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Food and ingredients

It all starts with palatability. Of course, pet food needs to be well-balanced and healthy, but in the end, if the food is not tasty, a pet will simply refuse to eat it. How can flavor be improved? What's the role of artificial flavors? And how about oils and fats?



Senior pets and pet care

A rising number of older pets leads to great opportunities to cater to them. What are the most promising areas to tap into? And what about different pet care products – from dental to joint health – and services?



Global pet industry

Facts and figures about the Nordics: the smaller pet industries of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Plus an analysis of the state of the direct-to-consumer pet market. What trends in online pet product sales can be deduced from Amazon's Prime Day data? And how can retailers successfully retain their valued customers?



Pet care services survey

The results of our latest survey on pet care services: The preferences and spending habits of pet parents in different countries. [Page 38](#)



Amazon Prime Day

What were the most popular pet products sold during Amazon's Prime Day? How things have changed since last year. And the battle of prices. [Page 58](#)



Interview with Musti

The Chief Commercial Officer of the largest pet retailer in the Nordics on how they're doing, their plans, and what makes them special. [Page 52](#)



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The last one of the year

Can you feel it already – that joyous spirit of Christmas in the air? If you ask me, we can all use some positivity, with everything that's going on. Not because we want to turn a blind eye to the challenges we're facing. But it's good to keep an eye on the horizon too, and on the positive things that lie ahead.

So what do we have to look forward to? Innovations like cell-based meat products that can be helpful in combating climate change. Massive investments in the insect sector. And our GlobalPETS Forum coming up in January. To add to that positivity, here's a snapshot of some of the interesting 'end of the year' reading material you can expect in this issue.

Apparently, there are not enough pet service providers. Read more about it in the article giving results from the latest survey we did with Yummypets.

A growing senior pet population will naturally lead to a higher need for specialized products and care. So we dive into the data: the most popular accessory categories, the largest research project around aging dogs, and more.

While online sales in other sectors have slumped post-COVID, pet product sales in online channels continue to grow. You'll find an analysis of sales data

from Amazon Prime Day – their annual two-day discount event. Plus an overview of the state of DTC in the pet industry.

We also take a deeper look at the Nordics pet market. What are the top consumer trends in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway? How do consumers feel about locally-produced products? What does their buying behavior look like? And we sit down with the Chief Commercial Officer of the largest pet retailer in the region.

Finally, don't wait too long if you want to get hold of one of the last available tickets for the GlobalPETS Forum in Berlin. Just go to globalpetindustry.com/gpf for all the details.

Hope to see you there,

Philippe Vanderhoydonck
Managing Director



PS: If you don't receive our newsletters yet, go to globalpetindustry.com and sign up to keep a finger on the pulse of the industry.



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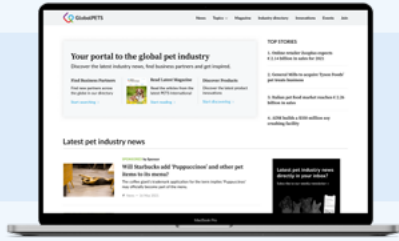
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Mars Petcare acquires Champion Petfoods

The Champion takeover, for an undisclosed amount, follows recent rumors that the company was exploring strategic options to sell the business for over \$2 billion. Back in 2018, a report in the Wall Street Journal revealed that Nestlé Purina was in talks to purchase a majority share of the manufacturer for a similar amount.

As a result of the takeover, Mars will support Champion's team in driving "further growth, innovation and success". The Canadian manufacturer, which is considered a "strong strategic fit" for the American multinational, will also be able to "fully capitalize" on opportunities to expand its portfolio.



Canadian and Belgian pet populations on the rise

According to recent research conducted by the Canadian Animal

Health Institute, Canada now has 16.4 million pets. The dog population reached 7.9 million in 2022, up from 7.7 million in 2020 (+2.8%). The North American country's cat population increased at a higher rate (+5%), from 8.1 million in 2020 to 8.5 million in 2022.

A new study by the Belgian trade association Comeos concludes that currently more than half (53%) of Belgians own a pet. This number contrasts with just 10% in 2018. In total, 1.3 million pet owners own 1.6 million domestic dogs.

New pet retailing landscape in Italy

Pet food manufacturer Cerere and retailer PDP have launched Petmark. With 79 shops, it will be the third-biggest chain of pet stores in Italy. All the stores are located in the north of the country. 61 of them were acquired from Maxi Zoo Italia and Agrifarma after their merger earlier this year.

This new retailing project, which expects to reach more than €65 million in revenue this year, will allow both brands to consolidate their share of the pet food and pet care segment, and expand their offline and online presence.

Meanwhile, Arcaplanet and Maxi Zoo Italia have completed their integration and announced a €50 million investment to enhance e-commerce operations. The new pet retail player has 489 pet stores in the country and 2,700 employees. It aims to increase the number of points of sale by 2025 to 700, particularly in the south of Italy.



Mars implements same-day product delivery in North America

Mars's entire portfolio, including pet brands such as Pedigree, Royal Canin and Whiskas, is now available via the grocery delivery platform Instacart. According to the company, products are available to 90% of the US population.

"Online shopping and same-day delivery are critical for brands looking to accommodate consumers' busy schedules," explains Kasey Jamison from Instacart, which delivers from more than 70,000 stores in at least 5,500 cities.



New top roles at big industry players

Geoffroy Lefebvre has been appointed as the new CEO of zooplus. He is replacing Cornelius Patt, who has been leading the German e-commerce company since 2006. The zooplus Supervisory Board commented that the new CEO has “proven pure play e-commerce and digital brand building experience”.

Pets at Home has appointed ex-Google and Vodafone employee Rachel Mooney as new Chief People Officer. CEO Lyssa McGowan said that she will be a “huge asset” to the company’s businesses.

Royal Canin Canada has named Rob Lunn as the new General Manager. Lunn worked at Mars for 13 years, focusing on identifying opportunities in key markets in North America.

Largest Brazilian media group enters the pet industry

Grupo Globo, owner of the most-watched television channel in Brazil, is now a shareholder in online retailer Petlove.

The company wants to increase its areas of operation in new businesses. In recent years, it has invested in food delivery apps and credit card machines, and it is now taking a first step into the pet market.

The investment will be made by Globo Ventures, a unit that researches and indicates new business opportunities for shareholders. The transaction amount has not been disclosed.



US pet parents spend \$180 less on their pets

A new survey carried out by online marketplace LendingTree among 1,017 pet parents in the US has found that nearly 9 out of 10 of them, primarily millennials, have experienced increased pricing on key pet-related expenses in 2022.

The results reveal that 26% of pet owners are having difficulties affording their four-legged family members.

The average spent on pets in 2021 amounted to \$1,163, while 2022 saw a decline to \$984. Overall, 87% of pet owners say they’ve experienced a pricing increase in food (74%) and veterinary services (33%).



Save Pets of Ukraine has rescued 160,000 animals

Set up by pet food manufacturer Kormotech, the Save Pets of Ukraine campaign has delivered 650 tons of food for dogs and cats since the start of the war.

It has also received more than 22,000 requests from Ukrainian pet owners, animal shelters and volunteers, and collected donations worth UAH45.9 million (€1.29M) through the non-profit organization U-Hearts Foundation.

United Petfood acquires British manufacturer

Belgian manufacturer United Petfood is to take over Gold Line Feeds, an independent animal feed manufacturer with 80 years' experience in the sector. This operation is expected to strengthen its position as a full-service private label producer.

The UK branch of United Petfood will administer the production and distribution of 20,000 tons of dry pet food a year that Gold Line produces in its factory in Northamptonshire.

The United Petfood Group, which has 20 pet food facilities in 8 European countries, also took over a factory from the Neodis Group in southwest France in April 2022.



The first cell-based topper for dogs to launch in 2023

US-based Wild Earth has developed a cell-based chicken broth topper for dogs. It will be the first pet food of its kind. This is the next step in the company's mission to transform the pet food industry, reducing its detrimental impact on the environment.

"By replacing factory-farmed products with clean, sustainable, cruelty-free cell-based meat, we can tackle the issues of low quality and often contaminated meat used for our pets' food, and transform the sustainability of the entire pet food industry," says co-founder and CEO Ryan Bethencourt.

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Pet insurance providers join forces

German-based Smart Paws has been acquired by US company Trupanion, which is looking to expand to EU markets with its medical insurance for cats and dogs.

Trupanion intends to enter the German and Swiss markets, and access other key European markets through this deal. The financial terms of the transaction have not been disclosed.

Smart Paws' team will continue to manage and administer all its own products and membership policies as part of Trupanion's organization.





Food and ingredients

How do you make pet food more palatable and tastier for pets – yet attractive to buy for their owners? What’s the role of natural and artificial flavors? And how do fats and oils contribute to a healthy pet diet?

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Enhancing the taste of food for pets

Palatable foods combine flavors, aromas, appearance and consistency. But is one factor more important than another? And what is the role of sucrose and salt?

Besides being complete and balanced, the best diets must entice pets and their owners. According to scientific research, if a dog is unable to detect any scent, they lose the ability to discriminate between two diets – making aroma a primary factor in food palatability.

From the owner's perspective, strong 'meaty' aromas should be avoided. Although these increase pet food palatability, they do not appeal to pet owners. So priority is better given to product appearance and ingredients that align with, for instance, current organic/natural trends in human diets.

New approaches

Considering dry pet food contains less than 20% moisture content and is primarily made of plant-based ingredients, its ability to stimulate the senses is lacking. That's why pet food manufacturers have developed new approaches that satisfy pets and owners.

Early efforts to enhance palatability began by using amino acids and fats from organ meats to coat kibble. While this increases palatability, these fats react with oxygen and become rancid – significantly reducing shelf life. In addition, the pungent odor associated with organ-coated kibble deters many pet owners.

With a growing understanding of food science, animal nutritionists started taking advantage of the Maillard reaction, the chemical reaction between amino acids and sugars occurring with high heat and responsible for browned and complex flavors. This is the same reaction that leaves coffee tasting robust and burgers tasting charred.

Accumulating data, however, suggested that by-products of the Maillard reaction led to decreased dietary lysine bioavailability – an essential amino acid – and increased risk of age-related diseases in pets. Another fact that would deter pet owners.

Multi-coated kibble

Now is the era of layering kibble with palatants: multi-coated kibble. The first coating is often a protein/starch layer that provides the desired taste and texture for the pet, while subsequent layers focus on sealing aromas and making the kibble visually appealing to pet owners. Even probiotics and allergy-preventing antibodies are being layered onto multi-coated kibble.

Considering that dogs can detect all scents 10,000 to 100,000 times better than the average human, pet food manufacturers are using multi-coated kibble to their advantage. While strong aromas can still promote food palatability in pets, these are simultaneously masked for pet owners.

Emerging aromas

Instead of altering the core formulation of a diet to achieve the desired flavor, the logical approach is to add flavor-enhancing compounds directly into the kibble. Recently, pet food manufacturers have been using liquid aromas to improve palatability without affecting the nutrient profile.

The fact that every species will interpret scents differently does make developing aromas complex. Aromas that sound simple to replicate, like meat and cheese, are actually some of the most difficult to have accepted by both pets and humans.

A recent US patent filed by Applied Food Biotechnology Inc focuses on developing humanized aromas that appeal to pet owners – like ‘grilled’ and ‘sweet’ – while remaining palatable to dogs.

The role of sucrose

Another approach has been to exploit the ability of dogs to taste ‘sweet’. Unlike cats, dogs can taste sugar, and studies show that adding sucrose increases food selection and intake. However, adding more sucrose also raises a diet’s caloric content and is not sustainable. So instead, researchers are using natural compounds to increase the sweetness value of sucrose without the additional calories.

For example, ammoniated glycyrrhizin isolated from licorice root is 50x sweeter than sucrose, and when used in combination it increases the sweetness value of sucrose synergistically. These flavor-enhancement properties have been validated in dog food trials and offer a unique approach to increasing palatability in vegetarian diets.

Sodium compounds

Aside from flavor, sodium compounds can also improve food texture. For example, pyrophosphates, like sodium tripolyphosphate, are often used to increase palatability without significantly affecting dietary sodium intake. Although these compounds are common in human-grade processed meats, the long-term use of pyrophosphates can impair kidney function.

Just add salt?

Salt adds more than a ‘salty’ taste to our food. It also enhances the ability to taste sweet and umami flavors

Salt is not only used as a palatant – it also has a therapeutic function.

while suppressing bitterness. On this basis, salt is composed of sodium and chloride (NaCl), essential macrominerals needed in every diet to maintain body fluids and support proper organ and nervous system function.

Fruit and vegetables provide a substantial amount of chloride, while animal tissue and meats offer a significant source of sodium. This means additional salt is not usually required from a nutritional perspective, but may be added to reach adequate levels of sodium chloride (NaCl). Since there is no defined maximum NaCl intake, salt is often added to pet food as a palatant. The European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) has only set minimum values, without a maximum limit:

Sodium = 0.10% – 0.12% DM*

Chloride = 0.15% – 0.17% DM*

**per 100 g dry matter (DM) in adult dogs*

These requirements are similar for cats, and studies suggest that values up to 1.50% DM sodium and 2.35% DM chloride are safe for healthy adult dogs and cats.

Therapeutic function

Salt is not only used as a palatant – it also has a therapeutic function. Prescription veterinary diets utilize added salt to promote water consumption and flush the urinary system. This benefits conditions that affect the urinary tract by helping to dilute urine and to prevent urolith (urinary stone) formation. Several veterinary diets also offer treats with high salt content for this same purpose.

Unlike in humans, there is no causal link between elevated dietary salt intake and conditions like hypertension, cardiovascular disease and kidney failure in pets. That being said, the current recommendation is to avoid high salt intake in pets with a history of conditions like these, but actively limiting salt intake is not necessary. ♦



Ashkan Sadri
Veterinary researcher
Vetabroad.org

Artificial flavors in pet food formulation

Achieving the desired palatability for pet food is not always a straightforward process. What issues do manufacturers have to deal with?

Using additives as a component of pet food diets can serve various purposes. They ensure food longevity and safety, and maintain the texture and color of pet food after a prolonged period of storage. An additive may be used to prevent water activity, spoilage and oxidation of sensitive ingredients that require additional protection.

