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Pet Age



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Publisher's Letter



To New Beginnings

Ready for new content, challenges and conversations in 2016.

I am so happy to be named Executive Publisher of Pet Age, the leading media brand in the retail pet industry.

My career has included managing media brands in financial services, pharmaceuticals, transportation, human resources and more. This dynamic experience lends itself well to Pet Age. When I think of independent retailers contemplating insurance, banking and payroll services, my experience in financial services allows me to join the conversation. I am confident that the same is true for transportation, pharmaceuticals, human resources and general business operations.

Of course, I'm not all business. I'm a pet lover and my family shares our home with two lovely rescued cats. I'm looking forward to working in an industry that provides such joyful, nurturing experiences to so many people and their companion animals.

Pet Age is in its forty-fourth year of continually providing meaningful information for retail pet supply outlets, manufacturers and wholesalers. It is our goal to continue to do that and improve as we go along. I will incorporate some of the lessons learned from past success, where applicable, with the help of an incredible staff. It is a great honor to work with a team of the most passionate writers and marketing and sales professionals this great industry has to offer.

In my short time working in the pet industry so far, one of the pressing issues I've noticed is the clash between brick-and-mortar and online retailers. On the surface, online stores have serious advantages in convenience and often in price. Some have large warehouses and can offer a huge range of products.

Is there a place for the independent pet store in the world of Amazon? Absolutely.

According to American Pet Products Association, consumers will spend more than \$60 billion on their pets this year. That's an increase of \$2.6 billion over 2014. How much of that money will be spent online is unclear. In my experience, however, the excellent customer service and warm feeling a person gets as a patron of an independent pet store cannot be matched by the click of a mouse.

I'll use my time at Pet Age to help bring independent retailers the ideas and information they need to get more customers inside their stores.

I encourage you to contact me to discuss Pet Age and the industry at any time. I'm excited to be starting the New Year in a new position in an industry that is so full of passion and enthusiasm.

All the Best,
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Pet Age



Editor's Letter



What's Next?

Welcoming fresh faces at Pet Age and celebrating young pet professionals.

The end of 2015 has brought on some changes in the Pet Age family. For one – as the previous page indicates – we have a new executive publisher, Allen Basis. So far, I've enjoyed the time I've been working with Allen. He's got some great ideas for Pet Age, especially regarding ways to make this magazine more responsive to readers and advertisers. I'm looking forward to working with him to make Pet Age even better than it already is.

The second change is the arrival of our new assistant editor, Nicole Gifford. She comes to us from Rutgers University's class of 2015. She's been doing wonders on our social media and her enthusiasm has been infectious. I'm thrilled to have her on the Pet Age team. Remember to follow us on Twitter and Instagram and to like us on Facebook to keep up with both Pet Age and the industry as a whole, as well as to hear more from Nicole and me.

In this issue we honor the winners of our second Forty Under 40 Awards. Forty Under 40 gives us a chance to acknowledge the really impressive younger people in this pet world –

both those working for companies and those working for nonprofits and other organizations. I really enjoyed reading about these up-and-comers of the pet industry. I hope you find their stories inspiring too. The list of winners is full of individuals of great talent and accomplishment. If these 40 young leaders are any indication, the future of the pet industry is in good hands.

As we move into the New Year, I'm excited to be working with Allen, Nicole and the rest of the Pet Age staff to bring readers content that makes your businesses (and, therefore, your lives) better. We are planning some new things for 2016 that we think will make Pet Age an even more important source of timely, practical news and information for the pet industry.

Whichever of the winter holidays you and your loved ones celebrate, I hope they are happy and healthy! See you next year!

Tom Mazorlig
Editor

tomm@petage.com

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Third NYC Re-Tails & Sales Pet Expo Held Oct. 13

By Pet Age Magazine Staff

The third annual NYC Re-Tails & Sales Expo was held on October 13 at the Hotel Pennsylvania in Manhattan. The boutique trade show featured vendors of made in the USA products available to pet retailers.

The expo started with a performance of the “Star Spangled Banner” by Megan Cooper, followed by short remarks by show sponsors: Tom Mazorlig from Pet Age Magazine and Dennis Turano from Maximum Computer Systems. NBC correspondent and award-winning animal advocate and author Jill Rappaport cut the ribbon and the expo officially opened.

The Re-tails & Sales Expo was presented by American Pet Professionals, LLC and Whitegate PR. It offers retailers the opportunity to meet pet product manufacturers and see a variety of American-made pet products.

“It’s our goal to help shine a light on companies who go above and beyond to create quality products that are safe and healthy for our pets,” said Nancy Hassel, founder and president of American Pet Professionals.

There were over 200 attendees, most of whom were retailers, but there were also pet bloggers, groomers and other pet professionals present. Many of them brought their four-legged friends. Pet celebrities, including Chloe Kardoggian



and Bocker Labradoodle, were also on hand.

Seventeen vendors exhibited their products for pets and pet lovers at the expo. Products ranged from premium pet food lines like Nulo and Canagan to pet toothpaste from Petsmile to a complete line of small animal products from Fetch...for Pets!

Participating vendors included: Auburn Leathercrafters; Nulo Pet Food; Smartcookee Company; Grandma Mae's; Scout & Zoe's; Doggables Treats; PMI Lint Rollers; Canagan Pet Foods, Fetch...for Pets!, Mackenzie Couture Accessories, Pet Party Printz, Puppy Hugger, Dazzling Paws Jewellery, Petsmile, and Pet Healthy Family.

Vendors were pleased with the event.

“This was the first NYC Re-Tail’s show we have attended after having heard about it a couple years ago,” said Alan Dungey, owner of Auburn Leathercrafters. “I was able to present my company and my products in a more relaxed atmosphere. I was able to spend time with each retailer getting to know them, their stores and their needs. The retailers were able to learn more about Auburn Leathercrafters and our products I also found that the re-

tailers who attended were ones who might not have travelled to the larger shows.”

“We were able to present our line to 30 or so retailers who we were able to spend a lot of time with in a relaxed environment, some of whom decided to bring our line in for the first time,” said Dungey.

“It was good connecting with retailers from the New York area to discuss our antler dog chews as well as our premium treats with them,” said Cynthia Dunstin Quirk, CEO of Scout & Zoe’s. “It was encouraging to gather several quality made in the USA products in one place and have the ability to meet with a variety of accounts. Certainly a win-win for everyone involved.”

