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MAY 2022

TREND REPORTS

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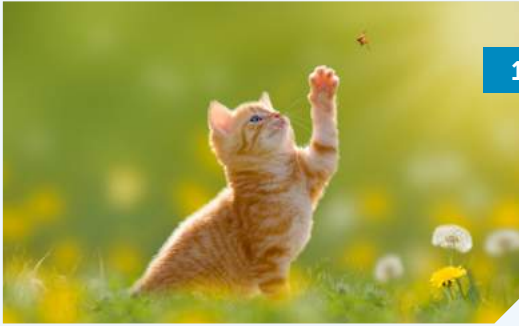
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We meet again

After visiting Global Pet Expo in Orlando, followed by our own GlobalPETS Forum, and with Interzoo coming up in a few weeks, the industry is starting to feel normal again. There just isn't really a good substitute for meeting people in person. *(If you're at Interzoo, come and say hi at Hall 1, Booth 137.)*

While dog food is typically the talk of the industry, cat food deserves to be a bigger part of the conversation. In this edition, you can discover more about halal cat food and read an update on a new study into insects and cat nutrition. Together with Yummypets, we've also asked cat parents from 4 countries about their preferences and purchases of cat food and treats.

Talking of treats, it was time for an update on the latest snacks and treats trends and developments. That's not the only trend report you'll find here: we've had a look at luxury trends in the pet industry plus the latest pet toy trends – including interactive toys. And we zoom in on what's happening in the world of pet beds, crates and cushions.

The pandemic accelerated a shift towards online shopping. But what are the latest e-commerce

trends? Across Asia, live shopping is increasingly popular. Will it be adopted in the West too? More often than not, being successful in the online world means working with social media influencers. What you then need is useful tips on how best to collaborate. E-commerce, especially cross-border, can also be a first step to penetrating a new market, like China.

Finally, there's plenty to read about innovations on the packaging front, chiefly sustainable ones. Including some thoughts on creating a more attractive packaging design and using eco-friendly ink. Enjoy!

See you at Interzoo?

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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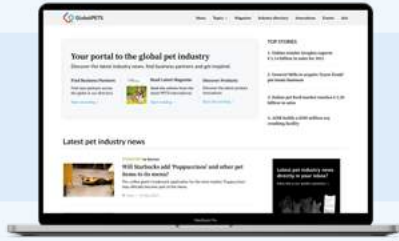
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The impact of the Ukraine-Russia war

Distribution centers and a number of pet shops across Ukraine have been destroyed by airstrikes since the start of the invasion on 24 February. Companies such as Suziria, COLLAR and Kormotech are trying to resume their activities. And several initiatives have been launched to help pets that have remained in the country, as well as animal shelters.

In an attempt to show their disagreement with the conflict, international pet food brands have announced the suspension of their operations in Russia, while the local industry has called on companies not to stop supplies to all 70 million pets in the country.

Official figures from the Russian government presented during a meeting with the pet industry showed that pet food imports have decreased by 20% in comparison with 2021.



PIJAC changes name to Pet Advocacy Network



The former Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), currently celebrating its 50th anniversary in the US, has undergone a process of rebranding to "better reflect its role in the pet care industry". The changes aim to be in line with the evolution of the entity into the legislative and regulatory voice of the responsible pet care community.

President and CEO of the association Mike Bober said that the new name embodies "who we are, what we do and why we do it".

SantéVet Group raises €150 / \$165 million in capital



The French pet health insurance company SantéVet wants to accelerate its development over the next 5 years to become the European leader in the sector and "conquer" new markets.

This new round of financing, considered by the company to be a "milestone", has been conducted by its majority stakeholder Columna Capital. The Lyon-based company expects to reach 300,000 active insurance contracts by 2022, and €100 million (\$110M) in gross written premiums.

Arcaplanet and Fressnapf's Maxi Zoo join forces in Italy

The new Arcaplanet Group was created after the recent acquisition of the pet care operator by private equity firm Cinven, and will have 500 stores across the country. Combining these businesses aims to consolidate the retailers in the Italian market and expand to new geographies. An investigation by the Italian competition regulator AGCM

states that the companies "represent the first and third pet shop chain at the national level" and obliges them to sell between 50 and 70 shops to avoid having a "dominant position". According to the AGCM, Arcaplanet represents a 45-50% share of the Italian pet market and Maxi Zoo 15-20%.





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Pet Supplies Plus acquires Wag N' Wash

Pet Supplies Plus has over 600 stores in 39 US states, and Wag N' Wash has 15 centers. The Wag N' Wash pet food, self-wash and grooming franchise chain is to operate under the umbrella of the Michigan company.



This acquisition presents “mutual benefits” for franchisees, neighbors and guests of both brands. Customers will see no change and will continue to receive the same “neighborly service” and access to the same range of products.

EU pet food players become Symrise Pet Food

Diana Pet Food, ADF, IsoNova and Schaffelaarbos are to operate under the same company division, to be able to better serve the growing pet food market. Symrise Pet Food will focus on pet food palatability with the brand SPF, on pet nutrition with a new brand named Nutrios, and on pet food protection with the brand Videka – a joint venture between Symrise and Kalsec.

“Symrise Pet Food unites the leading players in their markets and fields of expertise. They share a strong sustainability approach, as their business models draw on creating value from by-products,” says President Bertrand de Launay. Symrise Pet Food aims to give all pets a better life by being at the heart of every eating experience by 2030.

IskayPet takes over Portuguese retailer Ornimundo

The Spanish group IskayPet has confirmed the acquisition of one of the main players in Portugal, which is expected to grow by 17%



this year. Ornimundo, founded in 1994, is now a major Portuguese pet care company. It has 32 stores across the country as well as 20 pet grooming centers and 2 outlets. The retailer expects to achieve a yearly revenue of €35 million (\$40M) in the coming years.

IskayPet is the leading Spanish pet care and retail group. It owns pet shop chains Kiwoko and Tiendanimal and has more than 200 shops altogether.

UK adds pet collars to consumer price inflation

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) now considers a pet collar to be a ‘representative item’ of the UK consumer’s shopping basket. The ONS has therefore added them to the shopping items used to calculate the so-called Consumer Prices Index. This decision is based on increased consumer spending on pet accessories since the start of the pandemic.

180,000 separate price quotations are collected every month in approximately 140 locations around the UK to compile the indices, covering about 730 representative consumer goods and services.



US pet food exports rapidly growing since 2015

New figures from the Census Bureau reveal that the US exported 19.8% more dog and cat food in 2021. Official data shows that pet food exports have increased by 60% in the past 6 years.

In 2015, US pet food exports were worth \$1.28 billion (€1.16B). In 2020 this figure was \$1.7 billion (€1.54B) and by 2021 it had reached \$2 billion (€1.81B).

Since 2019, the US has increased its cat and dog food exports by 25%. This reflects growth in the pet population worldwide since the beginning of the pandemic.





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Concerns over safety of hemp in pet nutrition

A joint letter signed by 17 organizations, including the Association of American Feed Control Officials and the Pet Food Institute, calls for more scientific research on the topic of hemp. The document has been forwarded to agricultural leaders and state policymakers, seeking their support to ensure the safety of hemp as an animal-feed ingredient.

"We understand the importance of supporting the hemp industry, and yet we also believe it is simply too soon to know whether hemp is safe for farm and ranch animals, as well as for our pets," it reads. The signatories call for more research "to ensure the safety and well-being of the public, our animals and our agricultural industry".

Kinlys Group celebrates 90 years

To celebrate its special anniversary, Kinlys Group is to launch more than 400 new products. The Belgian manufacturer of food and non-food products for pet birds, wild birds, fish and other animals will be inviting customers to visit the factory.

As part of its strategy for the coming years, the manufacturer wants to become a "true specialist" in niche products for domestic animals. The company is also planning to expand production with a newly built factory, extra packaging machinery and 2 additional warehouses.

Pet Valu expands business to Quebec

Pet specialty retailer Pet Valu is entering the eastern Canadian province of Quebec with the takeover of Chico and its more than 60 franchised locations across the territory. The acquisition is a "key milestone" in the company's mission to be the market leader nationwide.



In 2021, Chico posted sales of approximately \$79 million (€72.4M), and revenue of roughly \$7 million (€6.4M).

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Food and ingredients

As cat nutrition deserves more attention, we've asked cat parents about their preferences in cat food. You'll also discover updates on diets that help diabetic cats and allergic owners, halal cat food, a new study on the digestibility of insects in cat food and more.

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Scrutinizing the science behind allergy-reducing cat food

There's no such thing as a hypoallergenic cat, so what can be done to make life more comfortable for allergic people?

Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) are the source of the third most common respiratory allergen, just behind pollen and house dust mites. With pet ownership increasing during the pandemic and many people spending 90% of their time indoors, the incidence of cat allergies is expected to increase in the coming years. So what can be done to make life more comfortable for people who are allergic?

The most common cat allergen

The World Health Organization currently recognizes eight cat allergens, with the most prominent one being Fel d1. This protein is shed by cats and can cause an allergic response in up to 96% of people with cat allergies. Fel d1 is primarily secreted from the cat's salivary and sebaceous glands as a small secretoglobulin protein. Although the concentration of Fel d1 can vary based on a cat's age, breed and sex, every cat produces this allergen, including 'hypoallergenic' breeds.

The exact function of Fel d1 remains largely unknown. However, studies have shown that neutered cats express lower concentrations of Fel d1. This suggests a potential role as a carrier molecule for steroids, hormones and pheromones.

Fel d1 in the environment

As cats groom themselves, their saliva spreads across their fur and skin. This combination of dried skin, hair and saliva forms a Fel d1 reservoir that sheds into the environment as 'dander'.

Dander comes in various shapes and sizes. An article published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* found that 23% of cat dander was smaller than 4.5 μm . This allows Fel d1 to remain airborne for several days before settling in dust, sticking to clothing or reaching small respiratory pathways deep within the lungs.

Significant levels of Fel d1 have even been found in places without any cats at all, such as schools, hospitals and practically every public building. With not only cat owners but also the general public at risk, the veterinary community is urged to explore new methods to limit the spread of Fel d1.

Neutralizing Fel d1 using diet

To help protect people affected by cat allergies, researchers have developed a method to neutralize Fel d1 and prevent environmental contamination. This approach introduces chickens to Fel d1 and utilizes their immune system to produce anti-Fel d1 antibodies in freshly laid eggs. These antibodies are then extracted from the egg yolk, purified and coated onto kibble. As a cat eats the antibody-coated kibble, some of the active Fel d1 in the saliva will become neutralized. This reduces the spread of active allergen, while the remainder of the neutralizing antibody makes its way through the cat's digestive system. At a molecular level, these neutralizing antibodies bind to Fel d1 and cover the IgE binding sites known to stimulate an allergic response in humans.

*The exact function of
Fel d1 remains largely unknown.*

So far, Purina is the first and only company to bring this technology to market. It has released some interesting data:

Cat's saliva

In a 6-week pilot study funded by Purina, cats fed anti-Fel d1 kibble (test diet) showed a 30% decrease in active Fel d1 proteins in salivary samples after 2 weeks of receiving the test diet. A subsequent study in 20 domestic shorthair cats found >80% of the cats showed a $\geq 20\%$ reduction in active salivary Fel d1. This supports the potential of this diet to decrease active Fel d1 levels across different patients.

Cat's skin

Hair samples taken from 105 cats fed the test diet over 12 weeks revealed a mean 47% reduction in active Fel d1. It is yet to be determined whether this decrease was caused by dispersion of neutralizing antibodies through saliva and grooming, or if there are other mechanisms involved that directly neutralize cutaneous-Fel d1.

Effective for treating cat allergies?

To assess the efficacy of anti-Fel d1 diets in reducing symptoms of cat-related allergies, cat bedding was removed after 4 weeks of feeding the test diet and used to provoke allergies in 11 cat-sensitive individuals. Interestingly, the results suggested clinical improvements as both nasal symptoms and ocular scores improved across individuals.

Role of veterinarians

Veterinarians are in a unique position to help allergic pet owners, promote the welfare of cats and improve human healthcare standards by using innovations in diet to address common issues like cat allergies. ♦



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Cat food consumption and buyer preferences



To get better insights into the habits, preferences and attitudes cat owners have regarding cat food, we partnered with Yummypets to conduct a survey on cat food purchases and buyer preferences. Here are the results.

The cat owners consulted for this study predominantly feed their cats a combination of dry and wet cat food (67%). A small minority (13%) give their cats exclusively wet food. French cats, in particular, are most likely to be on a 'wet food only' diet.

Dry food only

On the other hand, 9% of cat owners have their cats on a 'dry food only' diet. Both younger owners and those residing in the US & Canada are more likely to be part of this group. The remainder (11%), feed their cats a combination of cat food and other types of food (like pieces of ham, tuna and more).

Brand loyalty and trust

Cats are finicky eaters, so sometimes sticking to the same brand is the easiest way to keep a cat satisfied. And that's what 40% of cat owners do. Others (37% of owners) like to experiment and continuously look for new flavors or brands their cat might enjoy even more. UK cat parents are most likely to vary the brands and flavors they buy.

The interesting question here is if switching brands says something about how much trust cat owners have in the major brands. The vast majority (80%) indicate that they trust the major brands, with UK consumers being the most trusting. 21% of all cat owners even state that they fully trust the major brands.

On the other hand, 17% of cat owners have their doubts about major brands, and 3% state that they don't trust them at all. French cat owners appear to be the most hesitant about trusting major brands.

Where do they buy?

Cat owners are notorious for buying their food products in the supermarket. This study confirms that the vast majority (69%) still do so. UK and US consumers, in particular, are more likely to be supermarket buyers.

The second leading channel is online (28%), while pet specialty retail is a close third (23%). The group of 25- to 54-year old's do most of their cat food purchases online. Canadian cat owners buy online the least and are more likely to buy in pet retail stores. Around 13% of cat owners buy their food in veterinary clinics.

Feeding habits

When it comes to feeding, most cat owners prefer to give their cats food throughout the day. 30% of respondents free-feed their cats so they can eat whenever they want. Elderly owners are more likely to be part of this group. Also, French cat owners prefer free feeding, while UK consumers do so least often.

Most people feed their cats twice per day (39% of all respondents), while 22% feed their cats 3 or more times a day. Only 8% of cats get their food once a day.

Taste and quality versus health

What aspects are most important to cat owners when it comes to feeding their cats? It appears that it is not whether the cat likes the taste (21%), or whether the food is high-quality (15%). Rather, what is important is whether the food is good for their cat's health; that is key for most cat owners (54%). However, 62% of owners find it difficult to choose a product that matches their cat's nutritional or health needs. [▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)

UK and US owners are most concerned about the taste of the food and if their cat likes it or not, French the least. For French owners, it's most important that the cat food is beneficial for their cat's health.

Aspects like whether the cat eats enough to satisfy its hunger (7%) or whether it eats a variety of ingredients (3%) seem less important to all respondents.

Purchasing decisions

When choosing which brand or product to buy, there are many factors that cat owners need to consider. For starters, the sheer choice in products makes it difficult for owners (57%) to choose.

However, the most important factor in the purchasing decision, for 49% of cat owners, is the quality of ingredients. At the same time, 66% of respondents find it difficult to determine whether the ingredients used are beneficial for their cat's health. And 69% of them find it difficult to ensure that the quality of ingredients is as good as it should be. The origin of the ingredients, on the other hand, only seems important to a very small group (6% of the total).

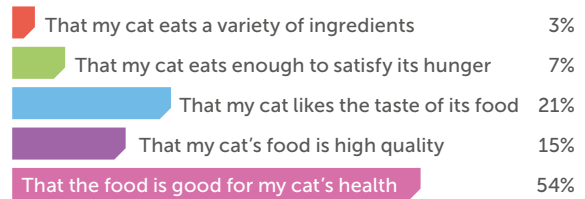
The second most important factor seems to be the brand (for 44% of owners). Yet, most owners (57%) find it difficult to pick a good brand. US owners tend to be guided more by the brand in their purchasing decisions, than owners in other countries.

36% of owners look at whether the food is appropriate for the age of the cat. As for price, that is important for 34% of respondents. UK cat owners are influenced by price the most, whereas French consumers care a little less about price. In the same vein, UK owners tend to look for age-appropriate food more often than owners in other countries, while US and Canadian owners find this aspect of small importance. About one in five owners in Canada and France base purchasing decisions on recommendations from their vets. Only one in ten owners do so in the UK and the US.

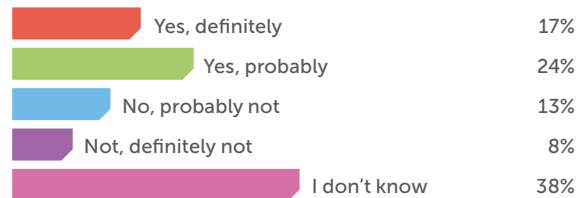
Labels

Factors that influence the number of cat owners the least are hypo-allergenic labels, or organic and gluten-free labels. Products that mention they're grain-free are important for 12% of respondents, predominantly in France and Canada.

Which is most important to you when it comes to feeding your cat?