Another use of additives is to increase the palatability and flavor of the diet. Flavor is an important sensory feature for both dogs and cats, and will ultimately determine whether the food – no matter how well-balanced and nutritious – is consumed in its entirety.

The rules and regulations

In the EU, additives in pet food must be authorized under existing EU regulations and stated on the product label. Regulation is not straightforward and, according to the European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF), there is no obligation to declare additives, with no legal maximum limit.

Additionally, the additive's name does not need to be given on the label, just the functional group it belongs to: preservatives, antioxidants, flavorings or colorants.

Improving palatability

Pet food companies invest a considerable amount of time, effort and resources in improving diet palatability, especially some extruded veterinary diets where there is a need to significantly reduce protein (chronic kidney disease, cystine or purine urolithiasis) or fat (chronic pancreatitis). Or to formulate a diet with hydrolyzed protein, where the addition of synthetic amino acids is necessary to balance out the composition.

Palatants improve flavor, aroma, texture, appearance, or a combination of these, to increase overall preference and acceptance of a wet or extruded diet.

Flavor enhancers affect palatability in 2 different ways. There are enhancers that affect 'first choice' – the first food chosen in preference tests. These flavors mostly affect olfactory perception and improve the attractiveness of the diet. Perhaps more important are flavor enhancers classified as having a 'continuous choice effect'. This reflects acceptance of pet food on a continuous basis.

Types of tasty ingredients

Flavor enhancers can be characterized as synthetic or naturally derived ingredients. This division is sometimes unclear, as naturally derived substances might be extracted at a significant level of processing that can ultimately influence the integrity of the extracted ingredient.

Natural flavors often added to pet foods are extracts from fish, poultry and beef meat and organs, while artificial flavors are usually developed to mirror natural ones. Natural palatants or flavor enhancers predominantly used in extruded or wet pet food are referred to as 'digests', enzymatically digested proteins that enhance the meaty flavor.

Other frequently used natural palatants are yeasts, essential oils, fats, plant oils, organic acids, spray-dried animal plasma, protein hydrolysate, distillate, or any product of roasting and heating.

Flavor enhancers that do not meet the criteria of natural palatants are classified as synthetic flavors and fall under the same regulation. Although many artificial flavor enhancers are regarded as safe, and widely used, some are considered to be controversial.

Debate on the negative effects

Additives in the form of pyrophosphates, or phosphate salts, are often used in cat food to increase palatability by intensifying the taste of amino acids. Some of these nutrients cats do find particularly tasty.

There is some debate about whether there are any negative effects associated with this artificial flavoring agent. It is a known fact that excess inorganic phosphorus may cause sustained kidney damage. Research shows that a high intake of inorganic phosphorus compounds (such as NaH_2PO_4) may affect indicators of renal function in cats (Dobenecker et al., 2018).

A 2021 critical review by J. Mark Craig on feed additives and artificial flavors raised concerns about the potentially overlooked health effects of some artificial palatants, such as cinnamic aldehyde (cinnamaldehyde), monosodium glutamate, trehalose, and artificial vanilla flavoring. The research was published in The Journal of Small Animal Practice.

From synthetic to natural

Despite official agencies giving assurances on safety, data to back up the claims is limited. Therefore, it would be wise to work towards replacing synthetic additives, where possible, with more natural, widely used, and readily available palatants. ♦



Dr. Diana Brozić
Assistant professor at the University of Zagreb, Croatia

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Biomega NORWAY Hirtshals in focus

The new biomega® biorefinery, located at the port of Hirtshals Havn, Denmark, will be officially opened in December.

The refinery – a double-digit EUR million investment – was built from the ground up by the biomega® engineering team with next-generation continuous enzymatic hydrolysis technology to increase operational efficiency, supporting the company's sustainable development goals.

Located close to raw material sources to reduce its carbon footprint, the company's capacity for its human nutrition range of peptides and oils will be scaled up with at least 20k MT of raw materials, complementing its support for the pet food industry.

It is one of many installations at Hirtshals that will contribute to the recirculation of surplus energy via Green Port North, reducing waste and minimizing environmental impact.

To find out more about biomega®, visit the website or send an email.

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What's in your pet food?



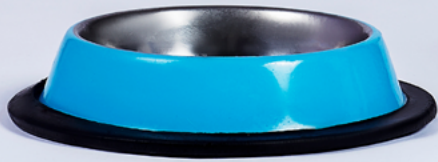
Seaweed is packed with omega fatty acids and antioxidants that help promote healthy skin and coats in dogs and cats. It can also help with dry skin, skin allergies, itching, and inflammation.



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  **AcadianTasco**

Technology helps develop nutritious, functional and tasty protein ingredients



New technological advances in electronic sensing increase precision and speed in pet food product development.

Pets love their protein! But, as pet owners become more environmentally conscious and dedicated to supporting their pets' health, demand for new and better proteins is fast increasing.

Nutritious and tasteful

Whilst proteins need to pack a punch nutritionally, they also need to taste great. As all pet owners know, animals prefer to eat food they like and may not finish their meal if it isn't to their taste. Reduced food intake prevents pets from meeting their calorific and nutrient requirements – and can even seriously impact pet health.

Technology to sniff out the best-tasting protein

Whether a pet likes its food is influenced by many factors including odor, taste and texture. It's why Livalta, a company specializing in developing protein-rich ingredients, set out to create a new yeast protein. The aim was to create a protein that would hit the perfect combination of odor, taste and texture that pets adore.

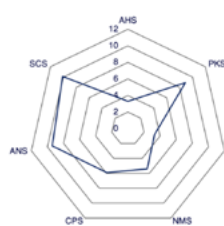
The company started with a clear idea of what the target taste and smell profile of the new product should look like. To find this perfect combination, they used an electronic nose and tongue. The nose and tongue comprise numerous sensors that mimic the biological senses of smell and taste.

Perfect protein

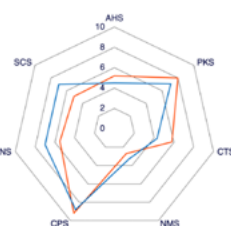
The first step was to have the electronic tongue and nose 'taste and smell' the yeast raw material and establish an initial sensory fingerprint (see figure). Not quite there yet, Livalta next used enzymes to change the taste profile of the raw material and mapped the results against a target profile. This allowed them to exclude those elements that did not hit the mark early in the process.

The use of electronic technology not only helped speed up the development process, but also allowed the company to create the perfect protein based on extensive taste and smell criteria. Their new yeast protein for pets, LivaltaCell PSY, was born.

Yeast starting material



Target and LivaltaCell PSY



—Target taste profile —LivaltaCell PSY

Now it's over to real dogs and cats to make the ultimate verdict as to how delicious they find this ingredient! ♦



Katarzyna Swirkowicz
Business Development and
Sales Manager at Livalta
livalta.com

Palatability approaches for performance and profit

As consumers are postponing vacations, turning down thermostats, and buying fewer treats – for themselves and their pets – the pet food industry needs to look at ways to stay resilient.



Manufacturers who are trying to squeeze value out of their formulations without sacrificing quality, nutrition, or brand integrity may benefit from initiating 'same performance, lower cost' palatability projects with their suppliers.

When looking into palatability cost savings, be sure to keep these four points in mind:

Do your current palatability requirements cover the bill?

If your palatability goal is superiority to the competition, are you leveraging that superiority through brand labeling and promotion? If not, can parity be acceptable, even for a short time?

Are your current palatability testing requirements appropriate?

Is a two-bowl preference test necessary, or can you use a single-bowl acceptance test?

What about your competitors – are they making palatability adjustments?

Market changes can prompt palatability adjustments. In good times, manufacturers tend to invest more in palatability. During economic downturns, some companies economize on palatability. If an entire market is feeling the same stress, it is possible that competitors are quick to make adjustments to palatability. Before you make any changes, know how you compare on palatability. Your palatability supplier can guide and assist you in assessing this.

Is your palatant solution the most cost-effective?

You might be able to change your palatant solution to reduce overall cost in use. For instance, cost-effective flavor boosters can make a real difference even when added in very small amounts. Or if you're using a liquid + dry cat solution, you might be able to achieve the same palatability results by using dry only. If you're using one expensive palatant across multiple brands, the savings of using an additional, less expensive palatant enhancer might outweigh your carrying costs.

Same performance, lower cost

To effectively cover all the points, it is advised to start a 'same performance, lower cost' project with your supplier. Together, you can explore all cost-saving possibilities and assess the impact on your brand. Projects like this can take time, but the potential value at the end of the day makes them a worthwhile investment.

Supplier success comes from fulfilling customer needs. Sometimes this means innovative, highly palatable products are needed. At other times more economical approaches are called for. By leveraging unique capabilities, AFB has worked with customers in the pet industry to deliver hundreds of successful projects in high-performance pet food palatants. AFB is ready to leverage that knowledge to help meet today's market needs for great-tasting pet food at affordable prices. ♦



Sara Martins PhD
Director Research & Development
AFB International
afbinternational.com

Getting the US feed ingredient approval process modernized



The industry is demanding more budget to end long delays in ingredient reviews and wants new marketing claims related to a pet's well-being to be allowed.

Ingredients used in pet food must be either approved food additives or Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS) by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at a federal level.

In coordination with state feed control officials, the FDA also recognizes ingredients published in the Official Publication (OP) of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) as being acceptable for use in animal food.

The FDA told PETS International that in the last 3 years it found 18 ingredients acceptable through different petition approvals. "Because some ingredients are reviewed for both animal food and pet food, 9 of those ingredients were available for pet food, with some of those 9 for all animals and some just for dogs and cats," says a spokesperson.

Taking too long

The industry warns that the approval process takes 'way too long'. According to the American Feed Industry Association (AFIA), companies have to wait for 3 to

5 years to get new ingredients through the FDA's 'rigorous review process'.

"The FDA has indicated to us that this time lag is largely due to insufficient staffing and the need to modernize their databases, and therefore their ability to store and access information," says Louise Calderwood, AFIA's Director of Regulatory Affairs.

The Pet Food Institute (PFI) explains that these delays are also impacting negatively on innovation in the industry. "It is critical that the US regulatory framework allows for the timely approval of pet food ingredients that represent the latest in nutrition science," claims PFI president Dana Brooks.

Funding is key

The feed industry supports an increase in funding to the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) to address the time lag issue. "We have a responsibility to submit complete packages to the FDA, but we feel that this review process should be less than 3 years," adds Calderwood.

[▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)

In 2020, the FDA received \$5 million for this purpose. That allowed them to hire 12 employees, according to AFIA. A source at the federal agency told PETS International that it takes about 3 years for new staff to be fully trained on how to review feed ingredients. “We are starting to see the benefits of those additional hires,” the source adds.

But this still seems to be not enough for the industry, which is asking for more funds to complete the modernization process. Calderwood: “The FDA needs more funding for ingredients review, and more again for pet food. We are a very long way from knowing what, if any, additional funding will be available for FDA this year to address animal food additive petitions.”

If there is any increase in the FDA budget for feed reviews, it is likely to be included in the so-called Omnibus Bill for the fiscal year 2023. But according to insiders, this is not guaranteed, and the US Congress could pass another kind of resolution.

More health-related claims

The industry also wants to update the way companies can apply for approval for new ingredients, and to change the current cap which limits the claims manufacturers can make regarding animal wellness.

Some food ingredients can support all different aspects of an animal's general health: joints, digestion, eyesight, hearing and cognitive ability. But according to the industry, there is no legal mechanism for a pet food manufacturer to make marketing claims around any of those attributes, despite the science backing this up.

“The goal of pet food manufacturers is to develop recipes that deliver the nutrients our pets need to live long, healthy lives. A timely approval path allows manufacturers to make the latest innovations available to consumers as quickly as possible,” says PFI's Dana Brooks.

Industry leaders anticipate an increasing number of submissions if and when the modernization finally moves forward. AFIA's Louise Calderwood predicts that a “significant” increase in FDA staff will be needed to cope with the demand.

Lagging behind

The US feed industry considers the country to be ‘very clearly’ lagging behind in the ability of manufacturers to market products that are proven to be safe and effective to address animal health and well-being. “That’s certainly very frustrating for our pet owners, and for our pet food manufacturers who want to be producing products to promote longevity and health,” says Louise Calderwood.

According to AFIA, other regulatory jurisdictions such as Europe, Australia, Colombia, Brazil and Thailand are more advanced in their feed revision processes. ♦

Salmonella outbreak?

In recent times, some pet food manufacturers have had to recall a number of products due to salmonella contamination.

The FDA announced in August 2022 that some samples of Darwin's Natural Pet Products raw cat food had tested positive and there was an association with the illness of 3 animals. Earlier, in June, Freshpet had voluntarily recalled some of its products sold, due to potential contamination by these bacteria.

For AFIA, which is also involved in pet food safety, this is an indicator that the quality processes are working. The FDA also pointed out that some contamination cases are caught before the product leaves the production facility.

It is not known whether these incidents are evidence of a substantial increase in salmonella contamination in raw pet food in the US, but in the UK it seems to be the case. A recent study from the UK's Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) concluded that there were 295 isolations of salmonella from pet food that was intended to be fed raw during 2021. This was 8.1% higher than in 2020 (273 isolations) and 20.4% more than in 2019 (245 isolations).



David Palacios Rubio
Editorial Manager
GlobalPETS



How a long tradition of omega-3s now benefits pet health

‘What is good for me, is good for my pet.’ This saying is important for many pet owners across the globe, but it’s a way of life for those living in Nordic countries.

For over 150 years, the people of Norway have sworn by cod liver oil for its beneficial health effects for humans. In the 1970s, omega-3 research started to gain momentum among Greenland Eskimos and since then, scientists have realized the tremendous health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids for humans, as well as animals.

A well-balanced diet

Many pet owners understand the importance of a well-balanced diet, driving them to look for functional pet food ingredients with proven health benefits. In fact, they expect the inclusion of high-quality, human-grade ingredients, such as omega-3 fatty acids. Nordic biotech company Aker BioMarine is helping to meet these needs with its marine krill-based ingredient for the pet food industry.

Like humans, pets are unable to produce omega-3s naturally in their bodies. However, these fatty acids offer many recognized health benefits for both people and animals. But not all sources are easily digested by pets. Finding the most effective source is key.

