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Calling All Big Guys Who Own Small Dogs!

Football Star A.J. Hawk and His Chihuahua Named Todd Launch Campaign to Debunk Stereotypes about Small Dogs and Their Owners

Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" Contest Searches for Big Guys Who Own Pint-Size Pooches

ST. LOUIS, April 21, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Prissy, pampered, high maintenance and spoiled . . . these are some of the words Americans use to describe small dogs or their owners, according to a recent survey conducted on behalf of Mighty Dog® food for small dogs(i). While small dog breeds have been growing in popularity over the past decade(ii), the survey confirms that they continue to be unfairly stereotyped, along with their owners.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/pmh/20110421/SF87686>)



Two-thirds of the Americans surveyed describe small dogs as pampered (68%) and yappy (66%), and they describe people who own them as spoiled (54%) and high maintenance (52%). In addition, small dog owners are overwhelmingly perceived as female (69%) vs. male (35%), and only 17 percent of Americans describe a man who owns a small dog as "macho."

Enough is enough!!! That's the message from **professional football champ, linebacker and proud small dog owner A.J. Hawk**, who is teaming up with Mighty Dog® to help prove that small dogs and the people who own them defy stereotypes. Hawk is inviting guy's guys across the country to enter the **Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" Contest** (www.mightydog.com) to help change the misperceptions. Eleven lucky winners and their dogs may be featured in a 2012 calendar with Hawk and Todd.

"As a big guy who is the proud owner of a four-pound Chihuahua named Todd, I want to help spread the word that small dogs make a perfect companion for anyone, regardless of sex, age, stature or lifestyle," said Hawk, who is 6'1" tall and weighs 247 pounds. "Todd is my best friend because he is fun-loving and adventurous, and he has no idea how small he is. He has a Mighty attitude that makes me smile and I just love to hang out with him."

About the Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" Contest

Guy's guys who love nothing more than taking their pint-size pooch for a run in the park are invited to enter the Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" Contest. Or, a family member or friend can enter a Big Guy on his behalf. **To enter the photo/essay contest, visit www.mightydog.com between April 20 and June 1, 2011.** Each entry must include a short essay (150 words or less) describing why the Big Guy selected a small dog as his companion and how they share a Mighty life together filled with fun and everyday adventures. The entry must also include a photo of the Big Guy with his small dog. For a copy of the Official Contest Rules, visit the Mighty Dog website.

Up to thirty finalist entries will be selected by an outside judging panel and will be featured on the Contest website for consumer voting to help select the 11 Grand Prize winners. The voting period will run from June 22 through July 6, 2011. A.J. Hawk will also judge the up to 30 finalists to help select the 11 Grand Prize winners using the following criteria: appropriateness to contest theme (40%); quality of essay (35%); Mighty personality (25%).

The 11 finalists with the highest combined judging and voting scores will be named the Grand Prize winners and will each receive a trip to Los Angeles, Calif., with their small dog companion to take part in a professional photo shoot. Their photo may be included in the Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" 2012 calendar, which will feature A.J. Hawk and Todd. The calendar will be available for download on the Mighty Dog website in 2012. For every calendar download, the Mighty Dog brand will make a \$1 donation (up to \$10,000) to Adopt-a-Pet.com, a non-profit pet adoption charity.

In addition to the opportunity to be featured in the 2012 Mighty Dog "Big Guy, Small Dog" calendar, the 11 Grand Prize winners will receive \$1,000 and a three-day, two-night trip to Los Angeles for the photo shoot.

Each of the up to 30 finalists will receive a year's supply of Mighty Dog® food for small dogs, which features a variety of meaty formulas that contain protein-packed nutrition to help support the nutritional needs of small dogs' active lifestyles.

For more information about the Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" Contest, visit www.mightydog.com.

About Nestle Purina PetCare Company

The North American headquarters for Nestle Purina PetCare Company is located at Checkerboard Square in St. Louis, Missouri, where Ralston Purina was founded more than a century ago. Nestle Purina PetCare promotes responsible pet care, humane education, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. One of the leading global players in the pet food industry, Nestle Purina PetCare is part of the Swiss-based Nestle S.A. – the world's largest food company.

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(i) About the 2011 Mighty Dog® Survey

The Mighty Dog® "Big Guy, Small Dog" survey was conducted by OmniTel, a weekly national telephone omnibus service from GfK Roper, a division of GfK Custom Research North America. The sample for each week's OmniTel wave consists of 1,000 completed interviews, made up of male and female adults (in approximately equal number), all 18 years of age and over. Each OmniTel study is based on a random digit dialing (RDD) probability sample of all telephone households in the continental United States.

(ii) According to the AKC, five of the top 10 most popular dog breeds in the U.S. in 2010 were small dog breeds.

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