Would you be willing to feed your cat alternative sources of protein?



While there is talk of a trend towards shorter ingredient lists, only a small minority of this survey's respondents (8%) considered this factor as playing a contributing role.

Interestingly, health claims appear of less importance for most owners. One-fifth choose products with digestion benefits and 15% indicate their choice of cat food is based on its claim to be beneficial for specific health problems, like kidney failure allergies, and more. 14% of cat owners have a penchant for products that offer skin and coat benefits.

Health benefits

When asked which health benefits are most important in purchasing decisions, healthy digestion (60%), immunity strengthening (54%), urinary problem prevention (52%) and obesity prevention (50%) top the list.

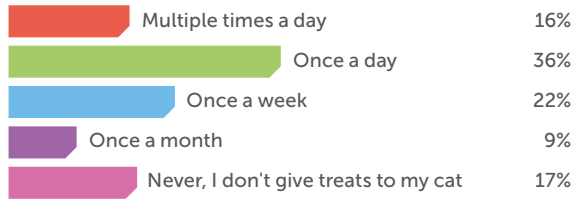
Cognitive function improvement (10% of owners), improved vision (13%) and allergy prevention (16%) are least cited as important health benefits.

Alternative proteins

How willing are cat owners to explore alternatives for animal protein?

Answers to this question are tight across the board. The largest group (38%) indicates they're not sure whether they want to feed their cat with food based on alternative sources of protein.

How often do you give your cat treats or snacks?



A fourth of the cat owners have strong convictions: 17% would be willing to drop animal proteins from their cat's diet, whereas 8% would not. British cat owners and the younger generations are most open to the idea. French respondents take to the idea of alternative protein the least, while elderly respondents are much less outspoken on this topic.

To treat or not to treat?

Dogs are clearly not the only pets that are pampered with treats. Only 17% of cat owners indicate that they never give their cats any treats. The majority state that they give a treat every day (36%) or once a week (22%). A sizeable group (16%) goes a step further and gives treats several times per day.

The French are the most likely to never give treats – which makes sense since they tend to free-feed their cats. Similarly, most elderly owners never give treats.

The 3 most popular types of treats categories for cat owners are crunch treats (53%), dental treats (22%) and catnip or cat grass (21%). Homemade treats, natural treats and cat milk appear the least popular. ♦

A total of 1,776 pet owners from Canada, France, the UK and the US responded to the survey.

Special thanks to *Yummypets*



Philippe Vanderhoydonck
Managing Director
GlobalPETS



DOES LICKING MEAN LIKING?

Pet parents are more likely to repurchase a food their cats enjoy. That's why cat food palatability is so important to both pet food manufacturers and pet parents.

Typical two-bowl or one-bowl trials are a valuable way to evaluate food preference and acceptance. Additionally, AFB International wanted to develop new methods to assess cat food enjoyment that would represent what a pet parent might experience at home.

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Halal pet food – an emerging segment on the global market

The global halal pet food market is poised for fast growth, including outside the countries traditionally attributed to the Muslim world. This is creating some promising opportunities for several market players who have already begun producing and marketing cat food in accordance with Islamic law.

What is halal food?

Halal food refers to food prepared according to the Islamic dietary law's rigorous guidelines. Under these guidelines, alcohol, blood and pork are *haram* (prohibited for consumption), but when it comes to production standards, there is more to it than that. Any animals that are dead before slaughtering as well as animals that are not slain in the name of Allah are all deemed *haram*. Moreover, halal food must be packaged and stored using utensils and materials that have been cleansed according to strict rules.

The global demand for halal food has been steadily rising over the past few years. As estimated by the research provider ResearchAndMarkets, the global halal food market size was valued at \$842.3 million (€771.9M) in 2020 and is predicted to grow by 10% in the coming years, reaching \$1.72 billion (€1.58B) by 2027.

Europe is the key market

Halal pet food is a relatively new trend that is primarily gaining traction in Europe, where a couple of new companies have been launched during the past year to manufacture cat food in accordance with Muslim standards.

One such company is UK-based Alif Pet Food which was established in late 2021 to produce halal cat food. Within the first few months, it was already receiving inquiries from all around the world. "Most notably from Europe, where we believe the halal pet food market will see the most growth in coming years," said founder Muhammad Khan.

The anticipated rise in global demand for halal pet food stems to some extent from the ongoing humanization and customization trends, which are more evident in Western countries than in traditionally Muslim countries. [▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)

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“As we know, pet humanization is the hottest trend of the moment, so it makes perfect sense that brands are increasingly accommodating the unique needs of influential minorities,” commented Pankaj Hurria, owner of Manchester-based Tiana Pet Food. The company was founded in mid-2021 to establish Europe’s first halal-friendly cat food made with best-in-class, human-grade ingredients.

According to Hurria, the demand for halal pet food existed before the new companies were launched. There are believed to be around 500,000 Muslim cat owners in the UK alone, including millennials and professional females with more liberal religious leanings. “Early research made me aware of the fact that Muslim cat parents have historically spent inordinate amounts of time on either tracking down fish-based products or home-preparing meals with trusted ingredients,” he added.

South-East Asia

Outside Europe, the halal pet food segment is primarily represented by Powercat, a Malaysian pet food brand that originally claimed to be the only halal-certified cat food in the world. The company is active in South-East Asia, selling food for adult cats and kittens in Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. In Indonesia, home to the world’s biggest Muslim population, the producer received halal certification from the Halal Product Assurance Body of the Indonesian Ulema Council – the nation’s highest Islamic authority.

No viable market for halal dog food

Technically, Islamic law doesn’t directly prescribe feeding cats or other pets with only halal pet food. However, Muslims are prohibited from buying anything recognized as *haram*, and pet food is no exception. Muslim scholar Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid describes it as “permissible” to feed cats with non-halal meat. “If you find such meat thrown away or it is given to you for free, then you may give it to the cat. As for buying it, that is not permissible”, he explained in a statement.

So far, halal pet food production is limited to cat food. According to Hurria, cats are revered or deemed holy in traditional Islamic culture, whilst dogs are not seen in

Halal pet food is a relatively new trend that is primarily gaining traction in Europe.

the same light. Despite the fact that Muslim dog owners are on the rise, the industry does not appear to see a business opportunity there. “In Islam, it is prohibited to keep dogs as pets, so we don’t believe the market for halal dog food to be a viable one,” commented Khan.

Not only for Muslims

Halal food for humans owes part of its popularity to non-Muslim customers who are looking for products manufactured in accordance with strict quality standards. A similar trend is expected in relation to pet food, as non-Muslim cat owners also want to be guaranteed that the food for their cats is absolutely safe. “Brands like Tiana appeal, not simply because they reflect Muslim values, but also because they have very stringent values with regard to ingredient integrity and nutritional worth. Tiana also uses leading-edge, freeze-dried technology, which helps ensure the product’s taste cues and nutritional worth are unrivaled,” continued Hurria.

In addition, by meeting certain standards, producers are free to opt for different pet food formulations to attract different categories of customers. Along these lines, Alif uses the “freshest, cleanest and purest halal meats” that are suitable for human consumption. “Being raw, we are mirroring the diet a cat would have had in the wild. After all, lions don’t cook their prey before eating it!” added Khan.

Both these companies see halal food as a good choice for pet food retailers that want to modernize their product range and differentiate themselves from more predictable supermarket offerings. According to Hurria, there is a “growing appetite” for these products among the independent chains and online players. ♦



Vladislav Vorotnikov
PETS International Contributor

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Insects in cat nutrition raise questions about digestibility

Cats may readily enjoy an occasional insect snack, but a new study suggests they may be less able to digest one if it constitutes a large percentage of their diet.

Research from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has been published in the *Journal of Animal Science*, the official publication of the American Society of Animal Science. Its conclusion: healthy adult cats showed a slight preference for wet diets containing black soldier fly meal, ground whole black soldier fly larvae, or black soldier fly oil – compared to a control diet of poultry by-products.

The black soldier fly ingredients did, however, inhibit the cat food's digestibility. This was "still what we would call adequate," according to professor of animal nutrition Kelly Swanson. "No one had loose stools or anything like that, but it was lower digestibility."

Black soldier fly

While cat owners may not notice the difference, the findings do have potential implications for the inclusion of insect-based ingredients in cat food products, highlights Swanson. The study made use of black soldier fly at relatively high inclusion rates – 10% for the defatted black soldier fly meal and 5% for the ground whole black soldier fly, which still included the fat component. A third experimental diet used 1.5% black soldier fly oil. The team chose to limit the oil's inclusion, based on previous research implying the oil could trigger issues with palatability.

Unexpected outcome

That was ultimately the surprise of the study. The team anticipated that cats might reject the insect-based

diets, but had assumed that so long as they ate the food, the insects would have a favorable – perhaps even superior – nutritional profile. "We thought they would be well digested, that was the main thing, and nothing would be a negative."

Chitin, Swanson suspects, is likely to blame for the unexpected result. Despite this, the professor believes black soldier fly is a safe and potentially useful ingredient for cat foods, and may yet come with some potential nutritional benefits. The ingredient still contains an interesting lipid profile, and it could have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and antibacterial properties. But future cat diets might have to limit the inclusion of black soldier fly ingredients in order to maintain digestibility.

From wet to dry?

Other solutions, such as considering the form and technical properties of the food product, may also be worthwhile, according to researchers. Although the Illinois study added black soldier fly to wet diets, professor Swanson believes the nature of insect meal could be best suited to a dry kibble instead. ♦



Emma Penrod
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BEWITAL petfood GERMANY
Novelties from BEWITAL petfood

With the upcoming product line LEONARDO Extra Fillet, German manufacturer BEWITAL petfood presents 6 new cans for cats. The special feature: fine fillet pieces that make the food even tastier and offer a special chewing experience. Salmon oil gives the recipes the final touch and promotes a particularly silky coat.

LEONARDO Kitten GF will offer a grain-free recipe for young kittens. This variety uses amaranth as a valuable alternative to cereals, while mackerel and fresh poultry provide a great taste.

In the BELCANDO range, the company is presenting a recipe improvement: All dry food varieties with the popular sauce effect will be supplemented with probiotics, which stabilize digestion, promote stool quality and reduce unpleasant odors.

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A cat with diabetes – nutrition comes to the rescue!



Managing diabetes in overweight cats can be a challenging task. Diet is one of the most important aspects of the treatment.

Diabetes is one of the most frequently diagnosed hormonal disorders in cats, predominantly diabetes mellitus type 2. The diagnosis often brings a lot of uncertainty and distress for the pet and the owner. Therefore, the task of the veterinarian is to quickly achieve glucose control using an appropriate dose of insulin. However, diabetes is often diagnosed in overweight or obese cats, making the management of the condition a challenging task.

Risk factors

It is well known that obesity promotes insulin resistance, which leads to increased insulin secretion by the pancreatic beta cells and consequently to beta cell destruction. Cats are known to develop glucose intolerance and hyperinsulinemia with weight gain. Studies have found that overweight cats are at a fourfold higher risk of becoming diabetic than normal-weight cats.

An additional risk factor for an obese diabetic cat is hepatic lipidosis – a condition that can be life-threatening and occurs when an obese cat stops eating. Anorexia can occur in the case of hyper or hypoglycemia, often seen just before diabetes diagnosis or in poor diabetes management.

Feeding management

Many of these issues can be resolved by achieving a healthy body weight, which is why one of the most important aspects of treating a diabetic cat is the diet:

composition and feeding management. But cats are often not the most compliant patients, and a lot of work is needed to make alterations in their feeding habits. However, if changes are made gradually, there is a higher chance of success.

Optimal dietary management would include making the diet high in fiber and protein, low in soluble carbohydrates, and rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids. In the case of obesity, the energy density of the diet should be adjusted to ensure a gradual reduction of energy and a successful weight loss protocol. Such a diet aims to improve glucose control and provide enough bulk to satiate the cat. This is achieved by using an appropriate combination of both insoluble and soluble fibers.

Soluble fibers are known to form gels in aqueous solutions, thereby binding glucose and water and preventing their transfer to the enterocytes in the intestine. Insoluble fiber has a lower rate of water-holding capacity, decreases the gastrointestinal transit time, promotes slower absorption of soluble carbohydrates in the diet, and therefore reduces insulin peaks after meals.

Conserving muscle mass

High protein content will aid with the conservation of muscle mass throughout the weight loss protocol, as the aim is to decrease just the fat tissue without losing lean body mass. Additionally, diabetic cats may have

increased amino acid losses through their urine, and patients that are not well controlled could experience consequent muscle wasting. L-carnitine is often used to increase the level of beta-oxidation of fatty acids in order to spare the protein reserves in the body.

Wet versus dry

The choice between a dry and a wet diet is ultimately related to the cat's preference, but – as urolithiasis and cystitis are commonly comorbid with obesity and diabetes – the preferred dietary management would be to provide at least one part of the diet in a wet form to ensure higher water intake. To achieve better control over the prescribed amounts, an automatic feeder can be used. This enables the cat to be fed multiple small meals throughout the day, which will mimic its natural feeding behavior.

In a diabetic cat, feeding should be tailored around a bigger meal of approximately 30% of the daily amount fed at 12-hour intervals, which is followed by an insulin injection each time, and the remainder in smaller portions throughout the day. Additionally, it is necessary to stimulate both mental and physical activity in the cat using toys or other forms of environmental enrichment.

Close monitoring

Weight loss should be achieved at a gradual rate of 1% (0.5%-2%) per week. A decrease in weight in cats with diabetes can result in better tissue sensitivity to insulin, leading to lower daily insulin requirements. Although this is a positive evolution in diagnosis, it nevertheless requires close monitoring and follow-up as insulin doses have to be carefully adjusted. The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life of the diabetic cat and finally, even, to reach a full remission where no insulin injections are needed. ♦



Dr. Diana Brozić
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Proudly Ukrainian, working responsibly towards global transformation

Kormotech is a Ukrainian family-run company that produces high-quality dog and cat food for its own brands and private labels.

The company's main incentive for creating high-quality products is the pleasure of interacting with happy and healthy pets.

Kormotech was set up in 2003 and has been ranked 5th in growth terms on the global pet food market. Petfood Industry Magazine named it one of the top 70 manufacturers worldwide. The company's product range includes over 650 references, and its 3 own brands are exported to some 35 countries.

Holistic nutrition

Optimeal Beauty is a super-premium food developed using a holistic approach. A daily balanced diet protects pets' well-being and helps care for how they look and feel. This new product range won a bronze distinction at the World Brand Design Society Awards.

Deliciousness

Club 4 Paws Selection is a new premium line of the Club 4 Paws brand that stands for high-quality pet nutrition. The delicate pet food line aims to pamper pets with exquisite and paw-licking flavors.

State-of-the-art facilities

Kormotech's facilities in Ukraine produce 16,000 tons of wet food and 30,000 tons of dry food annually. 20,000 tons of wet food are produced at its state-of-the-art plant in Lithuania.

Quality is the company's cornerstone. Kormotech operates in line with international standards FSSC 22000, BRC, USDA, FDA, and has its own R&D department with dedicated nutritionists.

New pet culture

Kormotech is helping to redefine pet ownership in Eastern Europe. Schools now offer humane education, shelters receive financial support, and professional standards of veterinarians are being raised. It also supports initiatives that contribute to a dog-friendly culture in businesses and organizations in many cities.

In 2021, Kormotech launched the Optimeal Expert helpline in Ukraine, where pet owners get advice from veterinarians. This is the first initiative of its kind in Eastern Europe.

Continuing global expansion

Optimeal and Club 4 Paws products can be seen at exhibitions in Europe, the US and South-East Asia. Look for the Kormotech booth at Interzoo 2022 (Hall 7, Booth 241).

Support

In 2014, as a result of Russian warfare in the eastern regions of Ukraine, the company has launched the philanthropic effort, 'Don't Leave Us Alone in ATO,' delivering more than 60 tons of products to shelters in combat zones in the following years.

Now, in 2022, with the escalation of the war, Kormotech has launched a 'Save pets of Ukraine' initiative to help pets in trouble.

See how you can help here:
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Nugape Pet Food SPAIN Improving day by day

Nugape started manufacturing pet food in 2004, becoming the first factory in Galicia to specialize in the production of food for dogs and cats.

Over the years, the plant located in Pontevedra has incorporated state-of-the-art technologies throughout its entire production process. All the company's products are developed following high-quality standards to ensure the best results and optimal palatability.

Together with a large team of highly experienced professionals, Nugape has been able to meet the demanding nutritional needs of pets in more than 30 countries all over the world.

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An ingredient to help pets become less stressed

Stress levels can rise for a pet, even because of the smallest of changes. This often results in destructive behaviors, barking, accidents in the house, or health-impacting signs of stress, including skin or gastrointestinal problems and urination disorders.

While stress isn't necessarily a bad thing, it's important that there is a healthy balance between natural stress – which helps pets react to life's challenges – and excessive stress which can be extremely detrimental to pet health. Management of stress and cortisol levels can help minimize or even eliminate the negative impacts of stress. That's where Lactium® comes in. Lactium is a natural and unique health ingredient for stress management.