This is because dogs have a limited capacity to convert alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) to eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Also, only little ALA converts to docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). A phospholipid-bound EPA and DHA option, such as krill oil, has shown to be more effective in increasing omega-3 levels in dogs, compared to other options.

But there is more to krill

While many of the nutritional needs in pet food formulations are sourced from different ingredients, Antarctic krill is a single ingredient that offers multiple benefits.

In addition to its phospholipid advantage, krill is also naturally rich in choline, astaxanthin and marine proteins. Choline is essential for a healthy liver and important for brain and muscle health, whereas the antioxidant astaxanthin is considered a natural protectant. At the same time, marine proteins make krill a highly palatable ingredient.

Sustainability, science and innovation

Aker BioMarine, the company behind QRILL™ Pet, is at the forefront of sustainability, science and innovation. Sustainability has been fundamental to the company’s strategy since its inception. Today, Aker BioMarine’s krill fishery is rated as the world’s most sustainable reduction fishery. The company continues to pave the way in bringing the best ingredients to pet food formulations, based on in-depth research and scientific innovations. ◆



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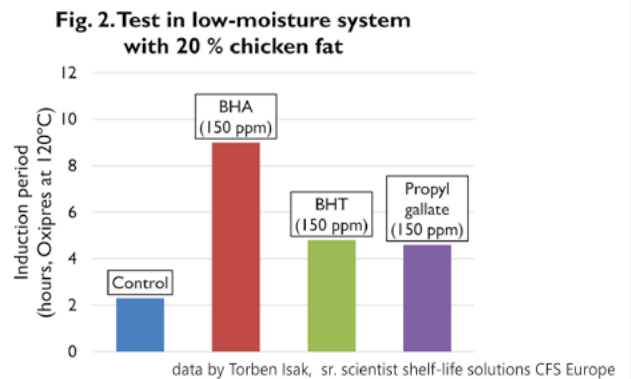
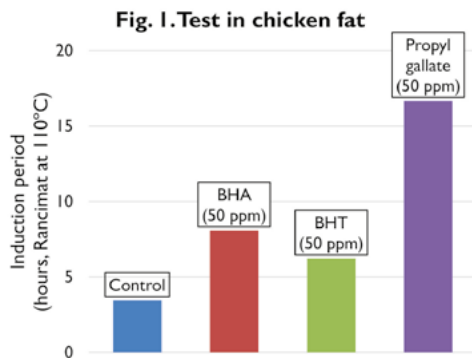


Animal Wellness Products ITALY
The innovative concept

PreNat is a natural and functional technological blend, created and developed for the pet food industry. Its particularity and uniqueness lie in the fact that it has found interactions that create synergy. Synergy occurs when one antioxidant is regenerated by another, when one antioxidant protects another through its sacrificial oxidation, or when multiple oxidants exhibit different antioxidant mechanisms.

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CFS Europe ITALY
How to protect lipids in rendered products from oxidation

First, we need a fundamental understanding of the matrix: is it an emulsion, a melted fat or a low-moisture protein meal? Antioxidants will perform differently in these three situations. For example, BHA was invented because propyl gallate had low performance in the cooker (migration into the aqueous phase).

The antioxidant functionality depends on reactivity, hydrophobicity and interaction. The testing protocol is equally important. If we test in chicken fat (fig. 1), but the primary application is a low-moisture system (fig. 2), we might reach the wrong conclusion.

Finally, the delivery system is important. Lately, PEG-free systems are in demand. CFS is happy to discuss which antioxidants are best for your system.

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The benefits of flaxseed and other oils



Vegetable and nut oils provide essential nutrients but need to be used in the right amounts.

In feline and canine diets, fats and fatty acids provide energy. They also enable the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, regulate inflammatory processes, help form cell membranes and promote skin function.

Extra fatty acids

Neither cats nor dogs can produce or synthesize unsaturated omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids in sufficient amounts. So exogenous linoleic, alpha-linolenic, arachidonic, eicosapentaenoic and docosahexaenoic fatty acids must be provided in the right proportion in food.

National Research Council (NRC) and Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) norms define minimum fatty acid requirements, depending on species and age (see graph).

Sources and concerns

Animal fats are the source of AA, while fish oil contains EPA+DHA, and vegetable oils provide LA and ALA. Many fats, however, are a source of highly concentrated energy that may cause overweight and obesity. Too much fat can also lead to diarrhea or pancreas inflammation. So the concentration of polyunsaturated fatty acids should underlie the choice of dietary oil.

Compared to other vegetable oils, cold-pressed flaxseed oil, also known as linseed oil, has a very high content of alpha-linolenic acid – more than 50%. As

little as 0.5 g of flaxseed oil fully covers the requirement of a 30 kg adult dog while containing just 4.5 kcal.

Supplementation

Cold-pressed flaxseed oil also contains vitamin E in the form of β - and γ -tocopherols, natural antioxidants regarded as the most potent free-radical removers among vitamin E isomers.

Additional supplementation with flaxseed oil can support pet skin and coat health, improve the functioning of the digestive tract and immune system, and regulate inflammatory processes.

With just 14% of the required LA in flaxseed oil, a balanced diet should also include other vegetable oils. For instance, evening primrose, grapeseed and walnut oils each contain more than 50% of the required LA. Walnut oil has the best ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids (5:1) and, like flaxseed, is a good source of vitamin E.

Nut oils (almond oil, peanut oil, hazelnut oil) mostly contain oleic acid, which is part of the omega-9 family and not essential in a pet's diet. For other nutrients, nut fat can be used in the form of cold-pressed oil or as ground nuts. Regular nut flour contains more than 50% fat, a substantial amount of protein (15%) and dietary fiber. Ground flaxseed has a high fat (42%) and fiber (27%) content.

Compared to other vegetable oils, cold-pressed flaxseed oil has a very high content of alpha-linolenic acid.

Safety

Applying flaxseed in a pet's diet may seem controversial as it contains cyanogenic glycosides – bioactive plant products derived from amino acids. The cyanogenic precursor content in ground flaxseeds varies between 80 and 300 mg/kg. 1 gram of flaxseed per 1 kg of body weight is regarded as safe for dogs, but the recommended dosage for pets is much lower. Even below the toxic threshold, a higher amount of flaxseed frequently causes digestive tract disorders (diarrhea and bloating), which discourages owners from administering amounts that could result in cyanogenic glycoside poisoning.

Minimum requirement of fatty acids in diets in grams/1,000 kcal

	Growing dogs	Adult dogs	Growing cats	Adult cats
Fat in total	21.3	13.8	22.5	22.5
Linoleic acid (LA)	3.3	2.8	1.4	1.4
Arachidonic acid (AA)	0.08	-	0.05	0.05
Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)	0.2	0.11	0.05	-
EPA+DHA (Eicosapentaenoic + Docosahexaenoic acids)	0.13	0.11	0.025	0.025

Source: NRC/AAFCO

Nut oils are considered safe, but feeding ground nuts to pets requires caution because of possible contamination with mycotoxins. Dogs and cats should not eat macadamia or black walnuts, as these may cause weakness, mild central nervous system depression, vomiting or hyperthermia. ♦



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Fats, much more than just a bad reputation

Despite often being associated with weight gain, fats are also an important source of energy – for pets too.

Fat is readily used as fuel by dogs, as their metabolism can more easily burn fat than that of cats – or humans. Dogs with higher energy demands, such as working, breeding or sled dogs, are therefore best fed on a diet with increased fat content rather than food with increased protein or carbohydrate content.

Fat – the nutrient

Declaration of 'crude fat' or 'fat content' is mandatory in the analytical constituents of complete dog and cat food. This includes both fats (solid at room temperature) and oils (liquid at room temperature) that are major nutrients alongside proteins and carbohydrates. Some fat or oil must form part of a diet to support the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in consumer awareness that not all fats are created equal. They certainly differ in their impact on consumers' health. Dietary fat is absorbed and metabolized, serving as fuel or becoming part of the body. The composition of dietary fat impacts on the fat molecules that are stored in body cells and form part of them.

Fat types

The characteristics of fats are determined by their building blocks: fatty acids. Generally, we can distinguish saturated and unsaturated fatty acids based on chemical bonds in the molecule. In their own right, unsaturated fatty acids can be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated, depending on whether they have one or multiple unsaturated bonds. For pet diets, we are looking for a mixture of fatty acids.

Animal by-products used in dog and cat food are generally derived from production animals fed low-fat, grain-based diets. Because of these diets, the fat stores in the production animals consist mostly of saturated and monounsaturated fats.

Another major ingredient in many dog and cat foods is a source of carbohydrates, such as grains, pulses and potatoes. Energy from carbohydrates in pet food is metabolized by the dog or cat into more of the same type of fats, as found in animal by-products. To provide a more varied mixture of fatty acids, the challenge is therefore how to add polyunsaturated fats to the diet as well.

[▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)

Healthy omega 3

Omega 3 is often marketed as 'healthy' and comprises a variety of fatty acids. They are added to pet diets, in part to balance against omega-6 sources including meat meals and cereals.

The metabolism of omega-3 fatty acids, and their inclusion in cell membranes, results in improved cardiovascular function and heart health. Anti-inflammatory function and a positive impact on immune function, are attributed more specifically to the fatty acids docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). The benefit of both linseed and fish oil is that they help give a shiny coat, irrespective of the difference in fatty acid composition.

DHA and EPA have the ability to reduce inflammation in the body. Because of this anti-inflammatory characteristic, they are used in products aimed at reducing joint pain caused by inflammation, as is the case with osteoarthritis.

At the same time, these fatty acids help regulate the immune response and can be helpful in reducing the negative effects of allergies: both dogs and cats suffering from allergic dermatitis have been shown to benefit from DHA and EPA supplementation. Human studies show that supplementation of DHA and EPA also allows for increased muscle growth following exercise, by integration of the fatty acids into the cell membrane and enhanced protein absorption. Supplementation may be beneficial for working dogs, and also for senior dogs suffering from muscle deterioration.

EPA and DHA levels are relatively high in some fish oils, but not in the plant-derived sources listed earlier. Some of the plant-based fatty acids can be converted into DHA and EPA, but this conversion is very limited and is an ineffective approach for achieving the same benefits.

Fish versus algae oil

The healthy associations of DHA and EPA from fish oil, and their function in balancing the fatty acid composition of a diet, result in the regular inclusion of salmon oil in dry pet food diets, generally up to around 2%. It is a frequent addition to puppy and senior diets, in particular, to support cognitive development and maintain brain function. In humans, covering DHA and

EPA requirements supports proper fetal development, including neuronal, retinal and immune function.

The composition of fish oil differs, depending on the fish species, its diet, and the season and habitat. In contrast to common expectations, not all fish oil contains high levels of omega 3, but monounsaturated and saturated fatty acids may be prominent as well. The objective of fish oil addition (e.g. claims and functionality) will determine the choice of source to ensure that goal is achieved.

Fish oil composition is dependent in part on the diet of the fish. Many fish diets include algae, and these plants provide the fish with DHA, which is then stored in the fish's body. Removing the fish from the cycle seems a more efficient way of increasing DHA levels in a human or animal's diet, but there are some considerations. Algae may be taken from the sea or ocean, or can be grown in a controlled environment in containers on land.

Other considerations

Fish and algae oils are often marketed for their DHA levels, but EPA levels can vary between brands, so choose the right source for your needs and claims. Beneficial oils derived from algae grown in tanks on land may currently use more resources than the same amount of oil derived from fish. However, some are produced just as sustainable – if not more – as fish oil.

Due to the waters in which fish live, in contrast to the controlled environment of algae tanks, fish oil requires an additional purification step to remove the likes of heavy metals – a process not needed for algae oil.

Vegetarian diets only have the algae option and therefore bypass the negative connotations of animal well-being, overfishing, and the trawling associated with fishing. With the eye to pet food manufacture, oils allow for a more concentrated format of beneficial fatty acids. There are powdered forms available, which are exposed to air due to their format and are therefore more susceptible to oxidation. ♦



Alexandra Wesker
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Microalgae: A healthy solution for older cats and dogs



Natural astaxanthin is a remarkable antioxidant that offers a number of benefits for aging pets.

As cats and dogs grow older, many suffer from impaired vision, reduced mobility or other health-related issues that didn't affect them as younger animals. Understandably, pet owners want to keep their loved ones in optimal condition as their fur begins to turn gray.

Help from the sea

Just like in humans, oxidative stress increases as pets age, which means that their bodies face a higher number of free radicals, and their capacity to fight them declines. Among other things, this can affect the immune system, cognitive and visual functions and cardiovascular health. But help is at hand from the sea. The microalga *Haematococcus pluvialis* produces a carotenoid that is one of the strongest antioxidants found in nature; it has a free-radical quenching ability that is 110 times stronger than vitamin E. AstaReal has conducted more than 70 clinical studies to dig deep into the health benefits of its own brand of natural astaxanthin.

Solid science from head to tail

Canine visual function is one of the many use cases in which natural astaxanthin can support animal health. Older animals typically suffer from clouded lenses, which leads to reduced visual acuity. In one study, affected Beagle dogs were supplemented for 6 months with an antioxidant blend containing 5 mg of natural astaxanthin. The results showed that the rate of refractive error progression could be significantly inhibited compared with a control group.

Natural astaxanthin also significantly enhanced the immune responses of domestic female cats after a 12-week daily dose of astaxanthin. Furthermore, scientific studies show that it supports muscle recovery in animals and leads to a reduction in serum markers of exercise-induced muscle damage and muscle fatigue.

Microencapsulated algal meal

At a time when more and more owners are looking for premium products for their beloved companions, the opportunities for health-promoting ingredients such as natural astaxanthin strike a chord in the pet food market. AstaReal meets this demand with its NOVASTA® product line.

The latest addition is NOVASTA EB15, which contains at least 1.5% of astaxanthin. The algal meal is microencapsulated in fully hydrogenated rapeseed oil. This protects the power of astaxanthin, even in more 'open' formulations such as soft chews, pellets or meal mixes. To bring NOVASTA EB15 to the European pet food market, AstaReal has started a strategic partnership with IQI Trusted Pet Food Ingredients, a provider of premium ingredients. ♦



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Senior pets and pet care

With a growing aging pet population, different opportunities arise. There's more room for specialized pet services, products and accessories. You'll also discover the results of a survey on pet owner preferences around services. And a deep-dive into other pet care topics.