“This was excellent exposure to key players in the industry,” said Eileen Patterson of Doggables Treats. “Our products got a lot of exposure to retailers. The event was a home run.”

“Each year, the NYC Re-tails & Sales Pet Expo gets bigger and better than the year before,” said Dana Humphrey, founder and president of Whitegate PR. “We are so pleased with the outcome of this year’s show!”

Pet Age was the media sponsor of this event.

Hill’s Pet Nutrition to Cut 44 Jobs

Hill’s Pet Nutrition, a company that produces pet food, has announced plans to cut 44 information technology jobs in its Topeka, Kan. facility.

The positions will be eliminated over the course of the next year. Hill’s informed employees that it will move some of the jobs to centers owned by Colgate-Palmolive

in New Jersey, Mexico City and India.

Hill’s spokeswoman Edisa Chacin said that employees may apply for other information technology jobs in the company.

Good Deeds

Urban Resource Institute and Nestlé Purina Unveil Dog Park in Domestic Violence Shelter

Urban Resource Institute (URI) and Nestlé Purina PetCare hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate opening the new Purina Pet Haven, Manhattan's first dog park in a domestic violence shelter.

The new dog park is located at Urban Women's Retreat (UWR), an emergency shelter that is part of the URIPALS (People and Animals Living Safely) program. URIPALS is the only program in New York City – and one of the few nationally – that allows survivors of domestic violence to live in shelter with their pets.

Purina funded the design and construction of the dog park, which will provide survivors of domestic violence and their pets with a safe and calming retreat while in the shelter.

As part of its support for the URIPALS program, Purina is also donating

dog food, cat food, dog treats and cat litter and working with URI to provide supplies for welcome kits for families bringing pets to Urban Women's Retreat.

"Through the URIPALS program we have witnessed first-hand how important it is for survivors to have their beloved pets by their side while they heal," said Nathaniel Fields, president and CEO of URI. "From early on in the URIPALS program, Purina has been committed to supporting survivors of domestic violence and their pets. We know that the new dog park will play an integral part in helping our clients heal, and for that we are extremely grateful to Purina."

To learn more about URIPALS and for tips on keeping the entire family safe in domestic violence situations, visit www.urinyc.org.

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Movers and Shakers

PIJAC Promotes New President and CEO

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) announced the promotion of executive vice president Mike Bober to the position of president and chief executive officer effective January 1, 2016.

Bober joined PIJAC as the vice president of government affairs in 2013 and has overseen the Council's legislative and regulatory efforts throughout his time with the Council.

Bober succeeds current president and CEO Ed Sayres, who will take on an advisory role with a focus on responsible breeding and companion animal care.

When making the announcement, PIJAC board chair Ken Oh described the transition as a natural progression.

"Ed Sayres has a tremendous breadth of knowledge when it comes to animal well-being that goes far beyond legislative and regulatory policy, and the industry will continue to benefit from that expertise," said Oh. "We at PIJAC brought Ed on board because he coupled that with proven organizational success which he provided to PIJAC at a critical time. With that taken care of, he can turn his attention to broader industry efforts."



Continued on p.13



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Outward Hound Acquires Petstages

Outward Hound, manufacturer and distributor of toys, games, supplies and feeders for pets, has acquired pet product company Petstages.

This is the third and largest acquisition for Outward Hound, further differentiating the company's product offerings while opening up new retail and specialty distribution channels.

"In Petstages we have found an exe-

cution-oriented, passionate culture of pet experts with impressive product offerings that strategically complement our own," said Outward Hound CEO Kyle Hansen. "We are excited to bring together our extraordinary teams so we can continue to create the most innovative pet products in the world."

Petstages has won several awards for innovation and business performance

and has developed products including the Dogwood Chew Stick, Orka chew toys and ENVIRONMENT scratchers.

"Providing products with purpose is the cornerstone of the Petstages philosophy," said Petstages president Torjus Lundevall. "This deal gives us the greater capacity and resources that we need to provide continuous innovation and develop new meaningful product solutions."

New Report Details Four Key Trends Driving U.S. Pet Supplies Market

In a new report entitled "Pet Supplies in the U.S., 10th Edition," market research publisher Packaged Facts identifies four key factors that may be responsible for influencing the growing pet supplies market during the rest of 2015 and beyond.

According to the report, the impact of the economy on pet spending may lead pet owners who have adapted to life in the "new normal" economy to see themselves as better off relative to previous years and become less cautious about spending.

Cost savings are a priority for pet

owners, but Packaged Facts found that the percentage of pet owners who feel that pet products are becoming too expensive dropped from 74 percent to 64 percent, indicating that a growing number of pet owners may be comfortable revisiting higher priced products.

Premiumization and natural pet products are trends that continue to be in strong play, driving increased sales of high-end pet products and justifying market-supported higher prices for pet health and wellness benefits.

The report also concludes that the

U.S.'s 77 million baby boomers are a major part of market growth as high-earning, big-spending consumers that have broken the historical pattern of becoming less attentive pet owners with age.

Valued at \$15 billion in 2014, non-food pet supplies are part of a much larger U.S. market for retail pet products and services, totaling almost five times this amount. The competitive allure of the pet supplies segment—which grew by 15 percent during the five-year 2010-2014 period—is as irresistible as ever to retail marketers.

Good Deeds

Continued from p.11

VCA Animal Hospitals Offers Free Board to Pets Affected by Texas Wildfires

Select VCA Animal hospitals in Central Texas are offering free boarding assistance for small animals, including dogs, cats, and birds, to families who have been impacted by the Bastrop County wildfires that have endangered hundreds of homes and forced families to evacuate.

"Our thoughts are with the many families in Central Texas who are being

impacted by the wildfires," said Art Antin, chief operating officer of VCA Animal Hospitals. "We are extending free boarding for family pets that have been displaced so families can feel confident their pets are safe and focus on their priorities during this critical time."

Boarding assistance at participating Central Texas VCA hospitals is based on space availability.

Pets should be current on vaccinations, but in case they are not, VCA vet-

erinarians will update vaccinations free of charge. VCA Hospitals will also offer a free health assessment exam for pets that have been evacuated or displaced as a result of the fires.

Pet owners are encouraged can contact the American Red Cross, VCA Tanglewood Animal Hospital, VCA Ben White Animal Hospital, or VCA Northwest Hills Animal Hospital for more information.