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Lactium is a milk protein hydrolysate that contains a bioactive decapeptide called α -casozepine, produced from a milk protein using tryptic hydrolysis. Based on more than 10 years of research and development, Lactium is a highly effective product to decrease stress-related symptoms in pets.

Natural dairy bioactive that supports pet health

Lactium is a safe ingredient, with no side effects in terms of sedation or addiction. Importantly, as a natural hydrolyzed milk protein, it has no toxic effect on the body, even at high doses. Pet parents are advised to always consult a vet in case of behavioral changes in their pets. After all, such changes might not be stress-related, but the result of a physical disorder.

Scientifically proven

Regular exercise and the elimination of stress triggers are essential for enabling pets to cope with those situations in which stress is inevitable. Clinical studies prove that Lactium is an effective way to support

pets in better coping with such stressful situations. One of the studies examined the cortisol levels of pets during a stressful event, such as visiting a vet's practice. Dogs that were given Lactium before going to the vet, showed a significantly lower increase in cortisol levels, hence reducing stress-related symptoms. Similarly, for cats, studies have shown Lactium to be an effective ingredient to help cope with stress.

Lactium is already available in several pet food and pet care products on the market and many other pet products could also benefit from this ingredient. ♦

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Natural pet food proves formula for success



Ever since its launch in 2019, Absolute Petfood's natural brand Grandorf has been off to the races. Its range of natural and hypo-allergenic dry food – which is 100% made in Belgium – and wet food for dogs and cats is exceedingly popular amongst pet parents.

"The pet food market is growing exponentially. As ever more brands are eager and clamoring to grab their share of success, Grandorf has managed to stand out from the rest, by keeping things simple. Our basis is the use of high-quality, selected hypoallergenic ingredients. They enable us to make fantastic and healthy pet food," explains CEO Maarten Perdieu.

"We focus on offering a well-balanced diet with high deboned meat content. We are unique in NOT using chicken in dry food recipes. And on top of that, our palatability and digestion scores are among the best. The response from pet parents proves we're on the right track."

Initial success

"Despite the lockdown just 3 months after the launch of the Grandorf brand, sales took off. One of the first shops managed to re-order its introduction volume of 3

meters' worth of shelf space within 6 weeks after the launch!" Perdieu continues.

In the first year, the goal was to create a good foundation in the Benelux home market. In the Netherlands, the company partnered with specialty chain Jumper (+65 stores), and in Belgium, with Aveve (+100 stores), and specialty stores.

Key to the sales strategy is education. During the lockdown, webinars were created to train staff and inform pet parents on pet food to enable them to make the best choice.

International expansion

Since 2021, the company has set its eye on international expansion. "Despite travel restrictions in 2021, we managed to set up distribution in Bulgaria, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, France, Israel, Japan, part of Germany, plus some individual shops

in other countries," Sales Director Mark Hendrickx explains. "Our goal is to make it possible for all pet parents in Europe to purchase Grandorf within a reasonable distance of their house by the end of 2023."

Join this success story?

Distributors or resellers interested in partnering with Grandorf can get in touch by visiting the Grandorf stand at Interzoo 2022 – Hall 5, Booth 128. ♦

Key company figures:

- Number SKU: 68 (48 dry – 20 wet)
- Points of sale: 5,969 stores
- Countries: 21
- Turnover 2021: €44 million (\$48.55M)

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Let's lower our pawprint!

Becoming a fully sustainable business in the pet food sector does not need to be as challenging as it may seem. What you need is transparency and strategic partnerships.

The gravitational pull towards sustainability is inevitably advancing across the globe. 'CO2 neutral', 'green' and 'lower carbon footprint' are phrases that are omnipresent in our daily lives. Across the regions, governments have taken huge steps, like the 'Green Deal' in Europe, which will fully unfold in the years to come. By using animal by-products, the pet food industry supports this sustainable mindset. But the IPCC warning in 2018 that global warming must not exceed 1.5 degrees – if catastrophic implications are to be prevented – requires additional action that covers all aspects of business.

Baseline measurements and first steps

'If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it!' Working together with suppliers and customers to capture data across entire supply chains is essential. And it's also vital to unwind the complexity from farm to fork. This will create verifiable transparency in the life cycle, as you aim to achieve long-term goals like 'net zero'.

The science-based Targets Initiative (SBTi) can offer guidance to reduce emissions with more than 2,000 businesses leading the change. Targets are considered 'science-based' if they meet the goals of the Paris Agreement by limiting global warming to well below 2°C at least. Even though that might sound like a long journey with many unknowns ahead, it is possible to start work today on reducing the impact within your own operations.

Many options available

Besides lowering input in plants, there are many other ways to reduce your emissions. For example,

sourcing wind and solar energy, but also by using photovoltaic systems, power purchase agreements or district heating. You can go even further by offsetting remaining emissions with certificates that support projects around the globe. At full scale, you will be able to claim a carbon-neutral manufacturing site! Isn't it always about the first step?

The bigger picture and new alternatives

Improving operations is definitely the right move. But if you take water and land use into consideration, a significant share of the overall footprint is down to raw materials and the overall supply chain. So reviewing each individual flow – with a focus on origin and species – is key. Along the way, using alternative proteins like insects, or valorizing new streams, will be a necessity to not only support sustainability but also to broaden the supply of proteins.

Working in partnership

What is most critical to all this is partnerships. With aligned strategies, bulletproof goals and actionable steps to really make a change. Let's start reducing our 'paw print' now! ♦



Danny Lorenzen-Schmidt
Business Development and Sustainability
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The scientific mystery of mushrooms in the world of pet supplements

Consumers looking to protect the health of their pets are increasingly turning to medicinal mushrooms... and they might be onto something. But it's far from easy for scientists to unravel the mystery of why mushrooms seem to promote better health.

Doggie Herbs is one of several specialty brands now offering medicinal mushroom supplements for dogs. It began integrating mushrooms into its products in 2016, according to company founder Sean Russell. They were getting an overwhelming number of requests for supplements to boost immunity and prevent cancer, and due to his experience with mushrooms in herbal medicine for humans, he suspected that certain mushrooms could fit the bill.

Supported by cancer research

Indeed, research published in the late 1990s and into the 2000s indicated that medicinal mushrooms may prove beneficial to dogs. One study indicated that dogs who received a mushroom-based supplement while undergoing chemotherapy had fewer symptoms and overall better quality of life than those that did not.

Russell zeroed in on the same compound identified in the research: beta-glucans, a specialized form of fiber found in certain cereals, yeasts and mushrooms. He eventually secured appropriate suppliers and manufacturers, and the mushroom-based supplements were an instant hit with customers. Doggie Herbs now offers two mushroom-only supplements as well as a herb-and-mushrooms blend.

"Our mushroom products are the most popular products that we sell," Russell explains. The buzz around mushrooms high in beta-glucans, such

as Turkey Tail, and their purported cancer-fighting qualities drive consumers to the internet to learn more and find mushroom supplements for their dogs.

Complicated science

But while public excitement about the potential of mushrooms has only grown since the first research trials suggested mushrooms had potential cancer-fighting benefits, the science has become more complicated, according to Matt Cleaver, an independent researcher and consultant who studies medicinal mushrooms.

Cleaver was one of the contributing researchers in the trials connecting beta-glucans to improved outcomes during chemotherapy. The exciting thing about beta-glucans from mushrooms, he says, was that they didn't just enhance the immune system or suppress it (which can cause too much inflammation or, at the other end of the spectrum, leave patients open to infection). Instead, the mushrooms appeared to actually modulate the immune system, turning off unhelpful inflammatory responses and boosting the ability to fight infection at the same time.

However, as often with research into natural medicine, the study was plagued with many problems, especially the presence of diverse variables that complicate and could interfere with the end results. "When you're testing a drug, you're usually working with a single

chemical compound that is suspected of having a particular effect. This makes it relatively easy to set up an experiment; one group of test subjects gets the chemical, the other doesn't. If the desired results show up in one group but not the other, the chemical works," Cleaver explains. But natural remedies don't benefit from this simplicity – and mushrooms are particularly difficult to research. "Forget specific chemical compounds; in some cases, scientists haven't even settled the debate about what separates one species of mushroom from the next."

Fiber composition in mushrooms

Mushrooms also tend to contain specific beta-glucans not present in other sources of fiber such as cereals, but the exact composition of fibers varies from one mushroom to the next. So as additional trials tried to narrow down and isolate key beta-glucans, the results became less dramatic and raised questions about whether beta-glucans were really the compound responsible for the initial results.

According to Cleaver, this isn't to say that the mushrooms aren't effective at modulating the immune system. "There's ample research to support that claim. It's even possible the beta-glucans are still part of the equation. Achieving immune modulation may just require a specific combination of beta-glucans," he says.

"Or perhaps the fibers interact with other compounds in the mushroom, or even elsewhere in the dog's diet. We know the mushrooms work, but why remains a mystery. But ultimately, consumers may not mind. If they notice the quality-of-life difference, even if they can't quantify it as impeccably as with other medicine, they're probably still going to buy it," he concludes. ♦



Emma Penrod
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The opportunities and obstacles for upcycled pet food

Upcycled pet foods utilize excess resources which are readily available instead of letting them go to waste. Six industry executives discuss how brands can evolve and succeed.

As we enter a new era of what some may call the 'post-pandemic society', new cracks in the global supply chain remind us of the market's fragility. Despite the exponential growth of the pet food market, the industry is not immune to these universal challenges. What if there were localized resources available in our own backyards to counter the challenges of volatile global supply chains? And what if those resources also reduced food waste and minimized carbon footprints? Here, six executives from the upcycled pet food industry discuss the opportunities and challenges in more detail.

A resilient market opportunity

Nikki Collier, founder of Leashless Lab, believes that upcycling may be a solution. "That's the beauty of upcycling in the supply chain, and what you can do with it if you just ask your neighbors." Heidi Gillman, director of business development at Ag-Alchemy, echoes Collier's sentiments. "There's really something to be said about this whole upcycling piece because all the inputs are already there. We're not worried about something being stuck on a boat in a port."

Preventing food waste

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 30-40% of the nation's food supply goes to waste. This has massive implications for people and planet alike. In fact, Project Drawdown claims that preventing food waste is the single greatest solution to fighting global warming. Upcycled pet foods support this notion by utilizing excess resources

which are readily available and within reach, instead of letting them go to waste. Alex Waite, co-founder of Shameless Pets, defines the process more precisely as "rescuing and transforming misfit and surplus produce into high-quality treats for pets".

Waite emphasizes the balance between maintaining healthy supplier relationships and keeping your options open. "It's really important to create deep relationships in your supply chain so you have the trust that enables the both of you to scale and grow. At the same time, having multiple options to lean on is integral to being a nimble, fast-growing start-up." Doing so minimizes the risk of losing inventory while remaining open to new opportunities.

Challenges persist

Despite the allure, it's worth noting that there's no precise supply chain or distribution platform for upcycling. "You have to figure out a lot of stuff on your own, and the 'right' process will be different for different upcycled ingredients, different geographies and different businesses," explains Eric Westerduin, founder and CEO of Calvin's Craft.

Cost can be another barrier. "There is this perception that upcycled material should be cheaper, but in all reality it tends to be more expensive," says Waite. In many cases, it's more cost-effective for this food 'waste' to go to a landfill than to be repurposed.

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"It takes additional resources – people power, processing time, storage or even additional capital expense – for this material to be captured in a food-safe manner to make it acceptable for utilization," she adds. "I want to be sustainable, but is it worth me paying 25% more to get upcycled blueberries rather than traditional blueberries?" asks Nicole Marchand, CEO and founder of Dog Child. "I still struggle with that."

Much-needed capital

Even with a stable supply chain, there tends to be a stigma around upcycling in the eyes of investors. "Our biggest challenge right now is finding investors who understand upcycling and believe in the business model," continues Westerduin. While financial backers may applaud innovation and sustainability, they're often hesitant to extend the much-needed capital required for these businesses to scale up, even when they've proven to be profitable. "Investors can be quick to dismiss upcycling as a niche trend and something that isn't scalable," Westerduin adds.

However, the barriers to investment may be decreasing. Together with co-founder ReFED, the Upcycled Food Association (UFA) has created the Food Waste Funder Circle, where investors can receive a weekly 'deal-flow' report outlining investment opportunities across the entire food waste industry.

Education and awareness

There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding around upcycling among consumers too. Some associate the idea with consuming trash, which is far from true. In actual fact, upcycled ingredients undergo the same rigorous testing as conventional foods to ensure they meet high quality and purity standards before being converted and brought to the market.

Eric Adams, founder of Dog and Whistle, appreciates the need for consumer education. He takes a grassroots approach, teaching on the ground in real time at his brick-and-mortar shop, Le Pup Café, where he offers taste tests to not only dogs, but also their human owners. He's typically met by a flurry of disbelief and confusion, before proceeding to explain that the treats are human-grade, nutritious and tasty. Eventually, many of the humans do sample the products, he says. Adams works with a veterinary

consultant from Tuskegee University who curates his upcycled dog treat recipes to safeguard their quality and purity.

Discarding the term 'waste'

"This isn't really 'waste', you know. We need to stop using that word," states Gillman. To raise awareness, Ag-Alchemy created a video to help consumers wrap their minds around the scope of the company's manufacturing capabilities and unrivaled access to fresh, surplus bread, while gaining a better understanding of what upcycling looks like in practice. Similarly, Shameless Pets has created a brief animated clip on the company website along with mapping tools and pie charts to help visualize and communicate the full scope of the 'carbon paw print'.

Popular among millennials

Upcycled pet foods are a good fit with the humanization trend and the evolution of the 'pet parent'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they are better received by millennials than baby boomers. "I find there is a big generational gap," says Marchand. "Upcycling is a little controversial still." There is an indication that this gap may be closing, however, since millennials now represent the biggest share of pet ownership in the US according to a 2021/2022 survey.

Adopting new lifestyles

As more pet food brands embrace the growing shift toward high-quality, human-grade pet food, new organizations have emerged to support brands in creating a unified message around upcycling, like the Upcycled Food Association. The organization has already played a major regulatory role by creating the novel Upcycled Certified™ product verification program.

Ultimately, if concerns around scalability and access are to be addressed, upcycling must be adopted as a lifestyle, not just a trend. "It must be more of a mindset in the consumer; that's what's going to make it sustainable in the long term," concludes Marchand. ♦



Caroline Barry
PETS International Contributor



Do fermented foods have a role in pet nutrition?

Health benefits associated with human consumption of fermented foods ultimately led to the discovery of probiotics. But do fermented foods also have a role in enhancing the nutrition of pets?

Humans eat fermented foods all the time – yogurt, cheese, sauerkraut, kimchi – not to mention drinking fermented beverages such as wine and beer. Health benefits associated with the consumption of such foods ultimately led to the discovery of probiotics. To explore whether fermented foods have a role in enhancing the nutrition of pets, we should first look at the evidence in humans.

Health benefits in humans

Fermentation occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria or yeast grow. Lactic acid-producing bacteria and yeast are generally considered safe organisms for human consumption. Not only does fermentation produce acids that give food a tangy taste, but it also produces B vitamins such as thiamine, riboflavin, biotin, cobalamin and folic acid, as well as vitamin K. Several of these vitamins are considered essential to avoid nutritional deficiencies. As such, fermented foods are a source of essential vitamins. Moreover, these are natural, rather than synthetic, sources of vitamins.

Fermentation also produces bioactive peptides which can positively impact health. Examples of bioactive peptides include melatonin and GABA. Beneficial aspects of bioactive peptides include anti-cancer,

anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, anti-microbial, anti-adipogenic (fat accumulation), anti-mutagenic (DNA damage) and anti-thrombotic (blood clots). As an example, the production of the hormone GABA has been associated with anti-depressant and anti-diabetic benefits.

During fermentation, bacteria also produce exopolysaccharides which provide a thick protective barrier surrounding the bacteria to improve their ability to survive in their environment. Exopolysaccharides are made of unique polysaccharides that have been associated with immunomodulation, antioxidant and anti-cancer effects. Immunomodulation effects by exopolysaccharides have also been associated with alleviating influenza virus-induced infections.

Zooming in on vinegar

Specific products of fermentation have been associated with other health benefits. For example, vinegar (acetic acid) consumption has been shown to reduce after-meal blood glucose and insulin levels as well as improve the feeling of satiety. Vinegar has an anti-obesity effect and has been used to suppress immune-associated gut inflammation in a colitis model. Regarding nutrient absorption, vinegar is associated with improved calcium absorption.

Current developments in pet food

So, is it possible to create fermented foods for pets? In 1979, a US patent was granted to Mars which described a technique to achieve 'long-term stabilization of proteinaceous food products for both human and animal consumption'. The patent specifies the addition of an inoculum using a probiotic organism to help achieve a shelf-stable food product.

While it is unclear whether the examples laid out in the patent meet the complete nutritional requirements of the pet, a method is presented that puts forth how a fermented product could be created as a pet food. Given that bacterial fermentation naturally produces vitamins, it would be interesting to understand how this technology could be leveraged to create a food product containing natural sources of vitamins.