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'Seniors' are a growing part of the pet population

Over the past decade, the number of US households with a dog older than 7 years of age has increased from 42% to 52%.

Like the human population, the dog and cat populations in the US include a growing share of 'seniors' (defined as pets aged 7+). This is fueling sales across several sectors in the pet and veterinary industry. The sectors that are especially benefitting include veterinary services, chronic condition prescription pet medications, aging, mobility and pain-related pet supplements, and specialized weight-management and digestive-support/allergen-conscious pet food formulations for senior pets.

Seniors on the rise

In terms of the current age distribution of pets in the US, MRI-Simmons data shows a long-term increase in the share of dog-owning households with senior dogs (age 7+), rising from 42% in 2012 to 52% as of summer 2022. This means that a total of 26.5 million households own senior dogs. In contrast, the share of households with puppies under the age of 1 dropped from nearly 13% to 9% over the same period.

Similarly, the number of cat-owning households in the US with senior cats rose from 46% in 2012 to 52% as of summer 2022, amounting to a total of 16.0 million households with senior cats. In contrast, the share of households with kittens under the age of 1 fell from 13% in 2012 to below 11% in 2022.

Market opportunities

This senior pet trend helps to explain why animal wellness products targeting older pets have

multiplied over the past decade. Conversely, companies focusing on new pet parents and puppy/kitten adoption could be looking at pet market opportunities through the wrong end of the telescope.

A large majority of pet owners have always considered their pets to be fully-fledged family members, and since the pandemic many Americans have depended on their pets even more intensely for companionship and comfort. Survey data from Packaged Facts as of January 2022 shows that 92-96% of pet owners agree that pets are part of the family, with 80% of dog owners and 78% of cat owners strongly agreeing.

Health and wellness

As pet dogs and cats age, the human-animal bond between pet parent and pet deepens and consumers become even more willing to spend money on helping to optimize their pet's health and wellness. This willingness to spend has led to a broad spectrum of products – food, medications and other product types – specially designed to target a range of health conditions associated with older pets.

Overweight and special needs

Again mirroring the human population in the US, the dog and cat populations include a high proportion of pets with weight-related and/or aging-related special needs. The most recent survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, conducted in October 2018,

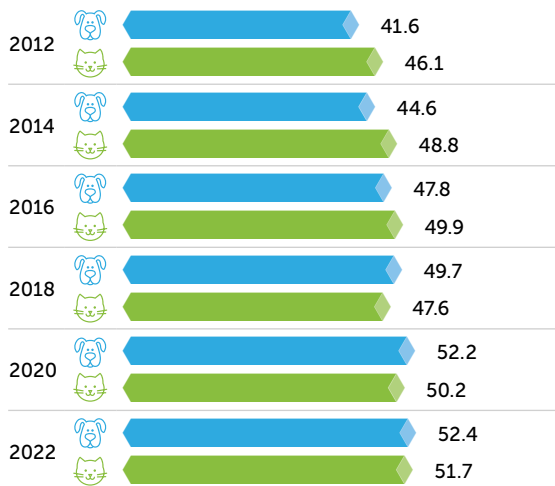
15% of cat owners indicate having cats with special aging-related needs.

reports that 56% of dogs and 60% of cats are overweight or obese. Additionally, according to survey data by Packaged Facts from February 2022, 18% of dog owners and 15% of cat owners indicate that they have pets with special aging-related needs.

Pet food formulation

Packaged Facts' April 2022 Survey of Pet Owners shows that only half of dog and cat owners use regular/adult formulation pet food, which implies heightened pet owner attention to the health and wellness needs of pets. In keeping with the growing share of dog and cat owners with older pets, senior/mature pet foods are among the most popular specialized formulations, used by 19% of dog owners and 16% of cat owners. Weight management/diet foods which are especially relevant to older pets also rank highly among specialized formulations. ♦

Share of dog/cat-owning households with senior pets aged 7+ (% , period 2012-2022)



Source: Packaged Facts, Pet Food in the US (August 2022); MRI-Simmons

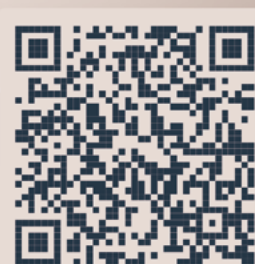


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Accessories for senior pets

The number of older animals is rising, but age should no longer be a barrier to happiness. The market offers plenty of products to keep senior pets physically and mentally active.

Pets are living longer, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). Besides the advances in clinical care, there are many accessories that can help to ensure a better quality of life for older animals.

The seniority of pets

The age at which a pet is considered to be 'senior' can vary, and so too can age-related health issues. These can range from being gradual and subtle, to rapid and obvious. Such health issues not only have an emotional impact (and often place a financial burden) on the owner, but also require careful consideration to help keep life as healthy and 'normal' as possible for the pet.

Thankfully, numerous products on the market are aimed at helping to enrich the lives of senior pets, not only by improving mobility, but also by promoting better cognitive skills.

Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is one of the most common problems in older dogs. This is often linked to canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD), which can lead to confusion and disorientation. As a result, there is strong growth in the range of products on the market aimed specifically at helping to make life easier for incontinent pets. One such product is the 'Wet Dog Mat' from Jacob's Den. This helps to keep the dog as clean and dry as

possible, by using a combination of absorbent and waterproof layers.

Movement and mobility

Many pets develop arthritis as they age. The most common form is osteoarthritis, which is progressive. Therefore, it is important to help to ease the pain for the animal and promote safe mobility by providing suitable accessories such as pet stairs, ramps and raised or/and orthopedic beds.

A number of vet physiotherapists recommend the WGYTECH dog stairs and the anti-slip tape from Canine Arthritis Management, which can help to minimize trips and stumbles. Such incidents are believed to play a huge part in influencing the rate of progression of arthritis.

For aging cats, 'cat trees' can help to enrich their lives when they venture outside less frequently. For caged rodents, the addition of more levels, non-slip surfaces and hammocks can increase their comfort as they move around.

Eyesight and hearing

Most pets will suffer some kind of vision impairment and degradation of hearing as they age. To stimulate all 5 senses, particularly eyesight and hearing, the Sharples Five Senses Ball is made of a color spectrum that is

easier to see and makes a sound when shaken. It also has a multi-textured surface for added stimulation.

The X-Tire Ball from Pet Qwerks Toys is a great addition, particularly for blind or partially sighted dogs, as it has ruggedly molded tires with a single jingle ball in the center. For birds with sight issues, vet tape wrap is a good way to mark the cage bars. Other additions can include padded perches or bird platforms – such as the Zerodis Bird Perch Stand – which provide tactile feedback when exploring.

Outdoor excursions

According to health provider Healthline, dogs can help decrease human anxiety and loneliness by 60%. In addition, people who own a dog are 54% more likely to get the recommended amount of exercise, according to the animal well-being association American Humane. Therefore, it is no wonder that so many owners still want their companions to be able to join them on walks. For dogs with very limited mobility,

Accessories can promote better cognitive skills and mobility in senior pets.

dog strollers such as the Klarfit Husky Vario 2-in-1 can be a versatile solution for such outings.

Enrichment

For senior pets with limited mobility, enrichment at home plays a vital part in their mental and physical stimulation. The Kong is probably the most well-recognized interactive dog toy on the market, closely followed by the snuffle mat in terms of popularity. Both of these products have been developed with pet wellness and development in mind. ♦



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Tracking the stages of aging in 40,000 dogs

The largest research project of its kind aims to better understand seniority in animals and humans and to expand canine lifespan.

All dog owners want to help their best friend live a longer and healthier life. To accomplish this, a better understanding of the aging process in dogs is needed. The Dog Aging Project brings together a community of dogs, owners, veterinarians, researchers and volunteers to advance this understanding. As a result, tens of thousands of owners across the US have been given a chance to actually help make their dream a reality.

Largest canine health study in the world

Since the launch of the Dog Aging Project (DAP) in 2019, more than 40,000 dogs have been enrolled in what is now the largest canine health study in the world. The project is being conducted by the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (VMBS), the University of Washington (UW) School of Medicine, and a dozen other partner institutions. It is supported by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) of the US National Institutes of Health.

Learning about healthy aging – in dogs and humans

Ultimately, the varied, rich and complex data collected through the project will allow the team to characterize aging in companion dogs, resulting in metrics that do not currently exist. To generate that data, owners are using tests developed by the DAP scientists to measure changes in physical function as their dogs age.

A better understanding of the aging process in dogs is needed.

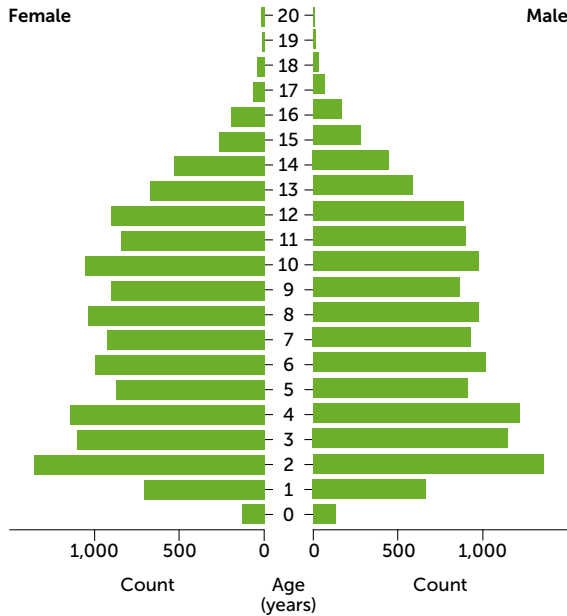
There are similar tests for aging humans, like moving from seated to standing, gripping devices, or age-specific normal ranges on blood chemistry values. For dogs, however, aside from owner observations, there are few standardized assessments.

Dr. Francesca Macchiarini, chief of the biological resources branch in NIA's Division of Aging Biology, describes this project as an innovative approach to understand the process of aging: "We're going to learn more in a relatively shorter period of time than we would by studying the human population – a lot about how biology, lifestyle and environment can affect healthy aging in dogs and then have that be applicable to humans."

Clinical trial

One of the project's most exciting components is the Test of Rapamycin in Aging Dogs (TRIAD) study, a clinical trial that will involve select veterinary sites across the US. In hundreds of middle-aged, large-breed dogs, TRIAD will evaluate the effectiveness of rapamycin, which at lower doses has been shown to increase lifespan, improve heart and cognitive function, and reduce age-related disease in laboratory species.

The demographic structure of Dog Aging Project participants



Source: DAP

This will provide the first clinical evaluation of an intervention that may increase lifespan and health span based on this approach.

Biological aging

Dr. Matt Kaerberlein, a UW professor and co-director of the Dog Aging Project, says that targeting biological aging is 21st-century medicine, with the potential to greatly enhance healthy longevity for both people and pets. Because the project is an open-data study, scientists around the world and from many different fields will have access to the massive amount of data generated, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the study in a variety of ways, based on their interests. For example, one key contributor is noted canine and archaic human genome science researcher Joshua Akey of Princeton University. ♦



Dr. Kate Creevy
Dog Aging Project Chief veterinary officer
dogagingproject.org



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Alzheimer's in dogs: are we closer to finding an effective treatment?

Researchers are looking to leverage the strong similarities between human and canine brains to advance the study of the cognitive disorder Alzheimer's disease.

It is a fact that older dogs naturally develop a dementia-like syndrome with biological, clinical and therapeutic similarities to Alzheimer's disease (AD) in humans. Australian biomedical company Skin2Neuron has successfully tested a new kind of cell therapy in older dogs, that appears to reverse dementia-like symptoms.

Veterinary trial

The first phase of the veterinary trial, conducted with 6 companion dogs with Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD) for a period of 3 months, concluded that cell therapy may have the potential for treating carefully chosen CCD sufferers based on neurosynaptic restoration in the hippocampus.

"We expanded the cells in the lab, and then a neurosurgeon microinjected the cells into the hippocampus. From there, the cells migrated to the right location and began to mature into adult neurons,

eventually making connections within the relevant memory circuit," Skin2Neuron co-founder Michael Valenzuela explains to PETS International. "As a result, we saw the dogs' dementia reverse and their behavior get back to normal."

Do dogs hold the key to treatment for humans?

However, this process requires sophisticated neurosurgical equipment that is usually only available for human patients, so a canine version of the treatment currently costs over \$10,000 per animal. Nevertheless, Valenzuela, who is also an advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) as part of the Clinical Consortium on Healthy Ageing, hopes that the treatment can eventually be successfully administered to both humans and dogs, thanks to the fact that the canine brain is so similar to the human brain.

[▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)



Prevalence of CCD is around 5% in dogs aged 10 years, doubling every 2 years thereafter.

completed by the owners of 15,019 dogs as part of the Dog Ageing Project (DOP). The study was aimed at establishing baseline associations between selected characteristics collected through the Canine Social and Learned Behavior (CSLB) survey, consisting of 13 questions that assessed behaviors such as getting stuck behind objects, pacing, and failing to recognize familiar people. It found that while the prevalence of the condition was near zero in dogs below the age of 10, the likelihood of developing CCD increased by 52% with each year a dog aged. The results also showed that the odds of developing CCD were 6.5 times higher among dogs with lower activity levels over the past year.

A recent study led by the University of Washington in Seattle (US) recognized this similarity and stated that 'dogs exhibiting CCD may offer researchers a valuable animal model in which to study characteristics of neurodegenerative diseases that are relevant to, but challenging to study in, human populations'. 'Dogs with CCD could serve as candidates for AD-preventative and/or therapeutic strategies,' according to the University of Washington. This could represent a major breakthrough in view of the fact that Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in humans in the US.

It is believed that CCD progresses at a faster rate in dogs as they have shorter lifespans. "There are certain diseases where in humans we have to wait 5 years, 10 years or 20 years to really see something which will happen in a year or 2 in a dog," says Assistant Professor Jan Krumsiek from New York-based Weill Cornell Medicine.

Canine dementia risk doubling over age 10

"CCD is a huge issue for dogs and their owners because it destroys the human-animal bond, and is often a reason for euthanasia because the dogs become just too difficult to manage," explains Michael Valenzuela. He points out that the prevalence of CCD is around 5% in dogs aged 10 years, doubling every 2 years thereafter.