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Remarkabowl to Offer Licensed Sports Bowls

Remarkabowl will expand its product lines in late 2015 and 2016 by adding baseball and hockey themed pet bowls as well as NFL, NCAA, NBA, MLB and NHL team licensed bowls.

The expansion comes after reaching an agreement to become the pet bowl supplier for Hunter MFG. of Lexington, Ky., one of the world's largest manufacturers and licensees of team licensed merchandise.



Remarkabowl's Pet-Pro bowls were named "One of the Ten Coolest New Products of 2014" by the I Love Dogs site and named to the "2014 Doggie Christmas List of Must Haves" by Trusty Tails.

The Vancouver, Wash. based company, which began operations in 2014, distributes and manufactures sports themed merchandise for parties, kids and pets.

More Employers Allowing Pets in the Office

New research from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has revealed that the trend towards bringing pets to work is on the rise.

According to SHRM's study, approximately eight percent of employers allow workers to bring pets to the office, while only five percent permitted employees to in 2013.

SHRM also found that three percent of offices have a take your pet to work day.

The trend is more common in fields that employ younger people, such as tech firms.

"Employers are starting to realize that having a millennial bring ... a pet to work, you wind up getting a more focused employee, you get someone more comfortable at the office, and a person willing to work longer hours," APPA president and CEO Bob Vetere told NBC News.

Movers and Shakers

Continued from p.11

Gold Medalist Carly Patterson to Serve as Ambassador for Nulo Pet Food

Nulo Pet Food announced an ambassadorship with former gymnast and Olympic gold medalist, Carly Patterson, her sheepadoodle dog, Beauxgart, and sphynx cat, Jasper.

"Putting the right nutrition into my body is important to my performance in the gym, and I feel the same way when it comes to feeding my pets, Beauxgart and Jasper" said Patterson, who in 2004 became only the second

American gymnast at the time to ever win an Olympic gold medal in the women's all-around competition. "I'm very thankful to have found Nulo."

"We are so excited to have Carly Patterson, Beauxgart and Jasper as ambassadors," said Michael Landa, CEO of Nulo. "As a former world-class athlete, not only does Carly understand importance of nutrition in the quality of her life, but she's a passionate advocate in quality nutrition for her pets too."

Continued on p.16

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Petfood & Animal Nutrition 2.0 Innovation Awards Announced

The Petfood & Animal Nutrition 2.0 Innovation Awards honored eleven winners on October 20 at an awards reception at the Chicago Hilton.

The year-long program is designed to celebrate companies demonstrating innovative, disruptive thinking across the pet nutrition market.

"This year's honorees run the gamut when it comes to innovative animal nutrition products," said Karen Butler, editor-in-chief of Petfood & Animal Nutrition 2.0. "It's exciting to see pioneering companies with 40 to 60 years' experience reinventing themselves to stay competitive, right alongside newer businesses who are drawing from cutting-edge research and technology to deliver nutrients in novel applications."

The winners included:

Caru Pet Food, the first North Ameri-

can pet food manufacturer to use Tetra Pak technology for a non-liquid animal-nourishment product.

Champion Petfoods, which manufactures biologically appropriate dog and cat foods from fresh regional ingredients in-house.

Clear Conscience Pet, which combines its CleanLabel platform of pure, pronounceable and purposeful ingredients with the reinvention of the pet chew, treat and meal-topper categories.

Darwin's Natural Pet Products, a company that has revolutionized the delivery of raw, frozen meals to the doorsteps of dog and cat owners across the United States.

Equivision Inc, a specialist in custom equine supplements with offerings that range from vitamins and minerals to formulas addressing specific needs.

Fromm Family Foods, a family owned

and operated manufacturer that launched the concept of small-batch premium pet foods in 1949.

Functional Nutriments, offering proprietary canine nutraceuticals with ingredients that support natural cell health.

K10 Holdings, a company that has developed water-soluble supplements and chewables with a dissolvable technology that facilitate absorption.

Look Who's Happy, which produces U.S.-sourced meat and poultry jerky treats in its own plant and has helped to rebuild transparency and trust in the category.

Open Farm, which boasts a third-party audited and certified humane supply chain and has set a new bar for sustainability efforts.

Solid Gold Pet, a holistic pet food company founded in 1974 that unveiled a bold, hip new brand expression in 2015.

"We congratulate this year's winners for their accomplishments," Butler said. "We're encouraged by the amount of innovation in the animal nutrition market, and look forward to seeing how products and companies continue to evolve in the coming years."

Good Deeds

Continued from p.12

Fresh Step to Hold Fourth Annual Catdance Film Festival

The fourth annual Fresh Step Catdance Film Festival, held in January in honor of the company's Million Meow Mission program, will focus on films that feature shelter cats.

The festival is now accepting submissions of original short films starring shelter cats from now until December 14, 2015. The movies should be up to

four minutes long.

The best original short film will be awarded \$25,000, a trip for two to the Catdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah and the Golden Litter Scoop trophy.

"We know there's a story inside every cat and can't wait to see how those stories come to life for the silver screen," said

Meyer. "Whether showing a sweet adoption story or highlighting funny, quirky or stealth cat moments, Fresh Step will honor the best of the best at the feline fête in Park City."

To learn more about the Fresh Step Catdance Film Festival's complete rules and to enter a film visit freshstep.com/catdance2016.

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New Report Forecasts Global Pet Food Market Growth and Trends

A new report from Grand View Research, Inc. has identified new trends and patterns that may expand the global pet food market to be worth \$98.81 billion by 2022.

According to the report, the growth may come as a result of a trend towards pet

adoption with the expansion of the nuclear family in emerging Asian economies including India, China and Vietnam.

The pet food market is also growing in Europe, as people are more commonly adopting pets and starting to see pets as family members.

A rising need for nutritious, healthy and organic food because of increasing awareness of pet health is another factor expected to augment demand.

Additionally, increasing life expectancy in both humans and pets is expected to fuel demand over the forecast period.

Good Deeds

Continued from p.14

Fresh Step Litter Donates One Million Scoops of Litter to Shelters

Fresh Step Litter will continue its Million Meow Mission in support of shelter cats by donating one million scoops of litter to shelters nationwide and offering new opportunities for fans of the brand to get involved with the cause.

Members of Fresh Step's Paw Points loyalty program can share a Million Meow Mission badge on social media and donate Paw Points to shelters to receive a \$2-off Fresh Step coupon.

Participating shelters can redeem Paw Points for free Fresh Step litter, as well as other cat care items and toys. Shelter and rescue organizations can register at freshstep.com/pawpoints to begin receiving donations.