A number of small, innovative companies are currently making fermented diet components that are marketed specifically for pet consumption. For example, the Big Dog Natural and Dr. Mercola brands both sell fermented vegetables, while the Answers Pet Food brand sells fermented milk products.

Commercial challenges

Some challenges remain in terms of expanding the availability of fermented pet food. From a commercial point of view, fermenting the food increases the amount of time involved in the production process for the product. Additionally, fermentation can change the taste of the food, which may alter pet acceptance.

Underdeveloped opportunity

However, given the diversity of health-enhancing substances made by nature's 'mini-factories' (i.e. microbes), fermented foods offer a unique, considerably underdeveloped opportunity to enhance pet health. For truly entrepreneurial companies looking for a novel product form, a complete pet food based on fermentation technology could represent a possibility to further expand the diversity of their pet product offerings and provide a health-enhancing point of difference in today's competitive pet product environment. ♦



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IPN's roots began in 1923, when they started producing animal food in North Yorkshire, UK. From 1990 onwards, the focus was solely on pet food. Since those days, the company has grown significantly, thanks to its focus on sustainable pet food solutions.

IPN – Inspired Pet Nutrition – is the UK's first Carbon Negative Pet Food Producer. As part of their zero-impact focus, the company has committed to planting 1 million trees over the next few years.

IPN currently has 3 pet food kitchens and is actively looking for further production facilities and brands to join the family. Dry extruded food is produced in England and baked complete foods, treats and wet foods are produced in North Wales. All the plants have a combined production capacity of 220,000 tons per year of dry, wet and treat foods.

Optimizing affordable pet food

In December 2020, IPN partnered with

CapVest and partners who shared their vision to democratize pet food through superior nutrition and affordability.

IPN is home to both Harringtons and Waggy, 2 pet food brands that are very popular nationwide. Harringtons is currently the UK's number 1 dry dog food brand, and the fastest growing wet dog food brand in the UK.* Designed for the affordable premium, mass market, the brand tiers across dog and cat, wet and dry and it is appealing to specialty channels.

The affordable super-premium tiers such as Just Six are proving the philosophy of making great pet care more affordable. The company has also launched 'Advanced Science Diet' as an alternative to the often high-priced functional and life-stage diets.

In 2021, IPN acquired Pet Food UK, the home of Barking Heads, Meowing Heads and AATU brands. These well-established brands are enabling IPN to reach more potential customers in the super and ultra-

premium markets and also help to further build the company's international presence. In addition, IPN also produces foods for select private label partners.

Growth strategy

IPN has ambitious plans to double in size over the next 3 years through a mixture of organic growth and acquisition. The company is committed to continued growth in the domestic market, while developing new products and exploring export opportunities that will enable the business to become a major international home of well-loved pet food brands. ♦

Interzoo 2022 – Hall 9, Booth 359a

**Source: IRI All Outlets GB – 52wk 26, March 2022*

Inspired Pet Nutrition Ltd.
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How innovative technologies are helping meet the demand for value-added pet food



Around the world, pet owners are increasingly focused on their pets' health and searching for more value-adding pet food. Lithuanian producer Kauno Grūdai has launched a new production line, based on innovative freeze-dried, meat-coated technology.

The resultant super-premium-class pet food is a fitting answer to the surge in demand for the highest quality pet solutions.

Bringing the best possible products to market

"Market data shows that the demand for best-quality pet food is unabated and still rising significantly. And further growth is expected for the future also, especially for food fit for small breed dogs. In answer to these market trends, we have shifted our strategy towards the production of high-quality super-premium products. We have renewed our factory, investing no less than €2.5 million (\$2.75M) in state-of-the-art production facilities and have in place a new research and development team. They will be looking at ways to continue to bring the best possible products to market," according to Šarūnas Valys, head of the company's Extruded Products business.

Exclusive solution

The use of the innovative freeze-dry technology, enables kibbles to be coated with natural meat, thereby enriching kibbles with naturally preserved nutrients. This exclusive solution provides irresistible taste, with the best palatability. To this day, Kauno Grūdai is one of the few producers that use freeze-dried ingredients in its production. It's a technology that is especially popular in the health food industry.

Traceability

Traceability is one of the main advantages of the company's business model. As part of Linas Agro Group, one of the largest agricultural and food production companies in the Baltic region, the company manages the production chain 'from field to table': meaning taking full responsibility for the entire production process, from the ingredients to the final product.

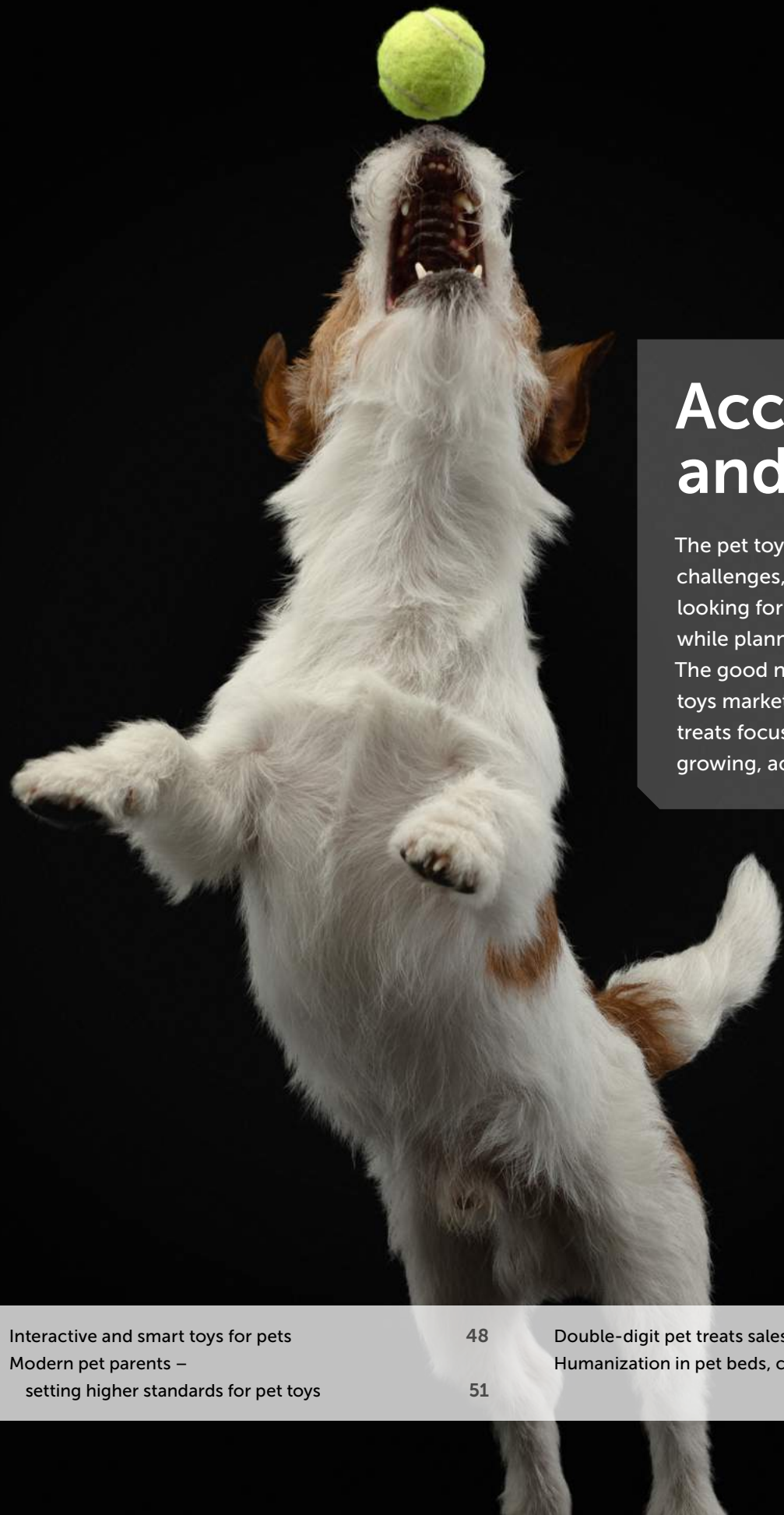
Super-premium product lines

Kauno Grūdai produces its super-premium-class pet food under the Quattro brand. Quattro is available in a special, no-grain line for small breed dogs. The super-premium pet food range is set to be expanded with exciting new options, including a new product line for cats as well as a new no-grain line for all breed dogs. The company also produces pet food for foreign brands under private labels.

Kauno Grūdai pet food products are available in over 20 countries and the company has plans to expand to the South-East Asian market as well as increase its focus on Europe. Meet them at:

Interzoo 2022 – Hall 2, Booth 622. ♦

Kauno Grūdai AB
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Accessories and snacks

The pet toy category faces new challenges, with picky pet parents looking for added-value premium toys, while planning to reduce their spending. The good news is that the interactive toys market is rising. Also, sales of pet treats focused on health and wellness are growing, accelerated by the pandemic.

Interactive and smart toys for pets
Modern pet parents –
setting higher standards for pet toys

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Double-digit pet treats sales spurred by pandemic
Humanization in pet beds, crates and cushions

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Interactive and smart toys for pets

Digital applications are part and parcel of all aspects of our everyday lives. Not surprisingly, as pets are fast becoming part of the family, their world is also being impacted by 'interactive' and 'smart'.

With rapid technological advancement, interactive and smart toys for pets are fast gaining traction among owners. Modern pet parents see the benefits of these kinds of toys and are willing to spend considerable amounts of money to keep their beloved pets happy and healthy.

Fun and convenient

At Pets Place, the largest pet store chain in the Netherlands, they have noticed an increased interest in tech-based pet products. Currently, they offer around 80 such products in their portfolio. Expectations are that the demand for more products will increase over the coming time, as pet parents discover that technological capabilities can make playing with and caring for their pet more fun and convenient.

In the US, Amazon tool product research Junglescout reports that interactive and robotic toys for cats were best sellers in the marketplace, achieving tens of thousands of sales every month. Similarly, Amazon sold more than 20,400 electric flopping clownfish every month in 2021.

The same goes for other high-tech pet products, like smart pet feeders and automatic treat-dispensers.

Market research agency Technavio predicts that the global market for these products will grow by \$2.28B (€2B) in the period 2021-2025 with North America driving the business.

What's on the market?

Different studies have shown that a lack of mental and physical stimulation in pets can lead to apathy, stress and depression.

Toys are instrumental in providing pets with the stimulation they need. Smart pet toys can be especially beneficial in this regard, as they are often specifically designed to arouse the senses, engage problem-solving skills and stimulate physical exercise.

Some of the tech-based products that are currently being offered on the market include:

Interactive ball launchers – These allow a dog or a cat to launch its own ball. A product like the iFetch can be loaded with a tennis ball, which is then automatically launched for the animal to retrieve. Some ball launchers can be connected to a smart device, so owners can operate them remotely, manipulate the trajectory and angle of the ball or play certain games with their pets.

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Treat-dispensing toys – These typically encourage pets to use their body and wits to unlock a treat. By tilting, rolling, biting, pecking or manipulating the device, a food treat is automatically dispensed. These toys can be used to train and maintain healthy eating habits and can often be operated remotely.

Aikiou – This interactive dog bowl forces a dog to work for its meal. The animal has to nose through each of the 'toe caps' on the paw-shaped bowl to reveal the kibble underneath. In this way, a dog's natural foraging behavior is stimulated.

Digital apps – There are many apps available for smartphones that aim to entertain and mentally stimulate cats. For instance, Cat Alone or Game for Cats encourages cats to chase and catch birds, fish or rats. The apps can also project images, like laser beams, on walls and such that mimic the behavior of a cat's prey animal.

What's next?

Industry insiders see that smart pet toys with built-in cameras and sensors are becoming increasingly popular. 'They allow owners to keep tabs on their pets while they are away, which is a great advantage for busy modern pet owners,' according to Pets Place.

The best-selling product on Amazon is the Furbo, an interactive smart dog camera that allows owners to see, talk to and give treats to their dog, wherever they are.

Another popular smart product is the Wickedbone, a bone-shaped interactive gaming device for dogs operated from the phone. It can perform a wide range of movements, including spins, vibrations, rolls and flips.

Last but not least, while pet toys are still widely purchased in supermarkets, convenience stores and specialty shops, it's expected that online sales will grow significantly in the coming years. ♦



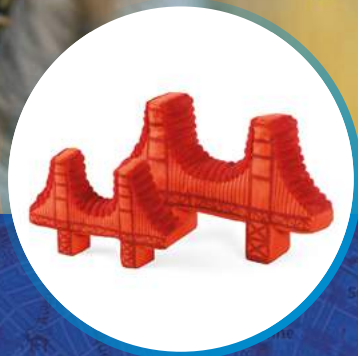
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Modern pet parents – setting higher standards for pet toys

The pet toy category has been booming since 2019, but now faces new challenges as pet parents look for toys as added value to the daily life of their pets.

In line with other pet product categories, pet toys have enjoyed an unexpected boom in popularity over the past 2 years, as the world's pet population has soared during the pandemic. But unlike food and treats, toy manufacturers could face potential headwinds in the years to come, as pet parents become increasingly choosy.

Spending less?

In addition, according to the 2021-2022 National Pet Owners Survey by the American Pet Products Association, one-third of pet owners plan to reduce their spending on pet supplies other than food in the coming months.

Whether they will actually do so remains the question: a downward trend has yet to manifest itself. But, some industry insiders believe that hesitancy amongst pet parents to purchase toys could be related to growing dissatisfaction with conventional toy options.

In a market driven by increased concern about health and safety – and a desire for social media likes – consumers are tired of the same old chews and ropes. Today's pet parents, experts believe, are in search of unique, high-quality, sustainable products.

Premium toys

According to Sneha Varghese, senior research consultant at Future Market Insights, pet parents looking for new ways to spoil their pets are

increasingly looking for premium pet toys made with higher-quality materials.

Toys marketed as 'premium' include those made with more durable materials that stand up to medium and aggressive chewing dogs, as well as a variety of products made with natural materials. Premium also comes with an increased brand awareness among pet parents.

"Pet parents look for products that are safe and made from quality materials. They are taking the time to really get to know brands and want to make sure they are getting the best for their pets," remarks Lisa Hisamune, director of sales at P.L.A.Y. Pet Lifestyle and You, designer of stylish and eco-friendly pet bedding and toys.

Brand awareness has also shifted as a result of pet parents increasingly purchasing toys online. In fact, according to the 2021-2022 National Pet Owners Survey almost 70% of pet toy purchases were made online in 2020.

Smart toys & social media

Millennials' twin loves – pets and technology – have boosted the development of AI-powered smart toys for pets. Such toys offer a solution for post-pandemic separation anxiety, as pet parents go back to work and leave their furry companions, who have become used to all-day entertainment, on their own. [▶ SEE NEXT PAGE](#)



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However, this trend is facing some unexpected challenges. A worldwide shortage of materials and rising manufacturing costs are impacting manufacturers. Recently, Felik, a smart toys manufacturer headquartered in Seattle, announced that it planned to discontinue production.

But, besides their increasing interest in smart toys, pet parents are also spending more on lower-tech alternatives, including interactive toys, puzzle games and olfactive training toys, according to Daniel Lizarraga, CEO of Gloria Pets in Spain. “Nowadays we like to have fun with our dogs, and we like to share funny pictures or videos with our friends of our dogs with funny toys.”

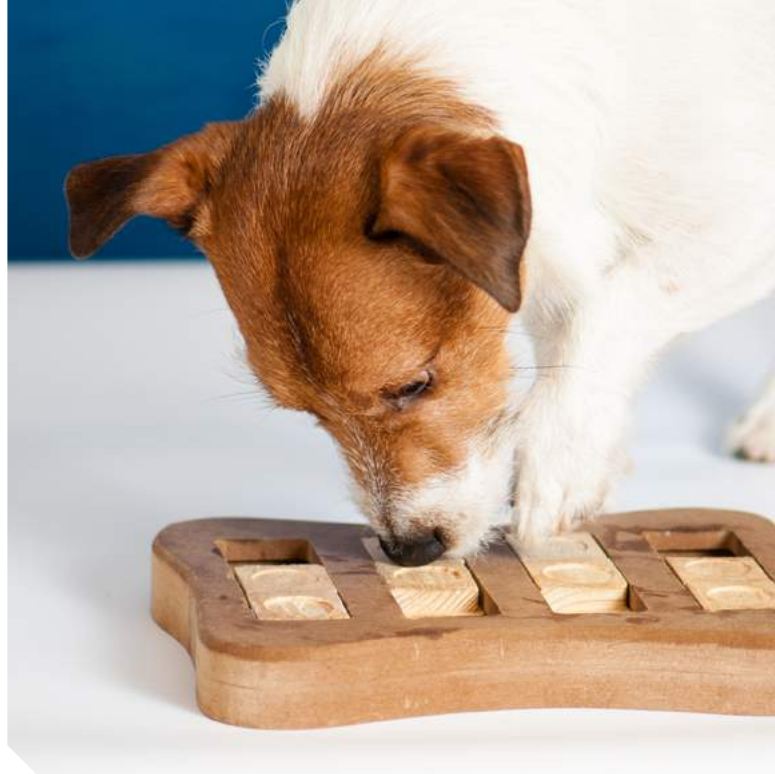
In fact, social media is impacting the pet toys category in all aspects. Even with plush toys, consumers appear to love fun designs that humanize their pets and make for great Instagram photos. Whether it’s a plush toy shaped like a popular soda brand or food item, or even everyday items like cameras, pet parents are keen on taking photos of their pets and sharing them on social media.