This is echoed by a Scientific Reports study published in August, which was based on data from 2 surveys

Understanding the disease

While the current studies of dementia in dogs are focused on advancing human treatment, there are hopes that a better understanding of the cognitive disorder will also improve treatments for the canine population. In the meantime, drugs – including antidepressants – are also prescribed, and dog owners are often advised to change their pet's diet as well as to increase their activity levels to manage the symptoms.

Nick Sutton, a dog health and science expert at The Kennel Club, backs up the idea that it is important to keep the dog fit and healthy in its senior years. "Walking the dog and taking it for exercise lowers its risk of dementia," he comments.

One Health

Despite there being no known cure for canine dementia, the scientific community is trying to improve the understanding of this cognitive disease by working towards One Health: a joint initiative of several disciplines to bring about human, animal and plant health in sustainable ecosystems across the world using a chain approach. ♦



Beatrice Bedeschi
PETS International Contributor

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Pet services survey looks into pet owners' preferences and spending habits



How popular are pet services? Which ones are used most often and how much do pet owners spend on them every month? What are key decision-making factors when choosing a service provider? Read the results of a recent research project conducted by PETS International in collaboration with Yummypets.

Pet retailers across the world continue to make significant investments in adding more pet services to their offerings. Whereas it's clear there is a growing demand for such services, we were interested to find out which services are most in demand in which countries.

Our survey was held amongst 1,572 pet owners in Canada, France, the UK and the US. The vast majority of respondents (62.8%) are pet owners that use pet services.

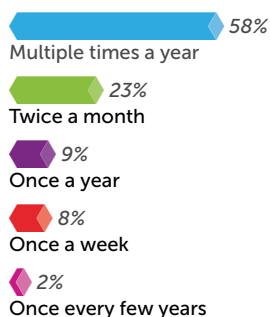
Of those that use pet care services, most (58%) do so multiple times per year. One in four (23%) require services twice per month and 8% once a week. The remainder (11%) go to a pet care service provider once a year or less.*

**To provide the best overview of the preferences and habits of consumers of pet services, respondents who don't pay for pet services have been excluded from the results in the rest of the article.*

Most popular services

Paying a visit to the vet is one of the most popular pet care services: 67% of pet owners take their pet to a vet. Interestingly, 78% of French pet owners visit vets, whereas in the US only 56% of pet owners do so.

How often do you use pet care services?

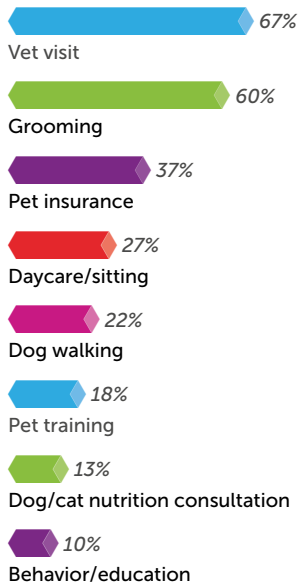


Grooming services come in a close second, at 60%, without any real differences between countries or pet owner age groups.

Another popular service is that offered for taking care of pets during holidays or when owners are at work. One-fifth of respondents (22%) indicate they've used a dog walking service in the past 6 months. As for pet daycare or pet sitting services, 27% of respondents used such services.

US pet owners are less likely to pay for dog walking and daycare/pet sitting services than owners in other countries. The survey also showed that pet owners between 25 to 39 years of age are more likely to use pet care services. What's more, UK pet owners (37%) pay for dog walking services.

What kind of pet services have you used in the last 6 months?



With pet health top of mind for most pet parents, it's interesting to see that 13% of pet owners indicate they've visited a dog or cat nutrition consultant in the past 6 months.

Acupuncture for pets and pet taxis are the least popular services.

Budget

We also asked pet owners how much they spend on pet care services on a monthly basis. Almost half of the pet owners (48%) spend somewhere between €50 and €100 per month. The second largest group (29%) spends less than €50 per month. A small group (7%) are the biggest spenders, with a budget of over €150 per month.

Despite current inflationary pressures, the majority of respondents (69%) think they will continue to spend the same amount on pet services as they're currently spending. Only 13% expect to spend more, while 17% believe they will spend less.

Buying criteria

With an abundance of pet care service providers around, deciding on which provider to use can be a challenge. That's why we asked pet parents what factors their decisions are based on. [▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)

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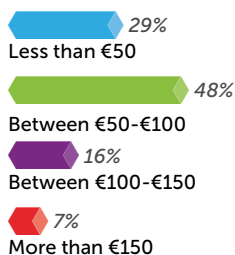


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What is your monthly budget for pet care services?



Cost appears to be the most important decision-making factor. A convincing 53% of respondents mention that high prices are the main concern around pet services.

Pet owners also value the opinion of others when picking a service provider. In fact, positive reviews are the second most important consideration for 51% of pet owners. Discounts are at the bottom of the criteria list.

Finding service providers

The natural first step for pet owners to find a service provider seems to get recommendations from friends, family and other pet owners. No less than 49% of respondents have found their current provider in this way.

Using the internet is the second most popular option. 26% indicate they've consulted reviews on the internet before making a final decision. A quarter of respondents base their decision on recommendations made by their vet.

When it's actually time to book an appointment, the majority of pet owners (62%) do so by phone, whereas 29% make their appointment online.

Opportunities for service providers

Surprisingly, survey results show that there is a lack of service providers. 23% of respondents indicate that they have difficulty finding providers and making appointments. In the same vein, around 16% of respondents also complain about a lack of providers in their neighborhood.

Customer satisfaction

Most pet owners (70%) are happy with their current providers. Very few (2%) are not satisfied or looking to change providers. The remaining group (28%) is okay

with their service providers, but feels there certainly is room for improvement.

When it comes to trust, the majority of respondents (80%) indicate they trust the know-how and skills of their pet care provider. Yet, 18% remain somewhat skeptical.

Pet insurance

In the September issue of PETS International, we discussed the growing popularity of pet insurance. This survey shows that 45% of pet owners have pet insurance; 15% of pet owners indicate that their pets aren't currently covered by insurance, but that they're planning on taking one out.

UK pet owners (81%) are most likely to have pet insurance. US and Canadian pet owners are less likely to have insurance.

When comparing different age groups, 25 to 39-year-olds are most likely to have pet insurance, whereas older respondents are less likely to have one for their pet.

Pets on holiday?

Because of the pet adoption boom during COVID, many places have a shortage of pet boarding providers. One in five respondents (21%) indicate that they were forced to change or cancel their holiday plans because of a lack of pet care solutions in the last 2 years.

Uniform demand for pet services

In previous surveys that we conducted together with Yummypets, there were always clear distinctions between pet owners from different age groups or countries. Although this survey does reveal some differences in these categories, they are much less significant. We can therefore conclude that pet owners across countries and age groups more or less share the same preferences and behaviors when it comes to pet services. ♦

Special thanks to *Yummypets*



Philippe Vanderhoydonck
Managing Director
GlobalPETS

The pet care business is booming – but for how long?



Having benefited from the pandemic, the pet care sector is bracing itself for a time in which life is returning to normal and inflation is on us.

It is not just the increase in the number of pets worldwide that is driving the growth of the pet care sector, but a range of other factors has also contributed to a push in spending. The most influential of these factors are humanization, health and well-being, sustainability and digitalization. Is the sector resilient enough to face a world where inflation is fast becoming the name of the game?

Humanization

Euromonitor International's Voice of the Consumer Lifestyle survey revealed that 71% of pet owners worldwide considered their pets as family members. This has contributed to an increase in spending, especially on premium products.

In recent years we've seen luxury fashion brands branch out into pet wear and we've witnessed the introduction of food treats that mimic human snacks, such as cookies and doughnuts. Pet owners are now spending their disposable incomes on their companion animals in much the same way as parents spend on their children.

The American Pet Products Association (APPA) projects that US pet parents will spend close to \$109.6 billion on their pets this year.

"The fundamental driver of longer-term growth in the pet industry is the humanization of our new companions. So, while the number of pets sky-rocketed during the pandemic, we have been also willing to spend more on them," says Sophie Lund-Yates, lead equity analyst at financial services company Hargreaves Lansdown.

Health and well-being

The pet care market has seen an increase in products for specific conditions, such as digestive, joint, heart, dental and skin health, as well as 'free-from' ranges. There is also a growing consumer trend towards natural and organic components in pet care products as owners become more aware of the impacts of artificial additives.

Sophie Lund-Yates says that owners are happy to spend more money on boosting their pets' health. "This can be on things like supplements, healthy treats, bespoke food for different intolerances, and anything that relates to wellness and comfort."

It's not just physical health that is concerning pet owners. The rise in the number of products aimed at improving the mental health of companion animals, such as calming treatments designed to help combat pet stress, is indicative of pet owners' concern regarding pets' mental health.

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Ongoing advances in veterinary health are improving pets' lives and enabling them to live longer. Innovations such as screening tools and imaging are aiding diagnosis and treatment, and an increase in spending on pet insurance is enabling pet owners to take advantage of cutting-edge veterinary care.

Sustainability

Companies are responding to consumer concerns regarding the origins of products and packaging. In fact, across the industry, more recyclable materials are being used in packaging and the use of plastic is decreasing.

According to Euromonitor, North America, Australasia and Western European regions are leading sustainability in pet care: 'Whilst Western Europe tends to lead the world in sustainability more broadly, thanks to its green macroenvironment, innovations in the pet care industry still tend to stem from the US, given the market's sheer size and scale.'

The agency points out that these regions have sustainability claims that echo the needs and wants of both society and business. Such claims have almost become a prerequisite for being able to survive the grueling competition.

Ranked by country the US comes first, followed by New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Poland, France, the Netherlands and Spain. The market research company also focuses on those markets that are actively investing in sustainability, like South Korea or Malaysia.

Digitalization

It is believed that as much as 23% of global pet care retail sales were done through online channels in 2021.

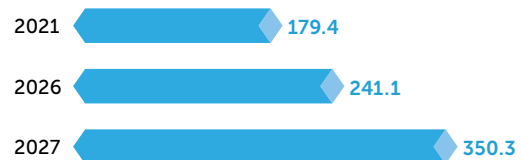
The option to bulk buy online with easy delivery, as well as pet food subscriptions that offer a more personalized service, have become popular with pet owners. This trend is likely to continue.

The veterinary sector is also increasing its online business. Earlier this year, Brazil approved a resolution allowing vets to perform online consultations. This has prompted new products and online platforms to emerge nationwide.

Experts expect some customers will cut back spending on non-essentials.

A case in point is Brazilian retailer Petz, owner of animal health company Seres which operates 12 veterinary hospitals and 126 health centers. Recently, a new telemedicine service became available. The service offers online assistance with a choice of 1,000 veterinarians.

Global pet care market value (in billions, USD)



Source: Research and Markets/ Global Markets

The challenges

While some areas of the sector are more resilient than others, the pet care market as a whole remains buoyant despite recent challenges.

Amanda Sizer Barrett, director general at the International Trade Association of Pet Equipment Suppliers PetQuip believes that pet suppliers and manufacturers can remain optimistic as the humanization of pets "should be reflected in steady, future spending on products."

"The pet industry is pretty resilient. It will rise to the challenge and continue to innovate," she says to PETS International.

But Sophie Lund-Yates from Hargreaves Lansdown reminds us that the effects of the inflation in household incomes may impact the pet care segment.

"We are likely to see customers strip back spending on non-essentials, and to behave similarly as they have done in supermarkets, which is to swap to value-for-money offerings," she concludes. ♦



Karen Cornish
PETS International Contributor



Trends in the flea and tick segment

From topical medication to chewable products, companies are launching new formulas to cope with a higher demand for protection against ticks, fleas and parasitic diseases.

The market for flea and tick products, which was valued at over \$5.8 billion in 2021, is expected to reach \$16.4 billion by 2031, according to Transparency Market Research (TMR). Such market forecasts make this a promising sector for companies interested in growing their market share.

Market opportunity

A dog or cat scratching and itching itself is a warning sign for pet parents. After all, owners are worried about fleas or ticks which might impact their pet's health or pass on a parasitic disease. Such concerns about pet health are an opportunity for the industry to launch products aimed at fighting off ticks and fleas.

To protect both pets and humans from ticks and fleas, there are already hundreds of pesticides, repellents and growth inhibitors available in the market.

Protecting against ticks and fleas

The products on offer range from oral solutions, such as pills and chews, to collars, sprays, dips, shampoos, powders and 'spot-ons' (liquid products squeezed onto a dog's or cat's skin, usually in the area between the shoulder blades).

Of all these products, the 2 most common treatments for warding off ticks and fleas are topical spot-on treatments and oral chewable tablets – the latter providing long-lasting protection against ticks and fleas from within.

In January of this year, Zoetis received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to produce Simparica Trio, a once-a-month chewable tablet that protects pets against parasitic diseases.

According to the company, Simparica is the first and only combination product demonstrated to prevent infections that may cause Lyme disease.

"This efficacy claim provides a new tool to veterinary teams who understand that healthy pets mean happy people, and who work every day to provide the best care for our dogs," according to Jen Sheehy, Medical Lead for Parasitology at Zoetis.

Easy application equals less stress

In May last year, Elanco announced the launch of Credelio Plus and Credelio Cats, a broad-spectrum oral parasiticide for the control of fleas, ticks and worms

Topical spot-ons and oral chewable tablets are the most common treatments.

in dogs and cats. This is a once-monthly tablet, that comes with the promise for cats, that the treatment kills fleas within 6 hours.

Paris-based Vetoquinol earlier this year launched Felpreva, its new spot-on parasiticide for cats. It treats both internal and external parasite infections – including tapeworms – for up to 3 months in a single dose. The company claims the product is active for 13 weeks against fleas and ticks. The new medication is available in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and Italy.

“The need for a straightforward, cat-friendly endectocide solution like Felpreva has never been more critical. Time-pressed vets are faced with increasing numbers of feline patients, whilst owners continue to struggle with the stress of treating their cats,” explains Juliana Carrer, International Range Manager at Vetoquinol.