"At Fresh Step, we understand the immense amount of love and joy our cuddly cats bring us. They reward us in millions of ways which is why we are committed to giving back through our Million Meow Mission program," said Nick Meyer, Fresh Step's director of marketing.

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Antitrust Concerns Slow PetSmart-Petco Merger Talks

PetSmart Inc.'s talks regarding the acquisition of Petco Holdings Inc. have stalled because of concerns about the potential repercussions if U.S. antitrust authorities do not approve the deal.

Though the companies are still interested in reaching an agreement, Petco refused a proposal to compensate PetSmart if the Federal Trade Commission requires store closures for the deal to be approved.

Petco has also asked private equity firms, including Apollo Global Management LLC, Hellman & Friedman LLC, CVC Capital Ltd and KKR & Co LP, to submit acquisition offers in the coming weeks.

TPG Capital LP and Leonard Green & Partners LP, Petco's private equity owners, hope to sell the company for at least \$5 billion, including debt.

Portland Pet Food Named Finalist in Martha Stewart American Made Competition

New start-up Portland Pet Food has gained national attention by being named a finalist in the Martha Stewart American Made competition.

The competition recognizes companies using American products and ingredients.

"The meat we use is high quality and something you would find in a lot

of restaurants," said Katie McCarron, the company's founder. "Just like myself, I want to make sure that dogs are being fed wholesome food. I want to make sure they are getting the ingredients they need each day in a wholesome diet."

The Portland Pet Food company's products can be found in 50 pet stores on the West Coast.



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Multipet Acquires Tuff Enuff Pet Products

New Jersey-based pet product manufacturer Multipet International has announced their acquisition of Tuff Enuff Pet Products.

Tuff Enuff was founded in 2008 with the goal of bringing to the pet market the ultimate soft, durable and

interactive toy that would be designed to last longer than everyday plush toys.

Founded in 1995, Multipet is known for interactive toy designs that place an emphasis on pet safety.

"With increasing market demand for more durable toys, the addition of

the Tuff Enuff line is a natural fit with our Multipet brand of products," said Mark Hirschberg, president of Multipet International.

MULTIPET

Good Deeds

Continued from p.15

Tetra Supports Sustainable Fish Trade at Aquatic Experience Show

Tetra, a division of Spectrum Brands, hosted a contest and promoted its new philanthropic initiative at the Aquatic Experience Show held in Chicago from November 6-8.

For the third year in a row, the company sponsored a Kid's Contest at the show. Children were encouraged to unleash their imagination by creating their own freshwater aquarium at the Tetra booth.

This year also marked a new Tetra philanthropic initiative in support of

Project Piaba, a New England Aquarium-based organization promoting the sustainable harvest of aquatic resources in Amazonian rainforests to ensure their survival. Project Piaba's aquariums and equipment at their Aquatic Experience booth were supplied by Tetra.

"As practicing environmental stewards ourselves, we recognize the value Project Piaba has in fostering environmental protection of the Amazonian fish trade, and its positive influence in advancing social

welfare and economic prosperity. We are proud to stand behind the organization and support its cause," said John Fox, division vice president of aquatic marketing for Spectrum Brands.

Additionally, Tetra supplied aquariums for the show's hosts, including seven of the tank ensembles in the "Fish Around the World" display.

For more information on the Aquatic Experience, visit <http://aquaticexperience.org/>.

Continued on p.18

Max & Ruffy's Relocates Headquarters

Max & Ruffy's, a manufacturer of organic pet treats, will relocate from its headquarters in Arlington, Va. to Westminster after receiving a loan from Carroll County Economic Development.

"We chose Carroll County because the facility was perfect for our manu-

facturing needs and we consider Carroll County a wonderful location," said Max & Ruffy's co-founder Kelly Raiser. "We look forward to being a part of the Westminster community."

The manufacturer will be moving into a 20,000-square-foot building in November and will hire 20 employees

by the spring 2016.

"It is gratifying that Carroll County is recognizable in the real estate market as an exceptional location for business both in terms of reasonable costs and a genuinely supportive business environment," said county economic development director Jack Lyburn.

Movers and Shakers

Continued from p.13

Keith Bornholtz Named President of Pet Distribution at Central Garden & Pet

Keith Bornholtz has rejoined Central Garden & Pet as president of its pet distribution business based at its corporate headquarters in Walnut Creek, California.

Bornholtz has over 25 years of experience in the consumer package goods industry with Proctor & Gamble, Clorox, Del Monte/Big Heart Brands, Master

Replicas and Yes To.

Bornholtz has been involved in a broad spectrum of strategic business activities including sales, marketing, product innovation, acquisitions, and organizational structure. He previously worked at Central in a senior sales capacity leading the food, drug, mass channel.

"Central's roots are in the distribution

business and they are the major player in the distribution of pet products across the country. We have a mission to provide great products to pet retailers, across the many channels we serve so that pet owners can pamper their pets with ease," said Bornholtz. "I'm looking forward to leading the dynamic team at Central's distribution organization."

Continued on p.19

Pet Philanthropy Circle Names 2015 Pet Hero Award Winners

The Pet Philanthropy Circle has announced the 2015 Pet Hero Award winners ahead of its fourth annual ceremony to be held at the Manhattan Penthouse on October 30.

The award program showcases people, organizations, and pets that serve to inspire others to volunteer and donate to animal welfare causes.

The Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to Dr. Neal Barnard, who has spent the past 30 years working to replace animal testing and experimentation. In 1985 he founded the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Humanitarian of the Year will go to Kristy Hinze-Clark and her husband, founder of Netscape Jim Clark, who have worked to defend both animal and

aquatic life by promoting animal welfare globally.

The Mayor's Alliance of NYC will be honored with the 2015 Outstanding Rescue Organization Award. Their efforts have saved over 250,000 animals and their van has transported more than 85,000 adoptable pets to homes in NYC neighborhoods.

The 2015 Animal Advocate Award will be given to Candy Udell, founder of the Rescue Paw Foundation and president of London Jewelers. Udell supports numerous local and national organizations who rescue hundreds of animals each year.

This year's Animal Health award will go to the Animal Cancer Foundation, a leading philanthropic organization committed to funding and accelerating com-

parative oncology research.

St. Francis Farm, established by founder Whitney Knowlton of Last Chance Animal Rescue, will receive the Outstanding Sanctuary Award. This sanctuary provides permanent and temporary care for special needs and senior animals.