Sustainability & health

At the same time, concern about the health of both pets and the environment has spilled over into pet toy production as well. Consumer demand for more sustainable products has led to a proliferation of toys marketed as being chemical-free, non-toxic, recycled and biodegradable.

“What used to be a niche market, is now gaining traction as consumers’ habits are evolving focused on sustainable alternatives,” says Federica Gabasio, purchasing manager for Farm Company, an Italian-based company that began distributing eco-friendly pet toys over 10 years ago.

The increasing demand for sustainable products has encouraged pet toy manufacturers to use natural and sustainable materials such as straw rope, cotton, wood, natural latex, as well as fur and leather. It may even well be that plastics in pet toys are on their way out. “Plastic-free toys manufactured using only natural resources and local manufacturers are a global trend,” highlights Lizarraga.



Hiccups in the supply chain

However, as with smart toys, manufacturers looking to source local, sustainable materials for their products, are also facing hiccups in the supply chain. “Right now, it is still quite difficult to get certified recycled materials in large quantities,” Anke Schüsckke, head of product management and quality management at Texas-based TRIXIE Pet Products points out. “Suppliers have to change their way of working in the future.”

Sustainable pet garments

Nevertheless, when enough fitting materials can be found, today’s consumers are extremely positive about the product offering. The willingness of pet parents to purchase sustainable toys and accessories that come at a higher price, has enabled companies like Farm Company to start expanding into accessories such as collars and leashes.

“We are now working on the pet garments section to provide sustainable and environmentally friendly products in this category as well,” Gabasio concludes. “Our goal is not geared towards expanding our product offering, but to provide a range of sustainable alternatives for pet parents to choose from. No matter if they are buying a snack or a leash.” ♦



Emma Penrod
PETS International Contributor



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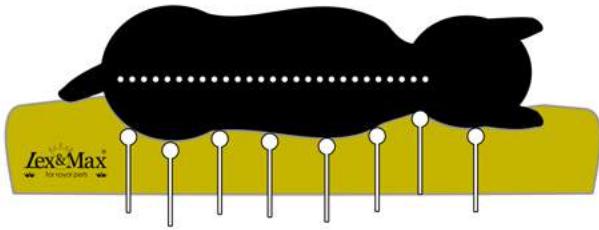
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Double-digit pet treats sales spurred by pandemic



Pet owners are spending more time at home with their pets and this has translated into more opportunities for treat-giving, and a boost in sales figures.

Sales growth in treats has consistently outpaced that of the more mature pet food market and pet supplies in general, and this growth has accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the amount of time spent with their animals, the increased focus of parents on health and wellness has resulted in more interest in functional treats.

Shift to health and online

Unlike much of the rest of the pet market, growth in treats sales has been hampered by the advance in Internet sales. Typically, treats are an impulse purchase made when pet owners are shopping for other items. Online shopping does not lend itself to this kind of 'see it, buy it' behavior to the degree that in-store shopping does. But, as with so many other items previously purchased in a brick-and-mortar setting, treats have followed the pandemic-driven shift to online sales.

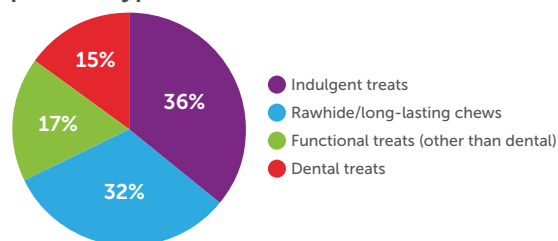
Consumer market research company Packaged Facts estimates that US retail sales of dog and cat treats approached \$10B (€9B) in 2021, after 2 years of double-digit increases. By product type, indulgent treats make up the largest share of the market at 36%, followed closely by rawhide and long-lasting chews at 32%. Even so, the pandemic-related focus on health and wellness has driven interest in both functional treats (17%) and dental treats (15%).

Cat treats – new market opportunities

Although dogs make up the bulk of pet treat sales with an 80% market share, the largest growth percentages have come from the cat side of the aisle. Historically,

in the US pet market, cats have too frequently been treated as 'second-class citizens'. This resulted in fewer product offerings and less focus on trend-influenced fare, reflecting the lower population of cats in the US and lower spend-per-pet ratio. However, the tables appear to be turning, with cat treat sales outpacing that of dog treats every year since 2016.

Share of US pet treats and chews market by product type



Source: Packaged Facts, *Pet Treats and Chews in the US* (November 2021)

The new opportunities in cat treats and potential higher percentage gains are to be found in the premium and super-premium trends powering dog treats in prior years. As more marketers introduce cat treats with higher-quality ingredients and higher prices, interest in cat treats will grow. It is expected that future sales will maintain healthy momentum.

In the pet industry overall, a uniform focus on pet health has long spearheaded the most important marketing and product development thrusts, driven by pet humanization and pet parents' heavy involvement in pet care. This increasingly translates into pet owners insistence on – and willingness to pay for – quality



products offering demonstrable health benefits on par with those they seek for themselves.

Health and sustainability concerns in post-pandemic times

Packaged Facts' January 2022 Survey of Pet Owners shows that 38% of dog owners and 35% of cat owners are paying closer attention to their pet's health and wellness because of COVID-19.

In the US pet treats market, successful products will provide demonstrable health and wellness benefits, such as those with higher-quality ingredients, functional ingredients, or the absence of ingredients perceived to be undesirable, such as artificial flavors, colors and preservatives. Weight control and age-related benefits also fit under the health and wellness umbrella and harbor much additional potential in the treats arena, including the targeting of numerous specific health conditions.

In addition, alternative proteins are ideal for pets with food allergies and intolerances and are frequently a more sustainable option than traditional chicken- and beef-based products. Plant-based products have the added advantage of a strong human-food market trend. Packaged Facts survey data from August and September 2021 show a high level of interest (54%) among pet owners in the use of plant-based proteins in pet treats. The long-lasting chew category, in particular, has seen an influx of new products relying on alternatives to rawhide, including plant-based.

Transparency in sourcing

To help their products stand out, progressive marketers are also offering more transparency in their sourcing descriptions, providing a level of detail that would have been unusual even 10 years ago. Locally sourced products are becoming more common among treat selections, as are responsibly sourced offerings made with ingredients guaranteed to adhere to a range of strict guidelines, such as 'Certified Humane' and 'Marine Stewardship Council'-certified. ♦



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Humanization in pet beds, crates and cushions

As the well-being of cats and dogs is increasingly important for pet owners, the market for pet bedding products is growing and expanding to meet the needs of all pets; not only those that are old or that have health issues.



In fact, as pets are treated more and more as family members, higher consumer lifestyle standards and a surge in hygiene standards are expected to drive the overall market potential even further.

Substantial growth

A study conducted by the Dubai-based market research consultancy Fact.MR shows that the global pet beds market is set to undergo substantial growth through to 2031. Sue Jones, co-founder of British pet products seller OKA, remarks: "Pets are part of the family, so it's understandable that people want to spoil them just as they would their children. I think this means people shop pet accessories in the same way they do for themselves, looking for comfort, quality, durability and style."

Orthopedic solutions enjoy popularity

Nevertheless, the pet bedding market continues to be driven by customers with older pets and pets with special needs as a result of health issues.

"The most popular trend I see in pet beds, crates and cushions is that more attention is given to the special needs of senior pets," highlights Dana Varble, Chief Veterinary Officer at the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC). Orthopedic pet beds provide additional support for pet muscles, backbone and joints while sleeping or relaxing. These types of beds distribute the pet's weight and in this way minimize any strain on their joints.

"Our pets are living longer lives and pet parents want to ensure that during the last years also, their lives are happy and comfortable. One example is the widespread use of orthopedic support in pet beds and kennel pads for pets that have joint disease," Varble comments.

Design is important too

Most pet parents buy such products to decrease pain and improve the sleeping comfort of their pets. And although the health-supporting properties are the most important, purchasing decisions are also increasingly being based on product appearance. No wonder there is a new trend to include more design elements. For example, wood finishes turn these utilitarian products into interior decor pieces.

Customers looking for durable...

Currently, most manufacturers use materials that make pet beds more practical and durable. But other considerations regarding product materials are also driving pet parents' choices. These include washability and sturdy fabrics or covers that can be switched and thereby extend the lifespan of products.

"Our pet cushions have fiber-filled inserts and machine-washable covers, while our beds and baskets are raised above the ground to avoid drafts. They also have inset handles for easy movement," Creative Director Sue Jones from OKA points out. Inspired by ancient designs

from the Far East, one of the first creations made by OKA were hand-crafted rattan accessories and storage. "This timeless material is a huge hit with our customers. And, in our experience, pets love our rattan Mattaban designs, as much as their owners do," adds Jones.

...and sustainable

Sustainability aspects are also important for pet parents. Although manufacturers are still only taking their first steps in this area. "More recycled materials, especially recycled fabrics are available and being utilized as cushion material. Importantly, new ways to engineer those materials are enabling us to re-use them, turning them into robust support solutions for our aging pet population," according to Varble.

Higher-income markets

Up till now, sustainability is only being picked up by the higher-income markets and to a lesser extent in developing countries. Kirill Leonov from the Russian Academy of Science points out that, in Russia, the demand is limited by lower living standards, compared to the European Union and the US. "In terms of materials, durability is as important as price is. In fact, many local customers do not really care whether fabrics are sustainable or recyclable. Some customers care about their pets as children, but the ecological issues are just not on the agenda here, as they are in other parts of the world," Leonov comments.

Thermo-regulation in the spotlight

With comfort as a top priority in pet bedding, it's not surprising that manufacturers are looking at offering even more advanced levels of comfort for pets.

New is the introduction of heat-regulated bedding, some even featuring electrical heating. These types of beds generally feature heavy padding or come as smooth beds with thinner padding. Underneath the padding material, the beds have warming (or cooling) elements inside a protective covering. Safety and security are paramount and showcased in pet beds with in-built safety elements to prevent overheating, fire hazards or frostbite. ♦



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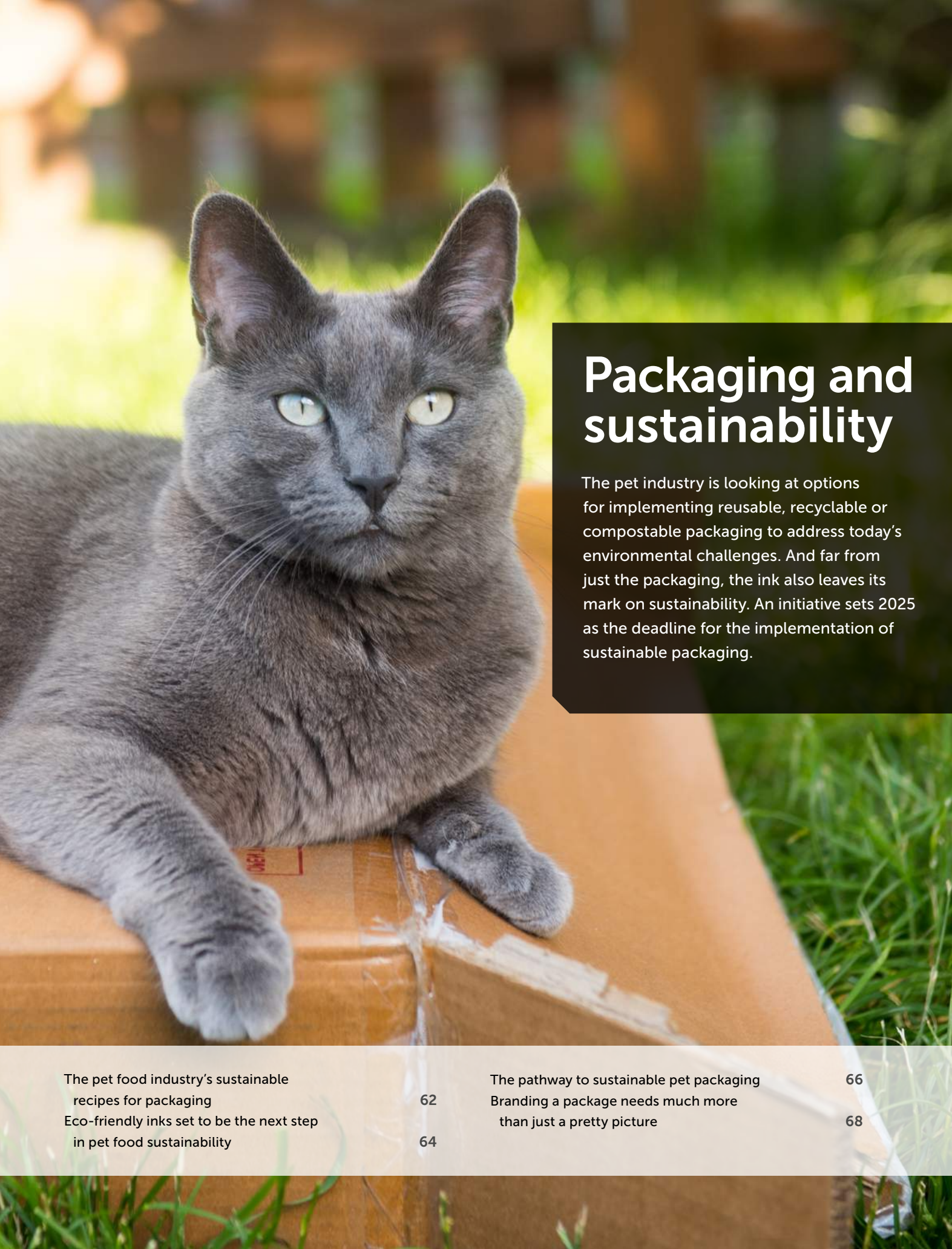
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Packaging and sustainability

The pet industry is looking at options for implementing reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging to address today's environmental challenges. And far from just the packaging, the ink also leaves its mark on sustainability. An initiative sets 2025 as the deadline for the implementation of sustainable packaging.

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The pet food industry's sustainable recipes for packaging

Big players and alliances in different parts of the world aim to redesign packaging and reduce unnecessary materials as they move toward a future of 100% reusable, recyclable or compostable.

Pet food packaging is critical to ensuring that pet food is kept safe and retains its nutritional quality. But it also provides pet owners with important factual and legal information about the food they are purchasing.

In the past few years, the global industry has been making progress toward reducing and optimizing the use of packaging materials, finding sustainable alternatives to non-recyclable plastic, and increasing the use of recycled content.

FEDIAF

The European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) advocates for a circular economy model, ensuring pet food safety and preventing waste. According to a position paper from the Brussels-based organization, this is the only formula for reducing the impact of pet food packaging on the environment.

Pet food packaging comes in a variety of formats – pouches, cans, bags and trays. Each relies on different materials, ranging from paper and cardboard to plastic and aluminum. FEDIAF suggests that manufacturers should carefully select the best option to guarantee freshness, hygiene, safety and sustainability.

Mars PetCare

Mars PetCare plans to have at least 10 new reuse programs in markets by 2025 to “help prevent single-use

plastics from getting into the market in the first place”. The company is part of an e-commerce platform that replaces single-use plastic packaging with durable, reusable packaging. Since 2019, consumers in Paris have been able to purchase their cat food online and receive a week’s supply in a sleek, stainless-steel container that can be reused and refilled for future orders.

All Mars PetCare packaging formats are currently being evaluated as the company is rethinking the design. This includes replacing hard-to-recycle packaging with a single-material packaging format.

At Mars, they want “to help consumers make decisions about what to do with the packaging once they have enjoyed the product”. And to do so, the company has launched guidance that will reach all major markets where their products are available by 2025.

Gosbi

Spanish pet food company Gosbi is also following a strategy to make its packaging more eco-friendly. The redesign involves the use of a single-layer pack. “The mono-material plastic allows a much easier recycling process and contributes to the circular economy,” explains CTO Xavier Miranda. This material is currently being used for more than half of Gosbi’s products and the company expects to eventually use it for the whole product range.



Nestlé Purina

One of the main challenges for the industry is to reduce virgin plastic, and the only way to do so is to guarantee that 100% of plastic packaging used for pet food is reusable, recyclable or compostable. "Our work around sustainable packaging is focused on deep-rooted and impactful challenges, like evolving infrastructure, material supply and demand, and bridging quality with sustainability. These are substantial hurdles that create lasting change," explains Billy Etling, Senior Vice President of Corporate Public Relations at Nestlé Purina PetCare North America.

"We're striving to achieve 100% recyclable or reusable packaging by 2025, and working with important partners to address larger-scale infrastructure capabilities," he adds.

