local dogs named Lacie, Laci, or Lacey could.

There’s no Fido around. However, in the age of the all-important credit score, Natick has a Fico in his place.

Other historically popular dog names - such as Rover, Patches, Fluffy, Rex, and Pluto - are either entirely excluded or barely make the local lists of licensed dogs.

Instead, Bailey is the top dog overall, with 174 canines sharing the name in the five communities.

Natick resident Lizzy Garvey, 16, and her parents, Hal and Marti, did not know until recently why Lizzy’s brother Brian named their golden retriever Bailey when the dog joined the family some nine years ago. As it turns out, Brian, now 30, drew inspiration from one of his favorite beverages - Baileys Irish Cream liqueur.

Seven-year-old Natalie Hailer’s dog was also named Bailey after the liqueur, but only because the cockapoo, now 5, did not respond to his first name, Duke. When the Natick family was coming up with a new name, the dog’s color reminded Natalie’s mother, Helen, of the beige-colored drink.

Elizabeth Yobaccio, also of Natick, said she couldn’t remember what made her come up with Bailey for her 10-year-old shih tzu.

“I don’t know, but I love it. I might use it again,” she said.

Lucy, which is the most common name in Newton, is the second most popular name overall at a count of 159. Waltham’s most common dog name is Max, which was also the most popular nationally for dogs and cats last year, according to Veterinary Pet Insurance, based in Brea, Calif.

The company had analyzed its database of more than 466,000 insured pets to find the most common dog names.

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Bailey, Lucy, and Max are in the top 10 for the five local communities and in the top 10 nationwide. Daisy and Maggie are also in the top 10 nationally and the top 10 in four of the five, with Waltham being the exception.

Overall, the pet insurance company's records reflect the local trend indicating that classic pet names, such as Fido, have taken a back seat to "people names," like Max.

In fact, some of the most popular dog names - Bella, Chloe, Sophie, and Bailey - also rank among the most popular baby names listed by the Social Security Administration.

There are 2,707 dogs registered in Newton, 2,701 in Wellesley, 2,664 in Needham, 2,555 in Natick, and 1,876 in Waltham, according to records from the clerk's office of each community.

In a sample of communities south of Boston, the most popular dog names in Scituate and Hingham combined are Sam (or Samantha, Sammy, and other variations), followed by Max, Lucy, Lily, and Bailey.

Beyond the top-10 lists, other trends emerge.

Local sports teams - namely the Boston Red Sox and the New England Patriots - are well represented.

In Wellesley, there are 10 dogs named Fenway, while Natick has seven, Needham has six, and Newton and Waltham each have three. Both Newton and Wellesley have three dogs named Remy, while Natick has seven, including one Remmy.

There are dogs called Sox, Beckett, Jacoby, Pedroia, Papi, Youk, Youkilis and Wally, as well as dogs named after former Sox stars Pesky, Yaz, Manny, and Pedro.

For the Patriots, Needham has 25 dogs named Brady, Natick has 21, Newton has seven, Waltham has six, and Wellesley has eight, along with a dog named Tom Brady and another named Tedy Bruschi. Natick has five named Bruschi, Newton and Needham have three, while Waltham has a possible Bruschi typo, Brschi.

Beer brands also seem to be a fitting choice for a dog name. There are 11 Stellas in Needham, seven in Wellesley, five in Newton, four in Natick and another in Waltham. Guinness is a close second in Wellesley with five, and there are two in Natick, which also has a Corona.

Nearly the entire Seinfeld cast is represented in Natick with four Georges, three Kramers, a Jerry, and two Newmans, but no Elaine.

Other recognizably named hounds in the town include Barney Frank, Rocky Balboa, Napoleon, Mozart, Ikea, Kobe, Hendrix and Chewbacca.

Natick is also home for the aptly named Dog, and don't forget Me Too.

Globe correspondent Ben Terris, staff reporter Matt Carroll, and imaging manager Francis Bright contributed to this report. ■

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