The Veterinarian of the Year Award will be presented to Dr. Marty Goldstein, a nationally recognized proponent of alternative cures for animals.

Found Animals Foundation will receive the Foundation of the Year. Initiated in 2005 by Dr. Gary Michelson, the foundation provides funding for the research of nonsurgical sterilization technology, low-cost spay and neuter initiative and finding homes for over 15,000 shelter animals.

This year's Outstanding Pet Award honors Brock, a Doberman Pinscher who inspired the formation of Pilots N Paws.

A recall expansion has been announced on a dog treat due to possible salmonella contamination.

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Pet Medication Retail Sales Forecasted to Reach \$7 Billion

U.S. retail sales of pet medications are projected to reach \$7 billion by the end of 2015, according to market research publisher Packaged Facts in a recent report.

The forecast figure, which is almost a seven percent increase over 2014, includes sales through veterinarians, brick-and-mortar retailers and online.

With sales having also increased six percent in 2014 over 2013, the past

two years mark a return to form for pet medications.

The industry's performance in 2013 was the worst in recent memory. The flat growth was attributed to several factors, including a colder than normal winter and spring, which greatly affected flea and tick medication sales significant erosion of the market-leading Frontline brand, and a scale-back in revenue from several products that launched in 2012

and received less marketing support the following year.

Looking further ahead, Packaged Facts anticipates that pet medications will be one of the highest growth areas of pet retailing during the next decade. More ethical and prescription products will migrate to over-the-counter and channels that have long made a big business out of selling human medications will increasingly tap in on the companion animal side.

"Pet medications sales will continue growing at a brisk pace and experience solid returns through 2019," said David Sprinkle, research director at Packaged Facts.

Skout's Honor to Be Distributed by UPP and VSI on West Coast

Skout's Honor, manufacturer of high-quality household pet cleaning products, has finalized West Coast distribution partnerships with United Pacific Pet (UPP) and Veterinary Service Inc. (VSI).

"These partnerships with UPP and VSI signify an exciting next step for Skout's Hon-

or, as we continue to expand and introduce the products to pet specialty retailers and consumers across the country," said Shannan Morlas, western regional sales manager for Skout's Honor. "We offer an undeniably better, faster and stronger solution to cleaning up everyday pet messes and the response has

been overwhelmingly positive so far."

Skout's Honor's line of professional-strength cleaning products for pets includes a Stain & Odor Remover, Odor Eliminator, Urine Destroyer and Litter Box Deodorizer.

"We're beyond thrilled to offer Skout's Honor in our store, not just because the products work so well for our customers, but also because the company itself is such a pleasure to work with," said Karen Bertrand, store manager at Pet Supply retail store in California.

Good Deeds

Continued from p.16

Jolly Pets, Inc. Partners with Project Blue Collar for Holiday Toy Drive

Jolly Pets, Inc. launched their Holiday Toy Drive, #DogGotToy, with Project Blue Collar (PBC) on November 27 to provide enrichment toys to shelter dogs.

From November 27 to December 26, every transaction on projectbluecollar.com will trigger a donation of a Jolly Pets toy to a shelter dog in need. Included in each order will be a thank you note listing the

dog's name receiving the Jolly Pet toy and the name of the shelter where the dog is.

PBC and Jolly Pets will ask people to post about their purchase by using the #DogGotToy.

"We're so proud to team up with a wonderful organization like Project Blue Collar and spread some holiday joy to shelter dogs," said Louisa Marvin, Jolly

Pets Marketing Director. "We both recognize the role that enrichment toys play in a shelter dog's life and in finding their forever homes."

PBC is a global, grassroots movement to promote dog adoption. Founded by two animal rescuers, the company donates 20 percent of its online sales to rescue organizations.

Continued on p.20

Multipet Acquires Old Mill Pet Products

New Jersey-based pet product manufacturer Multipet International has acquired Old Mill Pet Products.

Old Mill was founded in 2014 with the premise of bringing to the pet market treats and consumables that are

100 percent natural with ingredients sourced only from the United States.

"The acquisition of Old Mill falls in line with Multipet's strategy to diversify within the pet industry," said Mark Hirschberg, president of Mul-

tipet International. "The extensive distribution network Old Mill has established, as well as their reputation within the consumable market, easily solidified the decision for this acquisition."

Movers and Shakers

Continued from p.16

Radio Systems Corporation Appoints Therese Bosson Customer Operations Manager

Radio Systems Corporation, owner of the PetSafe and SportDOG brands, has appointed Therese Bosson to the position of

customer operations manager for Europe.

Bosson will head the company's customer operations team, with responsibility for the overall direction, coordination and evaluation of customer care for Europe. She will also ensure that high levels of customer service across European teams are

maintained and strengthened if required.

"The challenging and exciting role of Radio Systems' Customer Operations Manager is exactly what I've been looking for," Bosson said. "Radio Systems is a dynamic company to work for and I'm very much looking forward to my new role."

Continued on p.21

Phillips and General Pet Supply to Headline 2016 P3 Trade Show

The new P3|Progressive Pet Products trade show will feature Phillips Pet Food & Supplies and General Pet Supply. P3 will take place on August 24 and 25, 2016 at Chicago's Navy Pier.

The trade show's exhibitor ranks are filling up with many other leading distributors, top brands and market newcomers.

"We've been extremely pleased with the positive response we've received about the new show launch from industry veterans and emerging companies alike," says Stacey Barrett-Brooks, P3 show director. "The industry sees that this new show is definitely moving in to effectively fill a void in the Midwest marketplace and are excited to get in on the ground floor of an event with strong new business and growth potential."

Bentonite Performance Minerals, The Blissful Dog, Dog Life, DOGLINE, E&S, Evangers Dog & Cat Food, Home Pet Spa, Hyper Pet, Marchioro, Nature's Logic, NutriLife Pet Products, LLC, Pet Safe and Sophisticated Pup are among the other companies that will have booths at the show.

For more information about P3, visit www.p3petshow.com.



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Kaleb's Organics Dog Treats Verified by the Non-GMO Project

Kaleb's Organics all-natural, organic, made in the U.S.A. dog treats have earned the Non-GMO Project Verification.

The Non-GMO Project offers North America's only independent verification for products made according to rigorous best practices for genetically modified organism (GMO) avoidance.

GMOs are organisms whose genetic

material has been artificially manipulated through genetic engineering, which creates unstable combinations of genes that do not occur naturally and may contribute to allergies.