Long-term effectiveness at an affordable price

US-based Wondercide recently announced a new lineup of plant-powered products, including shampoo for dogs and cats, a water-resistant collar, and a spot-on treatment. The collar protects pets for up to 4 months and the spot-on repels parasites for at least 30 days.

To help pet owners cope with the higher costs of these treatments, subscription pet care company Pet Friendly provides subscriptions for safe and affordable flea and tick treatments for cats and dogs. Prices start at \$12 per pet. Recently, the company also introduced Multi-Pet Pricing in order to help families keep all their pets protected at an affordable price. ♦



Edgar Maciel
PETS International Contributor



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Good pet health starts with a proper toothbrush

Periodontitis is the most common disease that affects dogs and cats and oral hygiene is critical to avoid it.

Periodontitis is one of those medical words that can sound intimidating. In plain, everyday language it's simply called advanced gum disease.

Gum disease

Gum disease is caused by plaque. This is a slimy 'biofilm' that readily sticks to teeth. Here it can irritate and damage the gums and other tissues around the teeth and their roots.

Once the disease takes hold, it's progressive and will lead to pain and ultimately tooth loss. As well as causing a local problem, periodontitis has been linked to a large number of serious health issues, including heart disease and diabetes.

A pet's individual genetics will massively influence the development and severity of gum disease. In some animals, a little plaque can do a huge amount of damage. Other animals can have plaque but live their lives without experiencing any adverse impact on their health.





If brushing is 'active home care,' then chews, rinses and water additives are considered 'passive home care'.

Nothing beats a toothbrush

Just as is the case with humans, reducing plaque and improving oral hygiene will lead to healthier gums.

There are many products available that all claim to help do just that. There are mouth rinses and water additives. There are chews and specialist foods. And you may even hear some recommending dried animal parts and – more recently – deer antlers.

However, it is worth noting that nothing beats the toothbrush! The mechanical removal of plaque is the gold standard of oral hygiene, and the bristles of a brush get into all the nooks and crannies.

Meat-flavored paste can be used on the brush to make brushing teeth a 'tasty' pastime for dogs. Interestingly such pastes also claim to help in all sorts of ways but perhaps the most important thing is that they help to put your dog at ease. When it comes to cats, brushing teeth can be more challenging.

As a vet who specializes in dental disease and oral surgery, I have spent countless hours treating animals for gum disease. The good news is that there are many ways to minimize the adverse effects of periodontitis.

It's all about genes

When looking after a pet's teeth, there's not much we can do about genetics. Greyhounds and small breed dogs such as Yorkshire Terriers are notorious for having a higher incidence of periodontitis. When it comes to cats, oriental breeds suffer a similar reputation.

Face shape and crowding of teeth is also a factor and with the rise in popularity of dogs like French Bulldogs and cats like Persians, we see more gum disease. Teeth are happiest when they have plenty of space and are surrounded by healthy gum. But short muzzles compromise on space.

Active versus passive care

If brushing is 'active home care,' then chews, rinses and water additives are considered 'passive home care', and whilst not as effective, they can be much easier in daily use. However, very hard chews – such as deer antlers – are too hard and will fracture teeth.

Important to know is that many companies create chews or other dental health products with claims of many beneficial effects. Only thing is that they cannot substantiate these claims.

So, at the end of the day, pet owners are recommended to choose products that have the data to prove effectiveness and are approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). ♦



Tom Williams
Small Animal Dentistry and Oral Surgery
President of the British Veterinary
Dental Association

Boosting joint health – supplements for pets

Healthy joints are essential for pet mobility and health. Which supplements are most beneficial?

An articulating joint is where bones and muscles come together to support the skeleton and facilitate movement and stability. Importantly, the ends of the bones are covered by a thin layer of cartilage that enables a smooth transition of movement and absorbs any forces impacting the joint.

Joint health – all about cartilage and synovial fluid

The articular cartilage is a dense fibrous connective tissue attached to the bones via specialized zones at the end of each involved bone. Articulating bones are held together by tendons and muscles, creating a joint capsule. This resembles a sac-like envelope containing synovial fluid. Joint health refers to either or both articular cartilage and synovial fluid.

Replenishing the protective shock absorber

The cartilage layer covering each end of the articulating bones is a strong, flexible connective tissue that protects joints and bones. It acts as a shock absorber, reducing friction and preventing the bones from rubbing together in movement.

Cartilage is made up of specialized cells called chondrocytes. These chondrocytes produce large amounts of extracellular matrix composed of collagen fibers, proteoglycans, glycosaminoglycans and elastin fibers. There are no blood vessels in the cartilage to supply the chondrocytes with nutrients.

Replenishment of proteoglycans and glycosaminoglycans can be supported with

glucosamine and chondroitin supplements. Supplementation of collagen is also seen, although the efficacy of supplementation is debatable, because the collagen structure forms early in a pet's life.

Effective pain management

Joint pain is extremely complex as it can have multiple causes that are outside of the joint itself. Joint pain caused by inflammation, however, may be reduced with the aid of oral supplementation. Inflammation is a natural bodily response to physical trauma, but it creates a swelling that can cause severe pain.

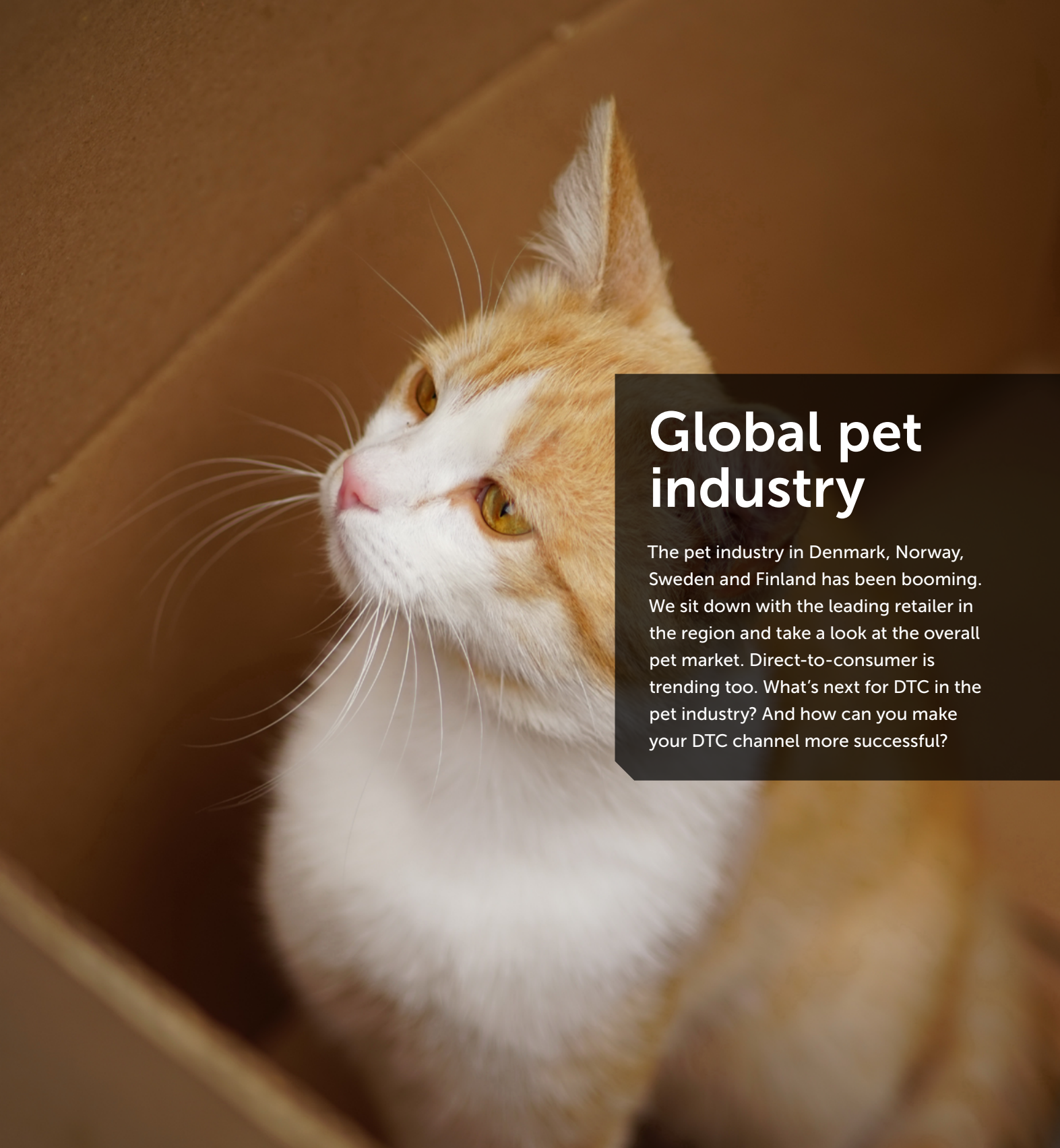
Commonly used ingredients include sources of omega-3 fatty acids, turmeric and selenium. These ingredients have different pathways in which they serve as an antioxidant and can be used alongside each other.

Choice of ingredients

Glucosamine can be either animal-derived or plant-based. Chondroitin is only animal-derived. Ethical choices should avoid Chinese sources which are likely to contain shark fins. Green-lipped mussels provide a great mixture of key supplements: glucosamine, chondroitin, collagen and omega 3. However, these mussels grow in New Zealand only, which makes them less attractive for pet supplement brands looking to reduce their footprint. ♦



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Global pet industry

The pet industry in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland has been booming. We sit down with the leading retailer in the region and take a look at the overall pet market. Direct-to-consumer is trending too. What's next for DTC in the pet industry? And how can you make your DTC channel more successful?

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A small but competitive market catching up with global trends

Pet food containing local products is particularly popular in the Nordics, while alternative proteins and cheaper private-label brands are also slowly finding their way onto shelves.

The Nordic Petfood Association (NPFA) estimates the number of pets in the 2 main categories in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden last year at 6.7 million: 3.9 million cats and 2.8 million dogs. This is an increase of 4% compared with pre-pandemic times, when there was an estimated total Nordic pet population of 6.54 million cats and dogs, according to the trade association.

Consumer behavior

The trends in the Nordic countries are similar to most other European nations, with pet parents showing rising interest in buying high-quality, healthy and ecological food. "High-quality pet food has been important for a long time, but grain-free products are what many pet parents are opting for nowadays," says NPFA member Åsa Dufva. According to industry insiders, grain-free diets are especially popular in Finland. Meanwhile, interest in raw food has decreased, partly due to the "growing awareness of the risks to the animals and the pet parents themselves".




Alternative proteins like insects are still not hugely popular among pet parents, although the category is growing across all the Nordic markets. Swedish insect pet food start-up Petgood says that its sales have almost tripled compared to the same period in 2021 and that the demand is still increasing.

Private label has also increased its retail share in the region, partially due to the current inflationary pressure. "There is a strong likelihood that a pet parent will leave the store with a private label product," adds Dufva.

A mix of big companies and local players

Multinational pet food manufacturers represent a large chunk of the Nordic markets, but there is also a significant presence of local companies across all countries with the exception of Finland. The use of local products in pet food formulation appears to be a crucial factor for consumers. "Pet parents in the Nordic countries know that cats enjoy being served Baltic herring, but this might not work as well in other markets," explains Dufva.

Retail value of pet food (estimation, in €)

	2022	2025	
Sweden 	543.5M	590.3M	+8.5%
Finland 	477.1M	559.3M	+17%
Norway 	426.2M	474M	+11%
Denmark 	422M	457.28M	+8%

Source: Euromonitor International

Other pet food products containing well-known Nordic specialties like reindeer, elk and salmon as ingredients are appreciated by pet parents, while the use of sausages in pet food formulation is still popular in Finland.

Online and offline retailing

Sweden, which is the largest of the Nordic countries, has the biggest number of brick-and-mortar stores selling pet food: approximately 350 shops, including grocery stores, pet product stores and even veterinary stations that are part of bigger chains. In terms of specialized pet care retail chains, Denmark had the most in 2021, according to Statista, with a total of 8. Next came Norway (5), followed by Finland (4) and Sweden (3).

Retail value of pet products (estimation, in €)

	2022	2025	
Sweden 	202M	229.6M	+14%
Finland 	198.8M	243.1M	+22%
Norway 	156.8M	178.6M	+14%
Denmark 	173M	196.8M	+14%

Source: Euromonitor International

Consumers are purchasing a growing percentage of pet-related goods online, and local players believe that this will continue to increase in the coming years. According to recent research by online payment service Paytrail, around 25% of Finnish households with pets have ordered pet products online. While corresponding numbers were not available for other regional markets, the online sales volumes are likely to be of a similar magnitude. Since people are doing

more of their shopping online, direct-to-consumer companies are also becoming more commonplace. However, sparsely populated areas, especially in Norway but also in the northern parts of Finland and Sweden, pose some logistical challenges to e-commerce companies.

Environmental commitment

Over the last few years, environmental awareness seems to have grown among pet owners. Swedish global warming activist Greta Thunberg is also influencing local pet food manufacturers through what NPFA's chairman Terkel Due refers to as the "Greta wave". For example, local players are striving to harmonize the recyclability of pet food packaging. According to Due, the Nordic countries have developed a shared vision of recycling and enable pet parents to access sorting instructions through QR codes on product packaging.

Essential industry

Since the Nordic pet food manufacturers serve a relatively small market, the different players work together to try to grow the pie for everyone. "Our market is small, so our impact grows bigger when we collaborate," says Due. For example, the NPFA succeeded in getting officials to recognize the pet industry as an essential sector during the pandemic, which meant that pet stores could remain open during the lockdown.

However, the current increase in the prices of electricity, gas and ingredients is directly affecting the regional pet food sector. According to the industry association, while the authorities see human food as a high priority, food for animals is classed as less important.

"Therefore, our next lobby action is to ensure the supply of energy for pet food production and to get the decision-makers to understand that pet food should be considered just as critical as food for humans," states NPFA's chairman. ♦



Jessica Suni
PETS International Contributor



Pet retailer leads with relatability and education in the Nordics

Musti Group's Chief Commercial Officer Ellinor Persdotter Nilsson shares what makes this leading retailer special and sheds light on Nordic consumers.

