

# A QUEST *For Comfort*

How improving her arthritic cat's quality of life inspired this businesswoman to give up her banking career and start a pet bed company.

BY ANN BRIGHTMAN

**D**ebra Holte felt helpless when she saw how much pain her elderly arthritic cat was in, so she set out to find some solutions that would help him feel more comfortable. "That's when I came across memory foam," she says. "It's the only material known to man that completely eliminates all painful pressure points. That is huge for an arthritic animal.

"When an animal is sleeping or resting on a 'regular' bed, the pressure points restrict the flow of blood through a joint," Debra explains. "Blood lubricates the joint, just like oil in a car. That's why when an animal gets up from sleeping on a bed that creates pressure points, he's often stiff until he gets moving and the blood begins to flow again."

Using memory foam, Debra designed an orthopedic bed that would help her cat, as well as other animals suffering from joint problems and related issues. At first, she found that using memory foam alone meant the animal would sink into the bed until he reached the floor, thereby creating pressure points. Gluing the memory foam to a layer of supporting foam eliminated this problem. "Finally, I wanted to protect the porous memory foam from possible accidents," Debra adds. "That's how I got the idea to create a waterproof liner to enclose the foam, and then put an outer washable cover on the bed."

Debra was so pleased with her unique bed design that she patented it. In 2004, she founded Buddy Beds so she could help other animals in need of an extra comfortable place to rest and sleep. "Prior to this I was an investment banker and money manager. You can imagine everyone's chagrin when I quit to 'sell dog beds'!"



Debra enjoys a winter outing with her dog, Webster.

Based in Denver, Colorado, her company today offers a whole line of memory foam pet beds in a variety of sizes and styles, including a comfy bolster bed. Buddy Beds also makes memory foam crate pads, travel beds, and accessories such as extra bed covers, waterproof liners and even bed warmers for the ultimate in comfort. "We are always working to develop new covers in a myriad of colors and fabrics," adds Debra. "Something to fit everyone's taste, lifestyle and decor. For those who love to take their dogs along in the car, we also offer plush travel blankets."

Debra has always loved animals, so Buddy Beds is a "true labor of love" for her. In her spare time, she also serves on the Denver Humane Society's Board of Directors. "Buddy Beds donates both money and a considerable quantity of our products to needy dogs," she says. "Our animal companions give us so much with their unconditional love, so my goal is to give them the utmost and highest quality of life possible. Do what you love...and love what you do." 