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### **Pet Dish: Lights, Camera, Action**

**Q:** My Shih-Tzu, Mahjongg, is so precious. Whenever we're out walking everyone remarks that she has the personality to appear on television or in films. What does it take to make her a star?

**A:** To make it as a professional star pet, it takes beauty, brains, and excellent training. Animal agent Linda Hanrahan of Animals for Advertising is "always looking for a dog with advanced trick training and a professional, flexible handler." She considers dogs that have mastered the basic obedience program (i.e. sit, stay, down, stand, and come off-lead with distractions). Currently, she's in search of an exceptional, light-colored mixed breed or a Chihuahua.

Still convinced that your trained pooch has star appeal, but neither one of you is dog-wise to the biz? Consider dog trainer Bash Dibra's theatrical workshop (718-884-8238). According to Dibra, the workshop is for "dogs that love to perform--not for starstruck dog mothers." He encourages owners to listen to their pets. If your pet loves to entertain and is well trained, audition for Dibra's Star Animal workshop. At his "casting call," your dog will be "screened and evaluated not only for her abilities but for her temperament and charisma." If selected from the 50-plus talented canines that audition, you will be invited to enroll in the "make your pet a star" workshop. The six-week course of instruction (\$400) will introduce you and your pet to "real-life working conditions" on set. You will learn how to teach your pet to sit up and beg, roll over and play dead, carry objects, crawl, sneeze, and speak on cue. Upon completion of the course, each graduate will receive a certificate, a videotape of his/her repertoire of tricks, and admittance into the Star Animal Workshop registry, which gives handlers access to those

professionals who regularly use actors in advertising, promotion, and film. Also, Star Animal workshop will serve as a booking agent.

Remember that your dog must be outgoing, obedience-trained, and socialized. No one can guarantee that he or she will work and no one can be as sensitive to his/her rights as you are. And don't quit your day job just yet; while print and television ads can pay a couple to a few hundred bucks a pop, you won't be able to freeload off your pooch's successes. But if you have the time and patience, working together under the hot lights can be a bonding, enjoyable experience for you and your pooch.

Charlotte R. Reed, Pets Contributing Editor, April 7

