

Remembering Bama

Pet food supply store offers nutritional alternatives for pet owners

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Correspondent

When the Gibbons' family dog "Bama" was sick, her veterinarian tried antibiotics and cortisone shots. She then developed immune-system problems. Traditional medicine offered no hope and the doctor finally suggested "putting her down."

The Gibbons family would not accept that diagnosis and began researching alternatives — reading books, going online, talking to other people and visiting health food stores. The result of all this work was a combination of home cooking, special dog food, nutritional and herbal supplements and vitamins — and a recovered Bama.

Inspired by Bama, who died of natural causes in 2004, the Gibbons' family used their hard-won knowledge to start Bama's Natural Instinct, "a business specializing in home delivery of natural pet foods, snacks and nutritional supplements."

"Animals are very smart, they are discriminating when given the chance," said Jackie Gibbons, one of the businesses' founders and a co-owner. "People can take care of themselves, but owners are the guardians, the caretakers. The animal's health is limited by their owner's knowledge. Become educated, you are your pet's advocate."

Each item carried by Bama's must pass multiple tests. First, the ingredi-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BAMA'S NATURAL INSTINCT

The Gibbons family never gave up on Bama, pictured above. After traditional medicine failed, the family gained the knowledge to start Bama's Natural Instinct, a company specializing in home delivery of natural pet foods and nutritional supplements. At right, is the staff of Bama's Natural Instinct.

ents are read and anything with by-products, chemicals or artificial preservatives are weeded out. Items with whole meat and vegetables are approved.

The next step is a family-pet taste test. After all, it doesn't matter how healthy the food is if the animal won't eat it. If the animal's discriminating palates pass the proposed item, the Bama's humans check for physical condition, including a shiny coat and healthy skin.

If an item passes these tests and is benefiting the animals, it is added to

Bama's inventory. Most of these foods are specialty items not found in local stores.

Gibbons said that Bama's also provides nutritional support, and doesn't necessarily sell what's easiest to get, but what's best. There are many options among the approximately two dozen brands it carries: dry, canned and frozen foods, herbal supplements, oils, fatty acids, vegetarian foods and organic pre-mixes that can be customized by the owner.

While some of Bama's customers are trying to nurse ailing pets back to



health or looking for a specific food, other owners are trying to get a new pet off to the right start.

Bama's is not in competition with veterinarians and even gets some veterinary referrals. Gibbons pointed out that a better overall diet can't hurt a pet: The body uses the food more efficiently, less has to be fed, there is less waste and less cleanup. In addition, healthier animals have smaller veterinary bills, she added.

A Bama's employee does an individual nutritional consultation with each customer. While most of the

foods are for dogs and cats, Bama's has handled foods for birds and other small animals.

There is a \$50 minimum order and a \$3 delivery charge.

Gibbons feels that the business reflects on Bama and preserves her memory. She added that she couldn't have launched this enterprise without the support of the whole family.

For more information about Bama's Natural Instinct and the communities in which it delivers, visit www.bamasnatural.com or call (908) 757-7666.