Kaleb's Organics full line of dog treats are Non-GMO Project verified, meaning that these items have met the consensus-based standard that includes GMO risk assessment, traceability, seg-

regation and testing at critical control points to verify that ingredients are not genetically modified.

"Consumers are becoming more health conscious in their pet's diets and want to know what's in their food. Research shows there are many concerns regarding GMO's and we feel it's important to avoid these ingredients at all costs," said Deborah Viney of Kaleb's Organics. "Kaleb's Organics is committed to providing safe, healthy and high-quality dog treats. We're so proud to have met the Non-GMO Project's thorough guidelines and have obtained their verification stamp of approval."

Good Deeds

Continued from p.18

Tall Tails Donates Towels to Morris Animal Foundation's 3000 Strong Celebration

Tall Tails Authentic Dog Products donated \$700 worth of the company's micro-fiber Cape Pocket towels to the Morris Animal Foundation's 3000 Strong Celebration weekend held in Denver, Colorado from September 18 to 20.

The towels were used to help all the dogs participating to dry off quickly after their dive into a pool.

"We donated our towels to this important weekend event for the Morris Animal Foundation because we know

how important it is they continue their cancer research in dogs," said Joel Kaplan, president of Tall Tails. "While the dogs were having a blast dock diving we wanted to be sure they would be able to be dried off quickly with our very absorbent towels once out of the water."

Morris Animal Foundation launched its Golden Retriever Lifetime Study in 2012. The celebration weekend was a way for them to thank all the amazing owners and their equally incredible dogs

who are participating in the study.

"We were happy to have the donation from Tall Tails," said Thomas Stevens, senior specialist of veterinary outreach for Morris Animal Foundation. "The Morris Animal Foundation's Golden Retriever Lifetime Study is a groundbreaking effort to learn how to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer other diseases. This is the largest and longest observational study ever undertaken to improve the health of dogs."

Research Suggests Canine Companions Can Calm Children in Cancer Treatment

A study to be presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference Exhibition in Washington, DC is among the first batch of quantitative data to validate claims that therapy dogs can be helpful to children with cancer.

The study collected data on blood pressure, pulse rates and anxiety levels of children before and after a weekly visit from a therapy dog.

Preliminary findings show that blood pressure readings in the group receiving visits from therapy dogs remains more stable across the sessions than in the control group. Additionally, canine companionship appears to improve anxiety levels among patients.

"These findings suggest that the dog may have a calming effect on the patient," said Dr. Amy McCullough, Ph.D., national director of humane research and therapy

for the American Humane Association

Many hospitals have therapy dogs to visit with patients, and until now anecdotal evidence was the only information demonstrating that these programs positively impact children undergoing cancer treatment.

"This study will be a milestone in understanding of the benefits of the vital bond shared between people and animals," Dr. McCullough said.

American Kennel Club Selects Winners of 2016 Lifetime Achievement Awards

Patti L. Strand, John Cox, and John Russell will receive the American Kennel Club (AKC)'s 2016 Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The Awards, first created and awarded in 1999, are presented in recognition of exceptional participation and achievement within the dog fancy.

Movers and Shakers

Continued from p.19

Pet Supplies Plus Appoints Senior Vice President

Pet Supplies Plus has appointed David Leonardo the company's senior vice president of franchising.

Leonardo joins the Pet Supplies Plus team as a veteran franchise executive with experience in high level roles at Wild Wing Café, Arby's Restaurant Group, Wendy's and Burger King. Most recently, Leonardo served as the COO at La Galere Markets, a start-up company that operates and develops gourmet, self-checkout mini-markets.

"Coming from a start-up environment, I wanted to use my franchising experience at a company with high-growth potential and in which I truly believe in the concept," said Leonardo. "Looking at the franchise industry overall, I was attracted to pet industry because of its steady and continual growth. Pet Supplies Plus is a leader in the pet franchise category and I am thrilled to join the team."

Pet Supplies Plus is the nation's largest pet retail franchise, with more than 300 locations in 26 states.



The finalists and winners, based on nominations from AKC member clubs, have impacted the dog sport on a national level through club involvement, judging, exhibiting, breeding and teaching.

The honorees will receive engraved Revere bowls on December 11 at the delegates luncheon held in conjunction with the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship in Orlando, Florida.

The advertisement features a large background image of a man and a dog running on a dirt trail. Overlaid on the top is the Zuke's logo with a '20th B'DAY' badge from 1995 to 2015. The text 'Fuel your biggest adventures' is written in a large, white, distressed font. At the bottom, three bags of Zuke's Genuine Jerky Steaks are displayed, showing different flavors: Beef & Carrot, Beef & Potato, and Beef & Sweet Potato. Below the bags, a text box says: 'Try Zuke's® NEW Genuine Jerky Steaks™ to give your pup an energizing snack whether it's for a morning run or weekend campout!'. At the very bottom, an orange banner contains the text: 'Natural Dog Treats • Made in New Zealand • Sniff around at www.zukes.com'.

Editor's Pick

ActivityMat by BUSTER

A problem solving interactive play center designed to mentally stimulate dogs, this mat includes a wide range of challenging snap-on activities with varying levels of difficulty that reveal hidden treats upon completion.

The starter set also includes a storage bag.

www.kruuse.com



Pettura by Lifes2good

A new line of liquid formula supplements, Pettura is attempting to change the way owners think about giving their pets a daily vitamin. A fast-acting, pre-measured pump can be added to pet food. Made with pharma-grade ingredients and tested to human standards.

www.pettura.com



Aspen Dog Sweater by Ruby Rufus

Stylish dogs can get decked out in this cozy, holiday-ready, must-have winter sweater by British brand Ruby Rufus. Made out of 100 percent cashmere with a Navajo-inspired pattern that looks Aspen après ski-ready and will have pets set to go out in the snow.

www.rubyrufus.com



ChuckIt! Max Glo Ultra Sling by Petmate

Compact and easy to store and carry with an adjustable band that allows for use in backyards or parks. Boasts a bright, long-lasting glow. Five minutes of light exposure generates 20 to 30 minutes of play. Universally sized to be appropriate for any size dog.

www.Petmate.com

Drinkwell Sedona Pet Fountain by PetSafe

A constant source of fresh-filtered water, the trendy water fountain design features 100 ounce water capacity and a sleek, spill-minimizing clear bowl. Whisper-quiet and boasting a large drinking area, the fountain also provides dual filtration to capture debris and improve taste.