The power of alliances

The pet food industry is heading toward an eco-friendly packaging future and big players are leading the way for the whole industry. But sustainability takes time and investment, as well as global alliances with other industry leaders, innovators and non-profit partners.

In May 2021, Mars, Mondeléz International, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever launched the Flexible Plastic Fund, a cross-industry collaboration in the UK aiming to create a transparent system that incentivizes high-quality recycling of a material that has historically gone to waste. "The Fund is driving toward the long-term ambitions of ensuring flexible plastic recycling is UK based, fully circular and facilitated by household recycling collections," explains Etling.

New York-based plastic neutral movement rePurpose Global recently announced that 20 pet food brands had aided its project to recover 2,000 tons of plastic waste from the environment. Just another example of fruitful collaboration on the way to a circular plastics economy. ♦



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Eco-friendly inks set to be the next step in pet food sustainability

How environmentally friendly a product is, also depends on the ink used in the packaging. Pet food producers are increasingly aware of that.

Pet food brands are trying harder than ever to implement the principles of sustainability in their packaging. The growing trend of environmental awareness, as well as regulations that cap the levels of volatile organic compounds (VOC – gases emitted into the air from products or processes such as printing) are pushing the industry to look to alternatives.

New natural ingredients

Traditional inks contain toxic elements that harm the environment as well as human health and, potentially, the health of a pet. These are the minerals in oils, and heavy metals such as mercury and cadmium in pigments. Solvents in ink are usually petroleum-based, while oils and pigments do not biodegrade, thus contributing to environmental pollution.

Sustainable inks do not use petroleum-derived solvents, replacing them with natural vegetable oils like soy, sunseed or rapeseed.

These types of inks can be either water-based, UV radiation curable, biodegradable or made from algae – with a new technology developed by bioscience research company Living Ink. All of them are highly biorenewable and easier to recycle, leaving less impact on the environment.

Expensive but effective

The cost of ink mainly depends on the raw material, and those used in sustainable inks are generally much

more expensive than the ones in petroleum-based inks. Depending on the packaging design, companies could experience a 1-5% increase in total price when shifting from the conventional solution to this kind of ink.

Experts point out that biodegradable inks are typically more cost-effective, requiring less product in the process, as they are more fluid and offer more vivid colors. Vegetable ink can also provide bright and glossy ink, giving sharper images.

The cost for print equipment manufacturers is pretty similar in both cases. Jim Pease, president of Sun Centre USA Inc, says that their machinery can definitely handle all types of inks, whether petroleum-based or sustainable. He adds that all his customers are interested in using sustainable inks.

Rebecca Casey, Senior Vice President Marketing & Strategy at Transcontinental Packaging, confirms the trend. This US company is dedicated to flexible packaging and is currently looking at eco-friendly ink technologies to meet its clients' needs – both major and medium-sized pet food brands.

"We see our clients moving forward towards eco-inks, or talking more about lifecycle assessments to reduce their carbon footprint. All of that will continue to evolve, and we will see more development on eco-friendly inks. We spend a lot of time in this area," she comments.

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Small versus big players

Despite the industry's sustainability awareness, eco-friendly ink is not yet a priority for a lot of companies. Some major players have progressively shifted to more sustainable food and packaging, adapting to the interests of pet owners. But for now, they just focus on the materials they use in designing the package. "That is already a big move for them. We haven't seen inks as a priority yet, but we know we're going to get there at some point," says Rebecca Casey.

This may be a niche for some smaller brands. Raw dog food producer Naturaw uses vegetable-based inks in its raw food packaging, claiming that manufacturing costs only "a few cents" for each sleeve. Likewise, California-based Honest Kitchens has dog food boxes printed with vegetable inks and its packaging is 100% biodegradable.

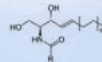
Corporate responsibility

In the coming years, this trend is expected to spread into the market. According to Asia Pulp & Paper, 56% of consumers in the US wanted more sustainable packaging in 2018. "With shifting consumer expectations, and an evolving understanding of the role of corporate responsibility, pet food manufacturers across the world are looking at various ways to integrate sustainability practices into their businesses," explains Dana Brooks, CEO and president of The Pet Food Institute.

"This may include commitments regarding ingredient sourcing. It is certainly a possibility that manufacturers will look at various components of packaging sustainability, including ink sourcing, as they integrate new practices. These factors can all be impactful areas for growth within the pet food sector." ♦



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The pathway to sustainable pet packaging

More than 300 million pounds (136 million kg) of flexible plastic packaging are created by the pet industry each year in the US, impacting around 67% of households. A lot is set to change by 2025.

As much as 99% of multi-laminate packaging used currently for most pet food and treats in North America does not have a sustainable end-of-life solution. But this may change after the Pet Sustainability Coalition (PSC) recently announced the so-called Packaging Pledge, aiming to accelerate the pet industry's progress toward sustainable packaging from summer 2022.

UnPacked22

The announcement came at UnPacked22, an annual virtual sustainable packaging event held by the non-profit organization PSC. Dozens of brands also made guest appearances. This included Instinct, PetDine, All The Best, Stella & Chewy's and MudBay, who all expressed intentions to become official signatories of the pledge. Companies who sign on to this program will voluntarily commit to transitioning their packaging to 100% recyclable, refillable or compostable by 2025.

The PSC Packaging Pledge is inspired by the Ellen MacArthur Plastics Pact, a global response to plastic waste and pollution. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Plastic Pact Network includes national plastic pacts throughout Europe, Africa and North America, as well as regional pacts including Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Time to catch up?

The pet industry has unique packaging constraints that hinder its sustainability advancement. Examples of these are large size formats, heavyweight requirements, and residual oils and food contamination. After

completing a stakeholder analysis of members, suppliers, brands and retailers, PSC learned that while packaging ranks among the top 3 most important sustainability issues facing the pet industry, the majority of pet companies rely on part-time staff plus inadequate tools, resources and support to advance their packaging toward more sustainable outcomes.

What also doesn't help is that companies often turn to existing packaging suppliers for education, and suppliers currently recommend a variety of solutions that are biased toward their abilities and solutions.

Making change easy

In order for brands and manufacturers to make this impactful packaging change, PSC has developed a program with a variety of tools and resources for pledge signatories.

Program benefits include:

- A *vetted marketplace* housing pre-qualified packaging suppliers that meet Ellen MacArthur requirements.
- *Marketing assets*, including signatory badges, social media and exclusive promotion opportunities.
- *Packaging assessment tools* such as packaging life cycle analysis, the Recycling Partnership's Plastic IQ, How2Recycle labeling support, and packaging design guidelines.
- Tapping into its extensive member network, PSC will also develop *Peer working groups* to share successes and challenges for accelerated progress.

pet
sustainability
coalition

packaging
pledge

Working for the future

Admittedly, the PSC Packaging Pledge is a program that will not immediately have an impact. But it is essential that the industry creates pathways for systemic improvements that require a long-term ambitious approach. At the same time, most flexible plastic packaging being used by the pet industry today is a serious environmental issue.

Recycling trials

Flex Forward is a return-to-retail pilot led by PSC that began in August 2020. Its goal was to collect more than 5,000 lbs (2,268 kg) of pet food and treat packaging over 6 months. The program exceeded its goals – reaching over 8,000 lbs (3,629 kg) of packaging, even amidst pandemic-induced retail closures.

PSC recently released new data related to the testing results from recycling trials that were conducted after the material was collected in retail stores. Over 12 different types of chemical and mechanical recycling tests were completed. Initial findings are being evaluated as part of a feasibility study outlining future expansion opportunities.

The findings indicate that if pet specialty and independent pet retailers in the US participate, expanding the Flex Forward program could successfully improve end-of-life solutions for 5 million pounds (2.27 million kg) of plastic pet packaging annually. This would also build store take-back behavior among pet parents. Regardless of whether the industry moves toward recyclable packaging or not, store take-back is the leading system for collecting material. It will be an essential component of sustainable packaging now and in the future. ♦



Caitlyn Bolton Dudas
Executive Director and Co-founder of the Pet Sustainability Coalition
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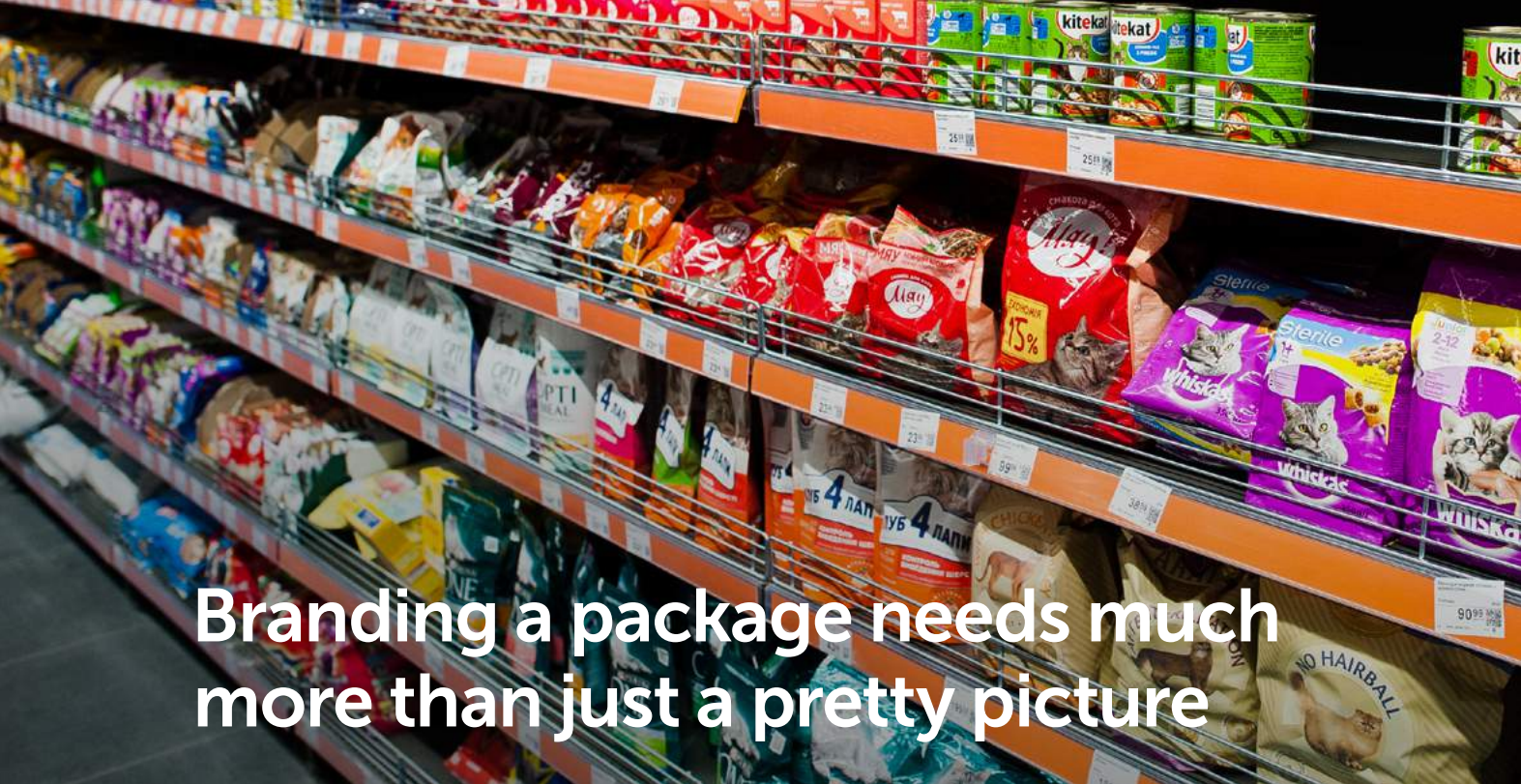
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Branding a package needs much more than just a pretty picture

Making sure your product catches the shopper's eye – that's what packaging design is all about.

A lot of hard work is involved in the process of package branding and design. Talking to Beckie Tomala, Vice President Client & Creative Services at Matrix Partners, makes that very clear. "Clients often have the misconception that branding is just placing pretty pictures on a bag. A beautiful package can sell, but with pet food, the main benefits of the food need to be clearly communicated," she says.

Some clients want to list every single benefit of their product, but the Chicago-based brand and marketing communications firm recommends highlighting the 3 main ones.

"It is a learning process. We help them understand the brand hierarchy and why only topline features should be displayed front and center. Any more than that and the message gets muddled."

Creativity takes time ...

Creating packaging takes time, patience and inspiration. Undertaking the necessary research and the development of ideas are essential if you're to find the packaging that's the most suitable. This is where the work of a packaging design agency comes in. It makes a massive difference to the structuring of eye-catching product concepts.

Translating a brand's values into packaging is Beckie Tomala's "absolute favorite part" of the job. "The pet industry is full of entrepreneurs, and people who are just as passionate about the human-animal bond as I am. Listening to them, and understanding their 'why', is important. From there you can access what makes them tick, and how to creatively communicate this on a package," she explains.

A designer needs to know where each ingredient is sourced, where it is manufactured, where it is packaged. Once the creative team has all this information, the agency carves out the main features and benefits of the product. "This will help differentiate the product and tell its story on the shelf," says Beckie.

... and inspiration

"The brand story drives the entire creative process, resulting in an engaging and effective packaging design. Once the story has been created, you really need to dig down to fully understand the product, inside and out."

Having identified the brand story, and the thinking behind it, a design team investigates ways of making the brand stand out. Looking at the retail channels where the brand will be on offer to the public is essential.



"I start my research in the channels where the product will be sold. If it is going to be on the shelves of independent pet stores, I always make rounds to 3-5 local stores that sell amazing products. I research all the packages in the stores, in every category, and take pictures of products that have the greatest shelf presence. But I don't stop there. I research packaging at Whole Foods Market and other high-end retailers and find inspiration in every aisle."

Certain key social trends always have to be kept in mind when designing pet food packaging. And first impressions count. If the packaging doesn't appeal immediately, the shopper moves on. When shopping the pet food aisle, customers scan for graphic clues such as 'Made in USA' flags when they encounter an unfamiliar brand. "If they don't see something relevant to them, they will keep on walking," Beckie admits.

Brands that care

Beckie Tomala believes that it is "more important than ever" to showcase engaging images of pets on packaging, as people shop with their heads and their hearts.

Research conducted by the team at Matrix Partners concluded that public concern for rescue animals is at an all-time high. Therefore, portraying mixed breed pets rather than purebreds is a subtle way to show customers that the brand in question understands what they care about.

"Customers gravitate towards package designs that complement their home decor or lifestyle, especially when shopping for super-premium foods and treats. Once you've got their attention, they need visual and verbal reassurance that they're buying the right brand for their best friend."

Creativity is subjective

Designing a great pet food package consists of 50% inspiration and 50% perspiration. This is the theory but, in fact, designing a great pet food package can be



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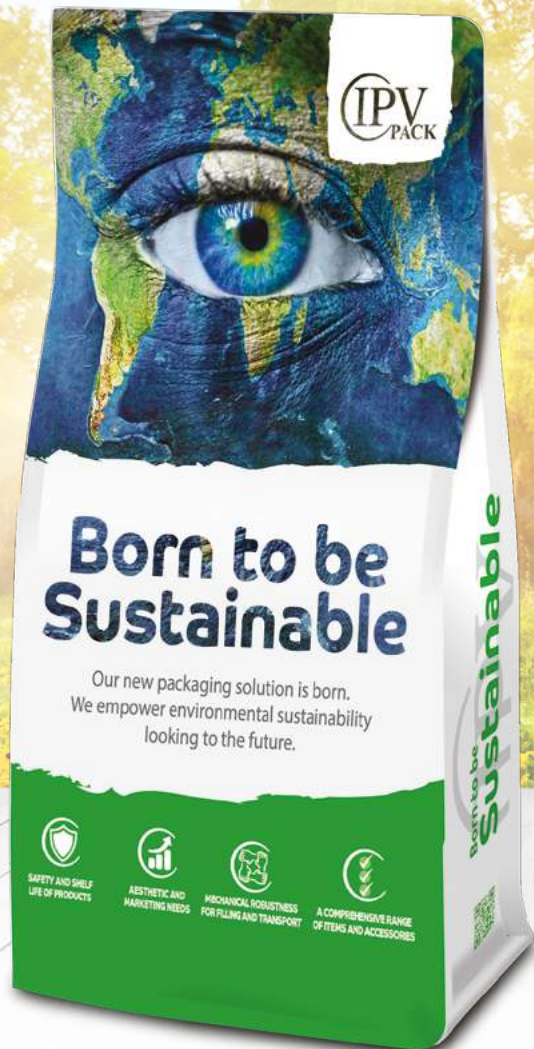
frustrating – even for a skilled designer. "Creativity is a process. Sometimes your team delivers a packaging concept that is 100% on point, and the client simply doesn't like it. Creativity is so subjective. At the end of the day, you want to deliver a design you and your client believe in, and one that you know will sell," says Beckie.

She highlights the fact that designers should keep their eyes open every time they visit their local supermarket, because the human food aisles are where the next game-changing pet packaging concepts will be born.