Since the Musti Group started in Finland in 1988, it has become the dominant pet retail player across the Nordics. Although Finland is still its biggest market, with 140 stores, the company's operations in Sweden (128 stores) and Norway (61 stores) are also expanding. The last reported numbers show that Musti's annual sales have reached €381 million, up 17% from the year before.

The 'relatable' retailer

From the beginning, the retailer has focused on highly knowledgeable staff as the way to differentiate itself. Pet ownership often comes with uncertainty, question marks and challenging situations. Musti wants to be there for consumers through the ups and downs of pet ownership.

Since 93% of Musti employees are pet parents themselves, a sense of 'I've been there, I know what you need' shines through in most customer interactions. The company shows the same level of commitment in how it organizes its stores, on its website and in its marketing activities. According to Chief Commercial Officer Ellinor Persdotter Nilsson, this resonates really well with pet owners.

Leading with education

The company's Puppy & Kitten club is one great illustration of this. Because new pet parents are often the consumers that need the most help, Musti has launched various initiatives, including puppy training, puppy 'playdates', and a puppy and kitten corner in stores. The group has also created helpful resources to guide pet parents through their pet's first year, from emails and discounts to gifts and a tailored assortment. Data reveals that this is really helping to attract a larger share of new puppy and kitten owners to the Musti ecosystem.

Ecosystem development

"Today's customers want you to be where they are, whether that's online or in-store. We're working hard to make shopping as convenient for them as possible," says Persdotter Nilsson. That includes running successful experiments with live shopping and launching initiatives to further integrate Musti's online and offline operations. Currently, 22.6% of the group's revenue comes from online purchases. Persdotter Nilsson does not foresee any major shifts in this percentage, since she believes that consumers will continue to find it important to interact with the company's pet experts in stores.

Growth plans

Because the stores remain a crucial part of the customer experience, expansion of the store network is high on the priority list and the group has opened 55 new stores in the last 12 months alone. The Norwegian market is seen as offering the biggest opportunity for network expansion. In Finland, its most mature market, most growth will come from serving existing customers better and increasing lifetime value rather than from network expansion.

Other major pet retailers are continuously adding more veterinary services to their stores and ecosystems. While Musti also offers vet services, these are not a core growth driver, although its pet-care initiatives are popular. "Our in-store services, like grooming, training and nail clipping, are always booked out. So continuing to add these services is certainly something we'll invest more in," states Persdotter Nilsson.

Nordic consumers

Since Musti operates across 3 countries, the company is well-placed to pinpoint differences in consumer attitudes or behavior. For example, Sweden has more cat owners, and hiking with a pet is the most popular in Norway. Other than these minor differences, consumers across the Nordics are very comparable in the way they buy and the pet products they choose. According to Persdotter Nilsson, one thing that Nordic consumers have in common is that they like innovations and are fast to adopt them.

Sustainable and locally produced products

The Nordic countries are often considered frontrunners when it comes to sustainability. For Musti, sustainability has always been an important part of its business and the way it operates. But is that also reflected in the pet products Nordic consumers favor?

In Persdotter Nilsson's view, people are certainly looking more for sustainable products, but it is still a developing trend. As an example of a category where Musti can see that shift, she mentions sustainable cat litter (particularly in Sweden).

"What seems more appealing to consumers right now is locally produced products," she comments. To respond to that trend, Musti invested in a pet food



factory in Finland. "The factory itself is also optimized for sustainability. For example, it only uses renewable energy and produces minimal waste."

While the main consumables like food and litter have remained Musti's best-selling items over the past 3 years, Persdotter Nilsson has noticed some interesting trends in data collected from the company's more than 1.4 million loyal customers: "We can see, for example, that one of the top-selling products is now dog food for sensitive dogs. This clearly shows an increased demand for pet food with health claims."

Another product group that has also become more popular than 3 years ago, is dog clothing. According to Persdotter Nilsson, this is largely due to the way the retailer has developed the assortment and reorganized its stores to make it easier to buy such products.

Are supply chain challenges stabilizing?

Like the rest of the industry, Musti has faced some supply chain challenges. However, the situation feels a lot more stable right now. "And the positive thing is that our customers haven't seen much of these issues. We've been able to handle the challenges as they showed up without impacting customers," she concludes. ♦



Philippe Vanderhoydonck
Managing Director
GlobalPETS

What's next for DTC?

Direct-to-consumer has proven to be a successful model for new pet brands, but more players in the sector means more challenges too.



Consumers now want to get closer to brands. To discover more about the products they're purchasing and to compare prices with those of competitors. This change in consumer behavior has prompted DTC – as an optimal solution for pet brands wanting to launch new products that customers can purchase easily from their smartphone, tablet or computer.

Convenient and valuable

"It has to be convenient and valuable, and that's what you deliver in the direct-to-consumer environment, which is where you capture that kind of high-value shopper," says Terri Rockovich, co-founder and CEO at Los Angeles-based dog food start-up Jinx.

The DTC channel also allows pet brands to customize their products, create experiences and share storytelling that customers value.

Repeat purchases

A couple of years ago, DTC brands were mainly offering fresh and customized dog and cat food. In 2020 – in the middle of the pandemic – the DTC market started to get more competitive and subcategories such as treats and supplements increased their market shares.

Partnering with retailers is a good way to scale up your business without having to pay high customer acquisition costs.

Most brands are now offering subscription boxes as a core part of their business model. Jinx, for example, combines one-time orders and repeat purchases, with a discount for pet parents that opt for the latter.

For the period from April to September, New York-based BARK announced that revenue from its DTC business had increased by more than 10% to \$235.9 million. Subscription shipments reached 7.46 million (+4%), although new subscriptions dropped by 14% to 477,000 users.

Big business goes DTC too

Big corporations are also seeing DTC as an opportunity to look into new business models that put the consumer at the center of the experience. Last year PupBox, a monthly subscription service for dogs bought by Petco in 2017, expanded its offer to cover pets of all ages. And Mars Petcare acquired direct-to-consumer fresh pet food brand Nom Nom Now earlier this year, as an addition to its Royal Canin division.

The power of traditional retail

Despite online being the new trendy way of shopping, traditional offline shopping is generating the interest of DTC players – plus the omnichannel strategy implemented by big retailer corporations.

Walmart and Target in the US are actively looking for partnerships with small companies and start-ups that are exclusively selling their products online, to offer them the chance to increase their visibility on the shelves of the retailers' stores. "Mass retailers are hungry for new types of customers, and this appetite for change is making them figure out how to create space on their shelves for some of these brands," says Terri Rockovich from Jinx.

Experts believe that it is smart for DTC brands to think about how they can stand out in these offline environments, while creating brand awareness among retailers that do not have e-commerce as the main shopping channel for pet supplies. "It gives a smaller brand the expansion opportunity and increased visibility by being on thousands of shelves nationwide," Terri Rockovich adds.

Partnerships like these are also a good way to scale up your business without having to pay high customer acquisition costs. Terri Rockovich has a clear view on that too: "I consider bags on shelves as actual impressions in marketing terms. So if someone walks by you and doesn't pick you up, and then sees you again the next time, those are all impressions that are building frequency with a potential customer."

Success in retail channels

Jinx launched its products in 2,000 Walmart locations last March – representing 80% of its sales through the retailer's channel. In April it also started selling its range through Chewy, and in August through Target.

The company is planning to expand its portfolio in regional grocery by the end of the year. And Terri Rockovich points out that the company strategy is to continue expansion in 2023, expecting to multiply its revenue in a range between 5 and 7 points "mostly credited toward retail distribution."

Walmart and Target in the US are actively looking for partnerships with small DTC companies and start-ups.

BARK has agreements with retailers – including Target, Costco, Walmart, Petco and PetSmart – worth \$59.3 million, which accounted for 11.7% of the company's total revenue in the fiscal year 2022. Its sales focus continues to be omnichannel, including both direct-to-consumer and retail sales.

Pandemic and recession-proof

Insiders don't think that the DTC momentum is ending anytime soon, believing that more competitors will join the market in the near future as the segment proves to be pandemic and recession-proof.

According to Terri Rockovich, there's still "a lot of discovery happening regarding brands that are showing up in these online environments through creative advertising. I do think fresh will dominate from the food perspective, but I'm really interested in what's next".

DTC players believe that the emerging category of supplements will soon consolidate even more. For the total DTC pet food market, several market forecasts indicate a yearly increase of more than 25% until 2028, when it is expected to reach a value of \$8 billion.

Impact on prices

The fiercer the competition gets, the more impact on prices. "The DTC landscape is becoming increasingly crowded, so it will make it more expensive for brands to sell online," Terri Rockovich admits. In this scenario, she believes companies need to have future-forward thinking about their growth strategy and plan a proper distribution strategy. "You've got to think about what's next almost before you even launch!"

At the end of the day, only strong players with a clear business and sales strategy will survive in the DTC market. ♦



David Palacios Rubio
Editorial Manager
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Why it's time for pet brands to adopt a direct-to-consumer strategy

Many companies use direct-to-consumer (DTC) to reduce distribution costs and improve revenues. But getting the strategy exactly right is vital.



Traditional distribution models of manufacturer-wholesaler-retailer cannot survive the ever-decreasing margin pressures, as the world battles with a variety of significant challenges. To name a few: consumers demanding lower prices, increasing supply chain costs driven by global container prices, and a fuel price explosion. Plus the economic downturn and cost-of-living crisis everyone is facing.

Profitability gap

Retailers looking for profit improvements have historically sought these from their suppliers, which has always been an unrealistic demand and caused years of conflict between manufacturers and their resellers. The gap between top and bottom line profitability has never been tighter, yet is a challenge that persists.

The answer is simply to cut out the intermediary, which would in the past have been the wholesaler or regional distributor but is now considered to be the retail partner.

The basics

Direct-to-consumer supply enables manufacturers to bypass existing distribution channels of wholesale and retail, instead supplying consumers via their own retail operation or digital sales channels.

While taking control of the customer journey, data gained from having a direct relationship with end users can provide invaluable insights. DTC can improve revenue, especially following the recent decline of the retail industry across the world. It can also improve gross margins, by recovering those previously allocated to retail distribution partners.

Online companies have exploded onto digital markets, heavily disrupting traditional retail sectors. Dollar Shave Club and Harry's in shaving, Casper in mattresses, and Glossier in beauty products have taken significant market share from incumbents, for example.

But DTC isn't just about pure-play operators, those that are online only. It's something that every pet manufacturer should be aware of, so much so that if you don't currently have a direct-to-consumer strategy, it may be too late.

Benefits on all sides

A DTC strategy has a number of benefits for brands, and also for customers. These range from financial and operational to brand and consumer experience.

Owning the complete distribution channel allows manufacturers to deliver the type of brand experience marketers have only dreamed of. When perfected, it gives consumers the shopping experience they have only dreamed of.

If you've ever played the children's game *Whispers*, where someone passes a phrase to another, who passes it on, so the whole sentence changes by the time it reaches the last person, you'll understand the brand manager's challenge in delivering the whole brand experience they set out to achieve. DTC regains this control and helps to achieve the original brand vision throughout the customer experience.

Having direct access to consumer behaviors – whether through search analytics, on-site data insights, or

actual purchase information – is incredibly valuable. This same direct access enables brands to interact with consumers on an almost one-to-one basis.

Brands that deliver e-commerce excellence in their distribution will reap the rewards of increased sales. At a higher financial level, they'll receive retail selling prices rather than distribution prices.

A DTC strategy also sees margin growth of anywhere between 10% and 30%, giving a significant boost to the bottom line.

Are we ready for this?

While DTC gives plenty of benefits, there are – of course – some considerations that players within the pet industry should take into account before deciding to go down this path.

In addition to the financial upside, DTC doesn't come without costs – changes to the supply chain, impact on technology and systems, additional resource and subject matter expertise, new marketing channels and more.

There is also the impact on business culture, ethos and partners. How does a direct approach fit with company values? Can your staff and business partners cope with this change? Both people and infrastructure must be ready, willing and aligned to the change of direction.

Getting the tactics right

The companies that have not yet adopted a DTC strategy are often the ones wrestling with the impact on their staff and partners. They are unclear about how it will work in transition. It is important that brands understand their tactics as well as the strategy.

In the words of Chinese military general Sun Tzu, "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

Let's take a closer look at some key strategic areas, as only you can decide on the tactics that are right for your business.

Product range and customer sales support

Even the largest retail stores only have a limited product range available, whereas dedicated brand shops or

websites can showcase the entire portfolio, displayed with full brand intent and supporting brand marketing.

Manufacturers don't have consumer-facing sales channels, so they must build them. It can be a combination of retail stores, transactional websites, mobile apps, digital marketplaces and direct subscription models.

Before the consumer-facing sales channels are opened, the customer support infrastructure should be in place. It will manage pre-sales product inquiries and post-sales questions on a wide range of topics, including: 'Where's my order?' and how to pay, as well as issues with deliveries and delivery services, plus everything to do with refunds. Nobody said this would be easy!

Marketing and distribution partners

Many manufacturers deliver their goods to traditional retail customers on pallets, but a DTC approach reduces this to single-item distribution. That means changing warehouse operations and selecting new delivery partners.

Brand marketing is very different from e-commerce marketing, and may require you to recruit specialist digital marketing experts in customer acquisition and retention, plus learning a whole host of new acronyms: SEO, PPC, CRO, UX, CRM, CX.

Integrated technology

The final pillar in the new building known as DTC is to ascertain if your technology infrastructure can support a consumer-facing operation. This means looking in detail at your ERP system, e-commerce platform (if you have one), and Warehouse Management System (WMS). And finding out whether your system architecture is fully integrated.

Getting it right

Ever-decreasing margins mean manufacturers must be prepared to adapt or risk being left behind by competitors. The rewards are generous, but the risks are higher for brands that get this wrong. ♦



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Trends in online sales of pet products



Online sales that boomed during COVID-19 are now lagging behind in many sectors. Not so, it appears, where pet products are concerned. In this sector, sales continue to grow.

As online sales in the pet category continue to grow unabated, many of these sales channels have earmarked the pet category as a great business opportunity. The annual two-day Amazon Prime Day discount action is considered an excellent marker for measuring online sales momentum.

Soaring sales

Over the past 4 years, the number of products sold during Amazon Prime Day has grown astronomically by over 200%. In 2018, the online giant sold 100 million products during this day. In 2019 sales were up to 175 million products and in 2022, Amazon hit the 300 million mark.