www.petsafe.net



Glow Elements Line by Elive Pet

The line features neon products that glow under blue aquarium light. They look dazzlingly bright during the day and create a luminescent underwater world at night. Some décor items feature air tubing connections that can be attached to an air pump to create bubbles and movement in the aquarium.

www.elivepet.com



Airmaster by Homedics

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www.homedics.com



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Stockroom New Products

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www.kongcompany.com



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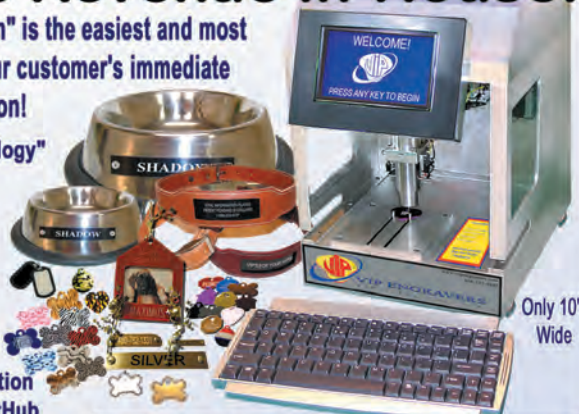
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www.petreleaf.com



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www.prettylittercats.com

Calgary Harness Dog Coat by Petrageous Designs

Locks out wind and water while offering a two-way back zipper that allows easy access to a dog's harness underneath.

Available in sizes XS through XXL in navy or red. The coat also features elastic leg straps, an adjustable Velcro belt and full chest coverage.

www.petrageousdesigns.com



EZVIZ Mini Indoor Wi-Fi Camera

Weighing in at less than 4 ounces, this small, cloud-based video camera keeps an eye on pets while owners are out of the house. It offers built-in smart motion detection, 720p HD quality, and the ability to send alerts via the free EZVIZ app.

www.ezvizlife.com

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Stockroom New Products



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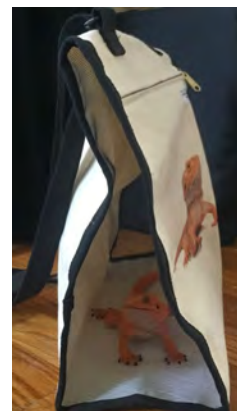
The new natural treats are made from wild or grass-fed meats from Australia, New Zealand and the U.S.A. as well as organic and sustainable fruits and veggies. The line focuses on exotic proteins like kangaroo, goat, rabbit, bison, pork and green-lipped mussels.

www.booboosbest.com

The Beardie Bag

This bag was specifically designed to carry bearded dragon pets, providing a vehicle to transport them from place to place or just around the house. It includes a screen for airflow and a waterproof liner. A portable pocket is also available as an attachment for human and pet necessities.

www.BeardieBag.com



PL360 Anxiety Relief for Dogs

This chewable supplement calms canines down in as little as 20 minutes. It contains chamomile and tryptophan, the notorious nap-inducing chemical also found in holiday turkey dinners. Helps ease the anxiety of stressful situations such as vet visits, grooming appointments, travel and separation anxiety.

www.pl360pet.com



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www.Petmate.com



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Stockroom New Products



Neon and High Fashion Collections by Hamilton Pet Products

The two new lines of harnesses, leashes, and adjustable and buckle collars for dogs are stylish and eye-catching. The Neon Collection comes in new electric coral, yellow, blue and red hues, and the High Fashion Collection features 32 different patterned jacquard ribbon overlays.
www.hamiltonproducts.com



Cloudpuff Pet Blanket by Sleepypod

The updated Cloudpuff pet blanket pampers pets with a sumptuous layer of comfort and coziness without sacrificing durability. Made from ultrasoft plush and a durable, microfiber suede backing, it can also be used as a carrier liner, couch protector or car seat cover.
www.sleepypod.com

Dog Treats by Scout & Zoe's

New chicken, duck, venison and vegetable-based treats



are made with human-grade raw ingredients. All varieties boast only a small handful of ingredients and are completely sourced and produced in the U.S.A. Available flavors include hickory-smoked chicken jerky, venison jerky, duck

treats with carrot and purple sweet potato.
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www.petedge.com

Calcium Powder by Scout & Zoe's

Now available in a larger six ounce size, the Calcium Powder is a dietary supplement that can be administered to canine, feline, avian, reptile and amphibian pets. Made from U.S.-sourced, 100 percent naturally shed elk antlers. The natural powder supports bone health, heart function and nerve transmission.

www.scoutandzoes.com



Piddle Place

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Like and Share

Embracing social media can bring in customers.

BY DAN CALABRESE

To appreciate the power of social media, think of it like a massive town square in which the entire world is present. You can go there as much as you want and spend as much time as you want, and it's always free. You can say anything you want—about yourself or about anyone else—and no one will filter you. (Yes, there is some moderation on social media, but within the bounds of good taste, this is still true.)

So, if you can say or do something that stands out, you've theoretically got the attention of the entire world, and you never had to spend a dime

getting it. Pretty cool, huh? The one small wrinkle, of course, is that everyone else in the world is trying as hard as you are to get everybody's attention. So all you have to do is be more clever and interesting than everyone else. How hard could that be?

That's the power of the opportunity—and the height of the challenge—involved with marketing a pet retailer on social media. Is it implausible that you can get the spotlight on yourself sufficiently to make social media a truly powerful marketing tool?

Not necessarily. Consider a few things you've got going for you. A lot

of people on social media are not all that clever or interesting, so the competition in reality may not be terribly fierce. And if George Takei can turn himself into a social media phenomenon posting fairly unremarkable memes on a constant basis, why shouldn't you be able to do it?

Pet retailers don't need to make their content viral on a global basis to make social media an effective tool. What they need is to consistently and effectively engage their own core constituency, which consists of pet owners and their friends and family in their communities. But it remains true that

consistently clever messages that get people's attention allow the potential of social media to become real in many cases.

So What Are a Pet Retailer's Best Opportunities There?

It starts with this: Pets are awesome subjects for photography and even better for video. Who owns pets? Your customers, that's who! Social media provides an excellent opportunity for you to engage with your customers and their friends by offering the opportunity for them to share pet photos and videos. Even if the content is not of their own pets, the social media world doesn't care and neither should you. The point is to be as interesting as possible and to keep the people most important to you connected and engaged.