When asked about what makes great packaging, Beckie's answer is simple: "Clean, simple graphics and clear, relevant messaging are concepts that will continue to reign when you're building consumer packaged goods brands." ♦



David Palacios Rubio
Editorial Manager
GlobalPETS



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Global pet industry

Diversification, positivity and engagement are set to be drivers of e-commerce strategy in 2022 within the pet industry. We dive into the details. Will live video shopping soon be adopted in Western countries? And don't miss out on our quick guide for partnering with petfluencers to increase visibility and online sales.

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The sales potential of live streaming

Pet product companies are scrambling to tap into a new and booming trend in Asia that is slowly expanding to Western countries.



Behind a colorful pyramid of Purina pet food cans and boxes, a young woman in a white shirt strokes a cat's head and talks to the camera for a live streaming channel on shopping platform Taobao.

On another platform, Proplan, a black-haired male avatar with blue eyes, introduces a range of cat food products and tries to convince viewers to subscribe and obtain discount vouchers for their next purchase.

Looking for authenticity

These are snapshots of a trend rooted in China's booming pet product market, where more and more pet companies are live streaming shopping sessions. These are particularly popular on special days such as Spring Festival or Valentine's Day. They include a straightforward product introduction and an interactive Q&A where pet parents can ask if products are suitable for their furry friends and get tips on how to take better care of their pets. Hosts also send out cash or exclusive discount vouchers to grow the channel's following and incentivize pet parents to buy products.

According to Steffi Noel, project leader at Chinese market research firm Daxue Consulting, consumers are increasingly looking for a higher level of authenticity in pet products. "Live streaming is satisfying this need. As anchors and guests test the products live, in normal conditions, everyone can see how something works and the expressions on the guests' faces," she says in a conversation with PETS International.

Opportunities for all retailers

The pandemic has driven a surge in live streaming tools from companies that want to advertise and sell products.

A study by iResearch Global revealed that live streaming e-commerce users in China reached 388 million in 2021. That's about 40% of the country's online population, with 2 in 3 users watching the sessions and purchasing products.

Data from an online shopping platform concluded that Royal Canin topped the chart for live streaming sales in its category on the Taobao marketplace. The brand also accounted for the largest market share on the popular Chinese sales platform JD.com, followed by Orijen and Myfoodie.

Experts believe that live streaming opens up a field of possibilities for pet brands, to boost sales while presenting themselves as animal experts. Small pet retailers are also trying to implement live shopping tools to sell their accessories and food. "For them, it is increasing visibility among a local audience," Steffi Noel adds.

More than just pet food

The conclusion of the iResearch Global study was that 43% of pet owners in China purchased food online last year, and more than 9 out of 10 prioritize those products that have more nutritional value for their pets.

NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR CAT LITTER

40% of the Chinese (online) population uses live streaming e-commerce. 2 in 3 viewers purchase products.

Pet owners are getting younger, which means there's also an increasing demand for products other than food on live video shopping platforms.

"High-tech pet accessories are also a top-selling category, as they need to be explained in more detail. For instance, products like wearable tracking devices that monitor your pet's health and activity during the day, self-cleaning litter boxes and pet food dispensers," Steffi Noel explains.

And the rest of the world?

Although the live video shopping culture has long been popular in Asia, marketing experts believe that the trend will eventually be picked up on in the west.

In the US, major pet supplies retailer Petco joined the live streaming sales league in April last year, selling its private labels Youly and Reddy in a Facebook Live session hosted by an influencer. The company realized that many of their consumers want to shop via social feeds, whenever and however they want, and they forecast this new way of shopping will be 'a key channel to leverage going forward'. Other retailers such as Walmart, Bloomingdale and Nordstrom are also testing the new format for selling their products.

The key players, of course, are the new generation of pet parents, who are more eager to inform themselves through social media channels. But the main question is: will retailers in western countries be happy to invest in a whole new infrastructure that could potentially have an impact on traditional physical retailing? ♦



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E-commerce trends to watch in 2022



The growth in online sales and the pandemic's impact on purchasing behavior mark the year ahead for pet industry businesses.

Sitting in his office in the London area, with his Cockapoo sleeping quietly nearby, Umut İlhan describes how the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a boom for his online pet subscription box service. "We've had 11 times growth since the pandemic began," he says.

Themed treats and toys

Umut İlhan is co-founder of WufWuf, a company that provides pet parents with monthly themed boxes of treats and toys. They are currently a 'big family' of over 10,000 dogs from all over Europe.

Starting out in digital marketing in his native Turkey, İlhan then went to work in the pet industry. Now, he has combined that experience in digital marketing and e-commerce with his love for animals to become one of the market leaders in pet subscription boxes in the UK.

Older consumers online

The pandemic has completely changed the way of doing things – for all pet companies operating in the online channel. For example, WufWuf has seen a trend in older consumers buying online. Prior to the pandemic, only 1% of its customers were over 65 years old. Now it is almost 10%.

More tender loving pet care

In addition to the popularization of online shopping at all ages, industry insiders also expect that in 2022 pet parents will invest more in premium products.

Marketing and e-commerce specialist Chloë Thomas agrees that the way people care about their pets will be key to successful e-commerce this year.

"If I was advising a pet brand on their marketing strategy for 2022, I'd recommend they leverage the love and attention humans give to their pets as much as possible, in every area of their business."

"We want to feed them with the best foods. We want them to play with the best toys," adds Umut İlhan from WufWuf.

Fierce competition

The increase in online sales has badly affected a lot of other channels, but those who thought e-commerce would decline in 2022 will most likely be wrong. Umut İlhan: "It will never go back. It will always scale up, because now people have learned how easy it is to order online."

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- Improve **quality of life** in the workplace.
- Conduct an annual **employee satisfaction** survey.
- Develop skills through our multi-year **training plan**.



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- Review our **carbon footprint** every 4 years.

According to a recent report by e-commerce giant Shopify, the market is expected to grow by almost \$11 trillion (€9.7T) between 2021 and 2025. And while many more people have begun buying online, a lot more businesses have begun selling online. So competition in e-commerce is stronger than ever.

Diversification

Tougher privacy laws in several countries around the world are resulting in online companies blocking third-party cookies. This means that businesses will need to adapt the way they attract customers online, and fill the void with data they collect from their own customers. That's why experts are advising companies in the pet sector to diversify their marketing activities. "Relying on just one channel to deliver your growth has always been a terrible idea – in 2022 it's foolhardy," says Chloë Thomas.

Telling your story

The way consumers are buying is also different, and 2022 is expected to see a shift in messaging from pure sales to talking about a company's story and mission. "Consumers want an emotional connection with the brands they're buying, so you need to build trust and a shared understanding right from the start of the buying cycle," Chloë Thomas explains.

Building community

Companies are likely to build more of a community and loyalty around their brands. Chloë Thomas' advice to businesses within the pet industry is to create a community like a Facebook group where customers "can feel part of something". She adds: "Gather lots of user-generated content from your customers – video reviews, photos, product reviews – and use it across all marketing channels, in advertising too."

2022 is definitely the year to create a sense of exclusivity around the community. Starting a VIP or ambassador program can be a good option for encouraging customers to promote the brand among people they know.

Following this line, Shopify advises businesses to define the community they set up and create a feeling of exclusivity by 'gating' it. "You might do this as part of a loyalty program, a referral program or an affiliate



program. The key thing is to encourage your customers to shout about your business," says Chloë Thomas.

E-commerce experts agree that while an open community can get you in front of a wider audience, creating 'members only' content or spaces can be a strong incentive for fans who don't want to miss out on anything.

Omnichannel shows the way forward

Omnichannel sales are also set to be a 2022 trend for most of the companies operating in the pet industry. At a conference last November, Petco's Chief Digital and Innovation Officer Darren MacDonald provided a glimpse of the retail giant's e-commerce strategy for the coming period and omnichannel sales were a big part of it.

Instead of relying on centralized distribution centers to fill their e-commerce orders, 80% of the orders are assembled at one of their stores and then delivered by curbside pick-up or through a deal with DoorDash.

"Buy online, pick up in-store (BOPIS) has been on fire for us," he said. "It continues to grow. It is the most profitable transaction that we have and we continue to lean in to improving that customer experience."

MacDonald said Petco is also working on increasing the value of the average online order and has launched its AdWorks initiative to allow vendors to promote their products through sponsored listings, searches or banners. ♦



Elizabeth Thompson
PETS International Contributor

Cross-border e-commerce in China: opportunities and challenges

The Asian economy has been an attractive place for foreign consumer brands in past decades. Why do some succeed and others struggle, while the rest – unable to determine a way in – look on wistfully?



Virtually all major global consumer brands see China as a major source of growth in the future. Pet care brands should be no different.

Challenges

While market dynamics make China attractive, there are challenges to entry. For example, tight import regulations often prevent brands from entering and winning in the market. Product formulas must comply with stringent ingredient standards, and production facilities must pass Chinese Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards and be officially registered.

Even products with compliant formulas produced at approved factories require a lengthy and expensive approval process. Many brands have explored traditional import and decided that regulations posed insurmountable challenges. Or that the process was simply too costly.

If traditional import were the sole option, only the most patient and well-capitalized brands could go into other markets. Fortunately, there are alternatives.

Alternative options

In the mid-2010s, a new form of e-commerce developed in China. Strong demand for foreign-made products in highly regulated categories (such as health and beauty) prompted major e-commerce companies like Alibaba and JD.com to establish online marketplaces exclusively selling foreign brands.

Working with local and central governments, these e-commerce giants staged products outside China (or in bonded warehouses within free trade zones) and shipped them directly to Chinese consumers. The government levied a nominal VAT on these transactions, and imposed some import limitations, but the goods were generally exempt from stringent import regulations.

This new model – cross-border e-commerce – has become an enormous sales channel and, according to data from 100EC.CN, 140 million shoppers accounted for over \$60 billion (€54B) in retail sales in 2020. In recent years, the market has grown at least 25% annually and a double-digit CAGR is expected through the rest of the decade.

How to enter the market: 4 steps

When done thoughtfully, cross-border e-commerce is a strategic and lucrative way to pursue entry into China.

Step 1: Review the market and assess regulations specific to your products

For brands that want to enter China for the first time, a market review analyzes the market potential, competitive landscape and relevant regulations. Whether brands can enter the market with a full complement of products depends on the results of this analysis. Most start with a few high-demand SKUs, while others reformulate products specifically for the Chinese market.

Chinese pet market

Online retail accounted for over 57% of pet food sales in China in 2020, according to recent Statista data. Some estimate that the global Chinese pet market will reach RMB472.3 billion (\$74.2B / €47.4B) by 2023, an 800% rise compared to 2013.

Step 2: Test the market and develop brand positioning

In China, all brands need to position themselves differently to their home market. There are various ways to run initial in-market tests to determine brand positioning, such as sending samples to local influencers for feedback or setting up a marketplace mini-store to test sales.

Step 3: Develop an entry strategy

A market entry plan must cover assortment, channel, supply chain and brand positioning strategies. While highly dependent on positioning, a premium pet care brand would include an initial phase of using top-tier e-commerce marketplaces to build online storefronts. Combined with smart social media management on

platforms like Red Book, strong brands can quickly build awareness and drive sales.

Step 4: Find partners and execute the plan

The right partners will guide a brand through the execution process. With traction in sales and consumer awareness comes the opportunity to expand quickly through distributors and additional e-commerce platforms. Sometimes, it's even possible to identify SKUs for traditional import. Sufficient sales data and knowledgeable partners allow you to confidently enter this challenging process.

Cross-border e-commerce is a fast and relatively inexpensive market entry strategy for brands new to China, and those wanting more control over their brand image and customer engagement. It is a proven method of serving pet parents in China that every North American or European brand should explore. ♦



Kennedy Horton

Founder of Neem Ventures & Faculty member at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
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The key elements of strong petfluencer marketing



How can you design marketing communications with petfluencers to benefit from reach, relevance, resonance and relationships?

Social media marketing is one of the most efficient and effective ways to connect with your target audience, build relationships and create brand awareness. But doing it well isn't easy. It takes a lot of hard work, careful planning and consistent execution to create a campaign that delivers real results.

Collaboration

Influencer marketing is a form of collaboration. A company works together with an influential person to promote its product, service or campaign. In today's digital world, social media content creators with a niche audience can offer brands significant added value. Influencers have committed groups of followers – a petfluencer is a pet on social media, or an influencer with a pet, who inspires people.

The numbers

In 2021, US and European pet industry media spending was around €2 billion (\$2.2B), but only 5-8% was used for social media marketing. Yet Statista and Nielsen research data shows that up to 72% of customers decided to buy a product or service because of an influencer on Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. So the industry has to rethink its media spending, as the influencer market may well reach more than €60 billion (\$55B) in revenues this year.

Why go to influencers?

Why should the pet industry take a closer look at petfluencer marketing? Because consumers don't really like ads, with 76% of them using ad blocker technology. But consumers do trust people and, as Nielsen discovered, 92% trust people rather than brands! So, a brand is no longer what a company tells the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is!

What can go wrong when brands try petfluencer marketing?

- You didn't know much about social media campaigns beforehand
- You tried working with some petfluencers but they didn't deliver
- The campaign wasn't briefed, monitored or reported properly
- You sent your products to petfluencers – no idea what happened after that!
- There was no actual budget, or you just lost money doing it
- You spent a massive amount of time collecting and calculating insights, screenshots, numbers, even though spreadsheet analysis isn't really your thing

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The right choices

To create a successful campaign, while avoiding mistakes, brands should focus on a number of key facts. A social media campaign always needs to be properly structured; from idea to storyboard, chosen channels, campaign type, do's and don'ts, campaign brief, petfluencer recruitment, budget, monitoring and final reporting. And the petfluencer must really match the product, service or brand, target group and campaign goal. There are several types of petfluencers, from rising (0–1,000 followers) to micro (10–50 thousand followers) to macro (500 thousand – 1 million followers) and mega (+1 million) to VIP. Depending on the number of followers, several metrics also need to be checked:

- **Level of trust.** Opinions evoke different degrees of credibility and confidence from friends and followers, which are higher the less followers a petfluencer has
- **Brand relevance.** Connection with a brand, product and brand-relevant topics, which is higher the less followers a petfluencer has
- **Degree of volume.** Depends on different numbers and petfluencer types regarding different content, which is higher the less followers a petfluencer has
- **Level of loyalty.** Relationship with a brand compared to rising, micro, macro and mega influencers, which is higher the less followers a petfluencer has
- **Level of influence.** Influence over the petfluencer's network of followers, which is higher the less followers a petfluencer has
- **Reach of followers.** 0-1 million+, which is higher the more followers the petfluencer has

All this means that if your brand is aiming for conversions, or anything other than reach, you should go with smaller petfluencer accounts. If you want to reach a lot of people, it's better to go for the big accounts with lots of followers.

Petfluencer campaign workflow

- Determine KPIs, budget, target, etc.
- Determine influencer marketing channels
- Determine publishing schedule
- Match petfluencers
- Briefing
- Negotiate rates and contracts
- Review content and publish
- Reporting and analysis

Key takeaways

Social media marketing with petfluencers works. It combines great storytellers with brands that are looking for ways to connect and to leave a positive, lasting impression among audiences and future customers. The goal of petfluencer marketing is to stand out from the crowd of branded content, and authentically connect with audiences. So ...

Obsess over your audience. The more you know about your audience, the better for the campaign. And the better the petfluencer followers match with your customer base, the better the results.

Rely on word of mouth. Whether this means a handful of micro-petfluencers or a celebrity-level petfluencer – you need to make sure the campaign content is so interesting that it creates a social discussion and word of mouth.

Think long term. With your brand you should think long term. A good idea is an always-on strategy or brand ambassador, so your brand gets the love it deserves.

Repeat successful tactics. If you have worked successfully with creators, then it's best to use these tactics for your future campaigns. Check reporting to measure the success of current and ongoing campaigns and optimize successful points.

Don't be afraid to try something new. Brands should have fun with petfluencer marketing. Half of the fun comes from directly working with petfluencers who connect with target audiences in new and exciting ways. People enjoy seeing brands in new and exciting ways. So, it would be cool to create content that will showcase your brand outside the norm.

Create trust above all. Existing brands have a preceding reputation. You need to make sure the petfluencer you work with, and the content they create, appeals to audiences and enhances your brand's trustworthy and authentic reputation. ♦



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Pet health priorities are evolving



The pandemic has placed health at the forefront of consumers' minds, with pet owners increasingly focusing on their pets' health after spending more time bonding with them.

Health claims on global food launches have increased markedly over the past decade and will accelerate in the next 2 years. With increased consumer demand for food and drink that supports pet health, many pet owners are prepared to pay a premium for such benefits. And since pet food trends are increasingly mirroring human food trends, pet health trends will follow suit as well, which will likely benefit the supplements market.

The future of supplements

Supplements are becoming more popular among pet parents. In China, a third of them (32%) very often use these products for their cats and dogs, and 56% do it occasionally. In the UK, 35% of pet owners agree that supplements are the most efficient way of delivering functional benefits to pets. And 43% of Brazilian pet owners who are willing to invest in therapies to improve the pet's well-being have spent more on vitamins and supplements.