“These sales events are great for getting to know pet owner purchasing habits, for product launches, and to drive a lot of traffic to the sites,” explains e-commerce expert Matt Anderson.

At the same time, Anderson, who runs Amazon agency Marketplace AMP, also sees that some leading companies in the pet sector are seriously reconsidering whether offering big discounts is such a sound strategy. After all, they already have a solid customer base.

“If a pet parent is going to buy our brand anyway for his or her dog, then why should we give a huge discount?” is what companies are asking themselves, Anderson remarks.

According to recent research conducted by Similarweb, Mars subsidiary Nutro gave the biggest discount (-73%)

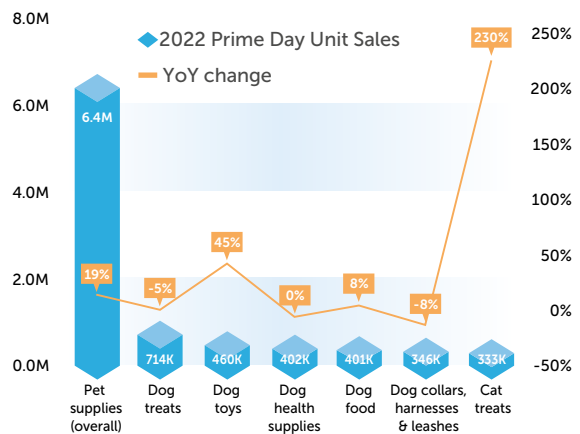
in 2022, in comparison with the discount given during Amazon Prime Day 2021. The second biggest discount was given by Canadian pet treats brand Temptations (-63%), followed by Cesar (-54%), Zesty Paws (-40%), pet chewing brand Nylabone (-37%) and Sheba Treats (-35%).

Treats sales the highest

Treats were one of the most successful categories during Amazon Prime Day, which this year took place in July. More than 332,000 cat treats were sold during this sales action. That’s 230% more than during the two-day sales action of 2021! Similarly, sales of cat and dog toys grew by almost 50% over last year.

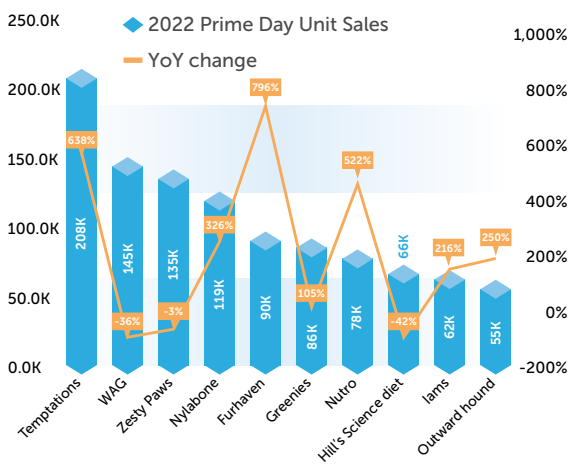
“Cat treats saw the largest lift of any pet category on Amazon, with shoppers purchasing nearly 8 times as

Unit sales pet category



Source: Similarweb

Top pet brands



Source: Similarweb

many treats during Prime Day as they had during the 20-day lead-up period,' according to Similarweb.

The market research company noted that, running up to Prime Day, shoppers waited to stock up on treats in anticipation of huge discounts.

Anderson points out that supplements are also skyrocketing in Amazon UK, with an overall increase in sales of 49% year-on-year. "A lot of that comes from sales of multivitamin products for pets," he adds.

Revenue versus unit sales

Beds and supplies brand FurHaven made the most revenue in the pet category on Amazon Prime Day 2022, according to Similarweb. Zesty Paws was the second most popular brand in both 2021 and 2022, and the third when looking at unit sales volume.

New World (accessories), Neabot (grooming) and Temptations registered some of the biggest increases in revenue – the latter brand selling the most products in the category at 208,000 units on Prime Day.

Hill's Science, the most popular brand in revenue on Amazon Prime Day 2021, dropped to number 6 this year. The data also reveals that, sales-wise, the pet food brand went even further down to position 8.

The battle of prices

On the downside, as far as online sales go, we see brands such as Purina dropping sharply in sales. Purina

ONE, Purina Friskies and Fancy Feast all sold less during Prime Day 2022.

Although the exact reasons for this are not known, Matt Anderson points out that big brands are currently having "robust discussions" with Amazon about price hikes to reflect the increase in supply chain costs. "I think that's probably one of the reasons why you see some of the bigger brands are not disappearing altogether, but they are undergoing dips in volume because they can't push the price," he concludes.

More competition

E-commerce giants continue to believe in the potential of the pet category and its strategic importance, despite a slow return to normal life after the pandemic.

Amazon leads online sales of pet products, accounting for 59% of all transactions in the US. According to Packaged Facts, the online platform is followed by Chewy (41%) and Walmart (33%).

In the US, Macy's has recently announced that it is starting to sell pet products in its brand-new digital marketplace. The retailer's new e-commerce platform offers 400 references in 20 product categories, including pets.

Another sign of the ongoing potential of the pet category is the first-ever Pet Day hosted by Amazon earlier this year. The company also recently introduced Astro: a pet-like household robot. Its interactive camera allows pet owners to follow their pets from a distance and interact with them.

It is estimated that combined sales of household and pet care products through Amazon will reach \$23.3 billion in 2022. According to Statista, this figure could even jump to \$39 billion by 2027.

And it's not only in the US that online pet category sales are booming. In China, e-commerce platform Alibaba is expected to achieve a turnover in pet supplies of \$16 billion in 2022 and \$24 billion in 2027. ♦



David Palacios Rubio
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How retailers are successfully retaining valued customers

Pet retailers are ramping up subscription programs and loyalty schemes to keep and grow their market penetration.

Having acquired many new customers during the pandemic, the race is now on for pet retailers to hold on to their valued customers amid fierce competition. And with spending potential expected to have a long tail – with each new pet likely to be a part of the owner’s household for a decade or more – the stakes are high.

Spending more over time

Retailers are primarily looking to let their customers stay loyal for longer. But they are also looking at ways to make them spend incrementally more the longer they shop with their favorite brand.

According to Chewy, customers typically spend less than \$200 in their first year. This amount doubles in the second year to \$400 and reaches around \$700 by their fifth year. The longest-standing customers spend nearly \$1,000 per year.

Chewy CEO Sumit Singh believes this trend illustrates “how much future revenue growth is already embedded in our active customer base, a revenue potential which we can and will unlock over time”.

Chewy’s active customer base was up 4.2% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2022, at 20.6 million. The company is focusing its efforts on those high-value customers who have shown they are likely to keep increasing their spending.

The battle for the customer

Key to customer retention are loyalty programs. The major players are increasingly pivoting towards

subscription and loyalty-based models. These tie in shoppers who often prove to be the most lucrative, the longer they stick around.

In the US, Petco has recently expanded its Vital Care loyalty scheme. They now offer discounts and rewards to bird, fish, reptile, hamster and other small-pet owners. The company did so after it noted that the rise in small pet adoptions was in line with the spike in new ownership of cats and dogs.

Petco CEO Ron Coughlin: “Our company’s companion animal business, whether it’s fish, birds or all other types of animals has been growing at double-digits.”

However, at the same time, Petco is facing fierce competition from rivals like online retailer Chewy, as well as general merchandise giants Walmart, Target and Amazon.

VIP treatment for loyal customers

British retailer Pets at Home has seen sales rise as its loyalty scheme membership grows. Its subscription service is also proving popular, with a 15.7% like-for-like VIP customer revenue growth in the past year.

Pets at Home CEO Lyssa McGowan: “Performance has been underpinned by continued customer growth and high levels of retention.”

Sign-ups to the company Puppy and Kitten Club are averaging 25,000 per week, three-fold higher than pre-pandemic, and, according to McGowan “creating a 12 to 15-year growth opportunity over the full pet lifetime”.

A good strategy?

Gemma Boothroyd, an analyst at Freetrade investing app, believes that VIP strategies have been “a major success” for the retailer.

“VIP membership and revenues growth prove the segment hasn’t just been resilient and the ease and perks of its programs have clearly retained pet owners,” according to Boothroyd.

Citi analyst Steven Zaccone remarks: “Pet retail continues to be a bright spot of consumer spending. But the discretionary side of pets remains a drag as consumers prioritize consumables in their fixed pet budgets amidst heightened inflation.”

That’s why hooking consumers into subscriptions and loading loyalty schemes with persuasive packaged offers have never been more important. The hearts and wallets of a relatively recent pet-owning cohort are up for grabs – but the competition is heating up.

Competition from online

Fressnapf, which has announced plans to establish 400 new stores in the next 3 years, is trialing an ultra-fast

30-minute delivery system to increase its customer base. The system, in partnership with Finland-based cycle logistics specialist Wolt, is currently available in Düsseldorf and Berlin.

The company also has a PayBack loyalty program in place, offering in-store and online shoppers redeemable points on purchases.

In addition, the chain aims to further strengthen its online presence. “We not only want to defend our market leadership, but also expand it,” says Fressnapf founder and owner Torsten Toeller.

Moreover, the German group wants to expand its online services, with further initiatives such as a video chat vet, GPS trackers, animal insurance, and a virtual platform for animal recommendation and adoption. ♦



Mark Faithfull
PETS International Contributor

THE FUTURE IS NOW.

Have you really done all you can do?

I am Fritz Gerke.

I am active in the pet business since 1982. First of all until 2003 as a freelanced retailer in Germany. Then I made international experiences as an export director. During these 19 years I built up also a large international network.

Primarily my subject is to translate market observation, trend analysis and future orientation into practice and specific actions.

Benefit from my special expertise and arrange a first meeting, free of charge for you, via phone or Zoom.

We will first clarify the need and the possibilities our cooperation can offer.

Yours Fritz Gerke



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*consultation and services for
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Bird feed Industry opportunities as demand increases



While the pet food segment for cats and dogs grew exponentially during the pandemic, the market for bird food also experienced exceptional demand.

According to the American Pet Products Association's (APPA) 2021-2022 National Pet Owners Survey, 8% of US households (9.9 million) now own a pet bird. In 2019, the number of households owning a pet bird was only 5%.

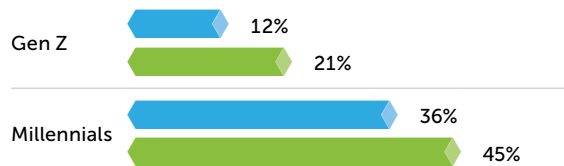
With the advent of a younger generation of owners, as well as the premiumization of diets, new opportunities are fast unfolding within this category. Let's have a look at recent trends.

Diets that match the needs of birds

There are many different types of diets available for pet birds, as well as varying approaches on how and what types of diets are most beneficial for birds.

The most common types of diets are seed-based blends and extruded pellets. These are often mixed to give the bird a balanced diet, allowing foraging behaviors, as well as providing mental stimulation. Most diets for parrots will also have fresh fruits, vegetables and other human foods mixed in.

What % of bird owners are from younger generations?



Source: 2021-2022 APPA National Pet Owners Survey

Preference for premium options

As pet spending increased during 2020-2021, so did the tendency of many owners to opt for higher-quality food options for their birds. Owners were more likely to consider premium diets as the best choice to fully meet their animals' nutritional needs, thereby ensuring greater health and longevity.

Unfortunately, various economic factors have recently caused a shift in these trends. The pet bird food industry is currently seeing a slight move, with bird

owners opting for less expensive formulas, larger pack sizes, and fewer treat purchases.

These trends are common whenever there are major changes in the economy that lead to tightening consumer spending and a decline in impulse purchases. However, as the shock of inflation wears off and the economy improves, a shift back to premium products seems likely.

Popular pet bird species

Whereas the pet bird food industry has remained relatively stable under the recent economic disruptions compared to other pet categories, one sub-sector has continued to grow at an impressive rate: feed for smaller pet bird species, such as parakeets, conures and other small parrots.

Demand has been driven by the fact that these species have been more readily available than other popular types of pet birds. Historically, cockatiels have been the most popular pet bird in terms of percent of ownership, followed by parakeets and conures. However, a reduction in the number of cockatiel breeders has caused a shortage of available animals for the trade. A recent survey shows that parakeet and conure ownership has increased, whereas cockatiel ownership has dropped.

The future of the industry

The past few years have been tumultuous for many industries. However, compared to other sectors, the pet bird food market has remained relatively stable throughout 2022.

Although supply chain disruptions and inflation have since curbed consumer spending, there is reason to be optimistic that the pet bird food industry will continue enjoying steady growth. The pandemic has led many people to discover the joys and benefits of owning birds and pets in general.

Number of birds in bird-owning households



Source: 2021-2022 APPA National Pet Owners Survey

Younger generations are increasingly showing an interest in bird ownership – two-thirds of bird owners are members of Gen Z or Millennials.

Younger generations also are increasingly showing an interest in bird ownership – according to the APPA survey, two-thirds of bird owners are members of Gen Z or Millennials, with Millennials accounting for 45% of the number of owners. These pet owners are likely to continue investing in their birds' nutrition and health.

Innovation in bird diets

Experts predict that the industry will see many innovations, particularly in the pet bird treat and toy spaces.

Innovations in diets, on the other hand, are likely to be much slower due to the high level of research and testing required, coupled with rigid consumer buying habits.

Additionally, industry experts see great opportunities for foraging-style mixes. Parrots are natural foraging animals and highly intelligent, instinctively seeking diversity and enjoying the process of opening seeds, nuts and other foods. Having a diverse diet encourages them to explore and enjoy the process of eating, while also providing mental stimulation.

Guidance for bird owners

The Bird Enjoyment and Advantage Koalition (BEAK) is a non-profit organization comprised of many different bird product manufacturers and associations who are working to provide resources and guidance to current as well as potential bird owners.

BEAK created MyBird, the largest Facebook community dedicated to pet birds, and is one of the leaders in bird-focused content on social media. Through these channels, BEAK intends to bring bird lovers across the world together and be an authentic and reliable source for all matters pertaining to pet birds. ♦



Tim Norsen
Bird Enjoyment & Advantage Koalition (BEAK)

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