The addition of nutrients via supplements, the use of food to aid mental health, and a renewed focus on the gut-brain axis, are hot topics in human food that will translate to pet food and supplements in the coming years.

Functional pet drink innovation

Beverages for pets take a novel format of supplements to another level. Functional drinks are easier for pets to swallow than solid supplements and quicker to digest than solid food. Launches like these do have promise: in 2021, pet-friendly drinks appealed to nearly half of UK pet food buyers, 21% more than in 2018.

Despite the huge rise in interest, pet drink launches are rare. Gimmicky launches, such as beer for dogs, enable pet owners to share experiences with their pets, but emerging functional drink innovation presents an exciting and scalable opportunity. For example, salmon drink for cats, produced by Dutch company Voskes, claims to be a good solution toward strong bones and joints. Water supplements also persuade pets to drink water, which some refuse for numerous reasons.

Interest in immunity enhancement

There is a world of opportunities for pet food and supplements with immunity improvement benefits. Since the pandemic, consumers are more aware of the importance of immunity, not only for themselves but also for their pets. As a result, pet food and supplements with immunity-enhancing benefits generate interest among pet owners.

Manufacturers can cater to consumer demand more effectively with fortified nutrients which are closely associated with improved immunity. For example, Goat Milk Formula from Nourse contains whole goat milk powder. That offers nutrients such as protein and fat to help dogs and cats grow, and taurine to enhance their immunity.

Selling to wealthy pet owners in China

Demand among Chinese pet owners for various nutritional functions suggests marketing opportunities for pet supplements, especially to sell to consumers with a high personal income who live in big cities.

There are already a number of vitamins targeting specific areas. Pet Vitamins Tablets are said to be rich in vitamins to meet daily nutritional needs, increase appetite and nourish hair. Meanwhile, PA5051 Probiotic Supplement for Cats is formulated with probiotics and glutamine, which aids healthy gastrointestinal mucosa and helps maintain normal intestinal functions. Chondroitin Soft Granules for Dogs is a nutritional supplement that is said to protect and relieve joints, repair cartilage tissue and ease hip joint problems.

A different take for those feline friends...

Cat food innovation from dual-species premium brands tends to focus primarily on health and wellness, with products that address cats' specific nutritional needs. Whilst many pet owners are prioritizing supplements, Orijen Guardian 8 Formula addresses 8 common cat ailments with a formulation that features fresh and raw whole prey ingredients (meat, organs, bone) and fewer supplements. ♦



Amanda Lintott
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The pet industry meets face-to-face again at Interzoo

Pet professionals from around the world will be gathering in the German city of Nuremberg from 24 to 27 May for Interzoo 2022.

This is the first time that the world's leading international trade fair for the pet supplies industry is taking place since 2018. Interzoo organizer WZF (Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft Zoologischer Fachbetriebe) will welcome around 1,300 exhibitors from 60 countries for this edition.

While there will be strong participation from companies located in the host country, around 80% of exhibitors will come from abroad. Italy, the UK, the US, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, France, Spain and Poland are among the countries most represented. The organizer expects the proportions to be similar to past editions.

Making it safe and successful

"We are doing everything to ensure Interzoo is appealing, safe and successful for everyone taking part," explains WZF's CEO Gordon Bonnet. "I firmly believe it will all work out. Our health and safety measures will enable in-person, face-to-face conversations with industry colleagues, beneficial new business contacts, experiences using all our senses, the pleasure of seeing new and old faces, and discovering trends and inspiration for your own business."

Hygiene guidelines

The organizer has developed a set of hygiene guidelines together with NürnbergMesse in cooperation with the state of Bavaria and local health authorities.

"It covers the entire exhibition center, from the amply planned, contactless access strategy to the ultra-modern ventilation systems in our halls and the wide range of hygiene measures such as dispenser systems and ongoing disinfection throughout the venue. That creates a safe environment for all our exhibitors and visitors," says Heinz Priessmann, Head of Security and Logistics Management at NürnbergMesse, the venue where the event will take place.

Event app

Even though the focus of Interzoo 2022 will be face-to-face, WZF has launched an app to facilitate networking among visitors and exhibitors. For example, attendees will be able to exchange details just by scanning the QR code printed on the accreditation badge. The app will also provide all visitors with a mobile list of exhibitors, including their booth positions, as well as a detailed program for the event. ♦



Diving into the world of private labels

Pet products manufactured by companies for sale under a retailer's own label provide similar quality to the high-profile branded products, but at a lower price – and that is appealing to many pet parents worldwide.

Today's reality is that pet parents are increasingly looking for high-quality products at a competitive price. This is having a positive impact on the private label segment, which has shown steady and consistent growth recently. As a result, more manufacturing companies are joining the private label business.

Advantages of store brands

For retailers and manufacturers, the so-called 'store brand' products combine the advantage of speed to market with control over formulation and production. "Meanwhile, consumers can select from a wide variety of products when comparison shopping or experimenting with new pet treats and foods," points out Amy McCarthy, Vice President for Pet Solutions at ADM Animal Nutrition. In 2021 the company, which is headquartered in Chicago, US, acquired a group of private label companies – PetDine, Pedigree Ovens, The Pound Bakery and NutraDine – providing retailers with access to a "vast portfolio, extensive technical expertise and formulation know-how".

Problem-solver products

Hofman Animal Care, a distributor of animal supplies in Europe, offers retail companies in the industry support in launching their own private label concepts, from the creation of the product to the quality control and the

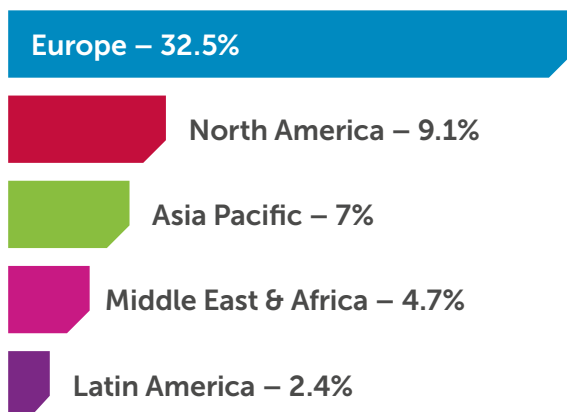
text that appears on the packaging. The Dutch-based company has so far produced 200 products under private label, mainly supplements, care products and a small percentage of food. The firm has seen a rise in interest for non-food private label products as retailers in the pet industry want to create so-called 'problem-solver' products with the aim of increasing customer loyalty and brand awareness.

Taking control of the whole product strategy

One of the main reasons that stores, retail chains and wholesalers decide to start their own brand is because of the popularization of these products in the online channel. "Own brands enable them to control the market price and create their own strategy," says a spokesperson from Hofman Animal Care.

French multinational Imerys, which owns mineral resources and production facilities in Europe, has a portfolio of more than 15 different cat litter products, including mineral-based clumping and non-clumping grades as well as a wide range of organic solutions. As a result of the company's strategic decision to focus on private labels, annual sales growth has stood at around 4% for the last 3 years and more than 60% of its cat litter sales now come from this segment, according to the company.

What percentage of pet food is sold under private label?



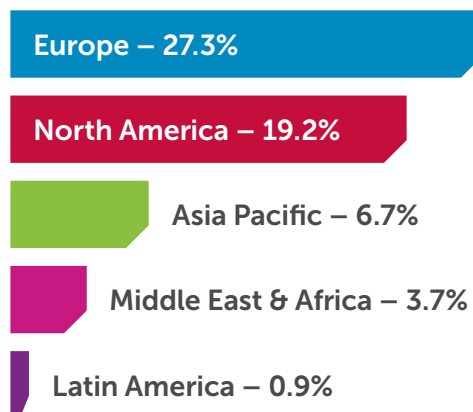
Imerys is also extending its operational footprint to accommodate the needs of customers in new countries. "This strategic step will allow us to strengthen our presence in the private-label cat litter market," states Thierry Casteran, Filtration & Life Sciences Market Vice-President at Imerys.

The challenges ahead

The global issues impacting the logistics and supply chain, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19



What percentage of pet products are sold under private label?



Source: Euromonitor International, 2020

pandemic, are definitely affecting private labels in nearly all industries. But in addition to these common problems, the pet segment is also facing some specific challenges. One of them is related to consumer packaging and the task of presenting a product that has an on-shelf impact and appeals to the buyer. "Retailers can be quite demanding and manufacturers can't always meet those demands, or they might need to invest to do so," continues Casteran. He admits that this is the reason why branded products tend to have more sophisticated packaging. On the other hand, private labels also face strong competition from dominant and highly differentiated major brands. "Private labels need innovation and marketing support, and only a strong private label manufacturer can offer this," he adds.

Visibility and space

The visibility of private labels is an added challenge for manufacturers. Insiders agree that the fact that larger retailers offer a wide range of private label products for extra visibility and space versus other brands creates operational and supply chain complexity. Hofman Animal Care states: "People need to realize this is the moment to invest in their company instead of building and subsequently losing business."

Whether for themselves, for their families or for their pets, consumers are interested in products that deliver the options they seek at a reasonable price point – and this is precisely where private labels can play a critical role.

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However, the decision to move into private label production is not always easy for manufacturers, plus the transition usually takes some time because they need to invest time, money and effort in designing a product that is going to be a success.

Moreover, national regulations covering a wide range of issues – from ingredients to packaging – can represent an extra burden for some companies. Quality departments play an important part in checking the current laws and making sure that the end products comply with all the applicable standards.

The future is bright

The store-brand category seems popular among pet parents. Euromonitor forecasts that the market share for private-label dog and cat foods and treats already stands at 9.5% in the US. "As pet humanization is expected to increase, private labels can cash in on the trend to offer more innovative and premium products that match international brands," comments Casteran.

In addition, the increase of the e-commerce retailing channel is making it easier to develop private label products for sale online. Hofman Animal Care sees a bright future and expects to double its number of references in the next 1-2 years. The same applies to ADM, which based on its own research concludes that functional treats for dogs are expected to grow at annual rates of 12% or higher by 2026.

"We see opportunities for continued growth in the private label space for innovative pet foods and treats that meet evolving consumer demands, such as more natural and sustainable ingredients, and functional solutions for proactive health and wellness," concludes McCarthy. ♦



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The booming business of luxury for pets

Companies from various sectors are targeting pet parents who are looking for high-end products and services for their furry friends.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a critical change in buying behavior. Among other things, it boosted the consumption of products within the premium segment, both for people and their pets. In a bid to take advantage of the rising number of pet owners around the world, companies are trying to seduce a new audience of consumers who do not mind spending more money to provide the highest level of comfort to their pets.

Regional differences

Although there is no clear pattern so far, industry insiders believe that the most significant growth in interest in this specific segment is currently occurring among pet parents in the US, the UK and the Asia-Pacific region. Recent data from MoneySuperMarket shows that pet owners in the UK spend almost £500 (€592 / \$654) per year on luxury items for their pets, especially treats and toys. In addition, more than 7 out of 10 are willing to spend more on luxuries for their animals than for themselves.

Designer brands

It is almost impossible to find an international designer brand without a product line dedicated to the household's furry friends.

One of the most popular ones is Louis Vuitton, which presents a selection of must-have accessories for pet

owners who want to pamper their animals. One of the most well-known products is the stylish dog carrier bag, but the brand also has exclusively designed pet collars and soft blankets. Likewise, Italian designer Prada offers a wide range of accessories for animals. These include a crystal-studded satin pet collar and various models of raincoats with hoods made of nylon – one of the brand's most characteristic fabrics.

In 2021, as part of its home collection, Versace presented a new line of plush pet beds trimmed with golden Barocco accents, referencing the iconic Versace bathrobes. The brand also sells collars, leashes and harnesses adorned with golden Medusa medallions.

Meanwhile, earlier this year, French brand Hermès introduced 2 new luxury products to its portfolio. One of them is a portable cavaletti dog house inspired by equestrian showgrounds. The other is a reinvented dog tote made of lightweight canvas fabric. 'Designed for convenient everyday use, it also features a leather name tag and a metal plate ready to receive the dog's name,' states the product description.

Zara Home has also recently launched a collection for dogs, including clothes, accessories, toys and even customizable beds.

Pet-friendly accommodation

As traveling with animals is becoming the new normal, hotel chains around the world are joining the trend by extending an especially warm welcome to guests' pets. According to Matt Schuyler, Chief Brand Officer for Hilton, travelers are nowadays looking for accommodation that is '100% pet-friendly' instead of simply 'pet tolerant'. Canopy, one of the hotel chain's brands, recently launched the 'Paws in the Neighborhood' program. This initiative includes access to a dog bed, food, water bowls, treats and a guide to pet-friendly activities in the vicinity.

In a similar context, a few months ago Mars Petcare and Hilton embarked on a partnership to set new standards and consolidate pet-friendly traveling. The agreement covers 100% of Homewood Suites by Hilton and Home2Suites by Hilton properties across the US and Canada. Pet parents can pay a \$50 (€45) fee to gain access to the Mars Petcare digital service. As a first of its kind for the travel industry, it provides access to experts on pet health, wellness and behavioral issues to answer any questions that may arise during the trip. According to Ikdeep Singh, Regional President at Mars Petcare North America, this service addresses "a common pain point" for pet parents.

Driving in comfort and style

Just a few months ago, car manufacturer Nissan launched a new range of products called Dog Pack, including a suite of new accessories and merchandise for its crossovers and SUVs to ensure that owners' four-legged friends feel comfortable during road journeys. The range, which is currently available for customers in Australia, includes a rear protection tray or mat, a reflective boot-lip protector, a four-piece dog travel set – comprising an easy-store bowl, a lead, a waste-bag holder and a sealable food bag – as well as an over-seat cargo-area organizer and an all-terrain dog bed. Despite it still being early days since the launch, the company states that customers have received this new service "very well". Another Japanese manufacturer, Honda, introduced a range of dog-related car accessories in 2021, including an innovative dog carrier that fits in the seat.

Luxury food and drinks

Manufacturers have been working on the premiumization of pet food for a few years now, and



the market is slowly seeing the appearance of new pet food products that resemble existing luxury goods for human consumption.

The London Fine Foods Group, a supplier to Michelin-star restaurants in the UK and Ireland, has created caviar especially designed for canine consumption. "Dogviar is a fun and innovative complementary pet food for puppies and dogs. It is a luxury sturgeon caviar pet treat containing 4% pure caviar oil," explains Director Jemima Benning to PETS International. The product is rich in omega-3, 6 and 9 and it is presented to dog owners as an additional sustainable by-product from the sturgeon roe and placenta. "Pure caviar oil is used in Dogviar as opposed to traditional caviar," adds Benning. The product has already attracted the interest of some individuals on social media and the company expects to establish more business-to-business sales later this year.

Meanwhile, in the US, PetWineShop provides liquid supplements and beverages for pets. Among the most popular items are the cat and dog 'wines'; the cat wines are liquid catnip products, while the 2 flagship dog wines 'ZinfanTail' and 'Chardognay' contain 100% Alaskan fish oil and glucosamine for bone health. "We are in the process of releasing several other combinations that will help our furry friends become more hydrated in the classiest fashion possible," comments founder Brandon Zavala. The products are mainly sold in pet stores and online and the company expects to achieve \$400,000 (€364,950) in revenue in 2022. ♦



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90 years of passion for pets

How a search for quality bird food ended up in an internationally operating specialist supplier of food and more for birds, fish and farm animals.

No less than 90 years ago, a Belgian bird lover – the founder of the company – was looking for bird food that would keep the birds in his menagerie in prime condition. Not finding the quality he wanted, he decided to make the bird food himself. Word soon spread amongst his acquaintances who turned to him for quality food.

Kinlys Group was born and over the years the company has grown to become a specialist in food and non-food products for birds, wild birds, small animals, farmyard animals and fish. With the same drive today for quality as they had 90 years ago.

Guaranteed quality – highly transparent production and sourcing

Kinlys Group wants full control over the quality of the food mixtures. That's why the company strongly believes in making their food products for domestic animals

in-house. The products are sold under different company brands, including Benelux, Primus, Aqua Ki, Benelux Nature and Noah's Farmyard, as well as numerous private labels.

Besides food mixtures, the company also specializes in non-food accessories. In addition, a number of exclusive brands for cats and dogs complete the product catalog. The quality of these products is guaranteed by a stringent selection of collaborating companies from around the world.

International sales network

Although Belgium is Kinlys Group's prime market, they also serve European chain stores, as well as independent stores. In addition, their products are sold in more than 70 countries worldwide through trade representatives. To keep up with both current demand and the substantial

growth of the company, Kinlys Group is building a new food production facility and significantly expanding their logistics hub, with a doubling of the pallet capacity and the implementation of warehouse management software.

The new food production site will mean a tripling of the current production volume. A state-of-the-art design, the facility's packaging department will be fully automated. It will also enable the deployment of the most trending solutions in sustainable packaging.

All these investments ensure that Kinlys Group is ready to meet future demands, as regards both efficiency and sustainability. ♦

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