Pet retailers have wonderful opportunities to do this on social media. By using everything from videos and photos to cartoons and audio, and even just the written word, they can lead the celebration of our pet friends and invite the communities around them to take part. Whether that comes from customer-submitted content or something you found searching Google for "adorable pet footage," social media provides the opportunity to engage people every day.

This is not to say your social media presence shouldn't include product and service information. The key is to pepper that in with the things

that keep people engaged with—and sharing—your posts. If your page is a favorite because people enjoy what you regularly offer, they'll accept and embrace the occasions when you do some old-fashioned selling. The mix should also include helpful information about pet health, diet, activities and all kinds of other things that are valuable to pet owners.

Social media is free to use, but that doesn't mean you don't have to devote resources to it. If nothing else, you at least need an employee who knows their way around social media and can be freed up to spend a significant portion of their time on the clock putting out material. Too many companies try to do it on the cheap by designating one or two people for whom it is a very low priority, and the result is a post or two a week—if that. This is a mistake. That person sitting on the computer "playing on Facebook" is actually doing something that can make a real difference for your store. It's real work. Let them do it.

This is not to say there's no room for traditional marketing in your strategy or your budget. But this column focused on social media because its potential is so large. It's time to take advantage. Driving traffic to your store via social media offers the potential to limit what you have to invest in more traditional marketing venues. If that's not worth a try, I don't know what is.



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Better Sales with Bettas

A dedicated section for bettas can generate steady profits.

BY RD WEBSTER

Keeping pet bettas is a growing trend that can bring in extra income and new customers if given a premium location in your store. So it's likely a smart move to dedicate an endcap to bettas.

The betta has long been bred as a hardy and beautiful fish that attracts much attention. With the recent abundance of new striking colors and varieties, along with the development of many new accompanying products, there is even more opportunity to grow your sales in this unique category. I'm confident that there will continue to be new offerings for many years to come, giving great appeal to this unique fish.

So how can you capitalize on this category? Devote a key location, such as an endcap, or a 4-foot section in a prime location to the sale and promotion of bettas.

For the sales you can generate from this category, you may want to have even more space. In fact, you need to grab the attention of everyone that enters your store. The potential new hobbyist is just an arm's length away with this type of display.

As an example, a store in Lexington, Kentucky, devotes over 12 linear feet of shelf space to just this category because of the sales it generates with college students nearby. Another example, in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, there are several 1,000-square-foot stores that are almost exclusively devoted to bettas and the complementary supplies. So don't be

afraid to give it a try in your store.

If you walk into one of the big box pet stores, you will always see a significant display for bettas and supporting products. That's because they are popular. What makes you different and more effective should be your knowledge and the variety of fish and products you stock. The big box stores, because of their size, can't be as responsive as an independently-owned retail store. That is an important reason why you and your staff must keep up with all the breed varieties, colors and descriptions associated with these fish.

The Internet is a great study resource since many advanced hobbyists show off their prize bettas on YouTube and in various blogs. There are so many combinations of colors and varieties that the potential for something new or outstanding showing up in any week's fish order is likely, and variety will draw in hobbyists to seek out their special fish with each new shipment. These special fish can demand a premium. A high end fish can go for as much as \$200, but even the \$10-\$20 fish are quite common.

A few stores that we have visited lately sell as many as 200 bettas each week with a line of people waiting for each new shipment to arrive. In reality, it would be easy to see a weekly 25-50 fish turnover for most any store. This is just in livestock sales.

Now comes the easy part of the sales: the dry goods. There are so many new products for the betta category.

These include habitats or housing, like complete desktop aquariums from multiple manufactures. Some examples are the Betta Falls Kit by Aqueon, the stackable Deco Cubes and Wonder Bubble Tunnels by BioBubble Pets, and the multitude of interesting glass bowls.

There are betta specific foods available as pellets, flakes and frozen diets. Numerous accessories like heaters and mini LED lights are available for bettas. There are many small preset heaters available like the UL approved Mini Heaters from Hydor and the BETTATHERM from ZooMed, which can easily be hidden in the gravel. The mini stick type heaters from multiple companies are also small and compact for use in small aquariums.

Water additives for bettas, like Ocean Nutrition's Atison's Betta Spa which contains almond leaf extract for the general health of the fish, can generate significant sales. There are plenty of other special conditioners or treatments from manufacturers like Hikari, which come in small, easy-to-use packaging, or ProDibio, available in single dosage ampules.

You can get a lot of bang for your 4-foot section with the products and fish available for this one specific category, which has been a growing major trend in the aquatics category.

RD Webster is currently an associate/partner of Market Strategies, an independent rep group that covers all 50 states. He has been an avid aquarist and fish breeder for more than 45 years.



Happier Holidays for Everyone

Tips to help your customers keep their pets happy and safe this holiday season.

BY STEVEN APPELBAUM

The holiday season represents a wonderful opportunity to celebrate with family and friends. While bright lights, decorations, seasonal treats and parties can be fun for people of all ages, these same things can be stressful—and at times dangerous—for pets.

Here are some tips you can share with customers to help make their holidays safer and easier for the pets in their lives.

Too Much Change

Pets thrive with an established routine. The holiday season wreaks havoc on that routine in most households. Pet retailers should caution owners about some things that should stay the same.

Moving the litter box to a new location so that it is not visible to guests can cause some cats to stop using it. Inform your cat-owning customers that they shouldn't move the box.

During this time of year some owners are so distracted by guests coming and going that they don't maintain an established potty schedule with their puppy. Potty training requires consistency. This becomes much harder to accomplish when owners are distracted. Remind owners to keep a consistent housetraining schedule during the holidays.

When teaching a puppy not to chew on inappropriate items, such as furniture clothing or kids toys, it is critical to fixate the dog on the correct chew toys while controlling access to the home environment. The challenge during the holidays is the many tempting items that are frequently left lying about: tinsel on trees, gifts on the floor, wiring on hundreds of blinking lights and delectable human snacks.

To curtail inappropriate chewing,

puppies need to have their access limited. Electrical wires should be sprayed regularly with a chew repellent such as Bitter Apple. Access to wrapped gifts should be blocked off and Christmas trees need to have their bases covered so the dog or cat can't drink the water.

Holiday Dangers

Dangerous items need to be kept well out of pets' way or, better yet, not used or displayed at all. Mistletoe, chocolates, alcohol, grapes and raisins are poisonous to dogs and cats. Poinsettias are danger-

ous too. Many cats find tinsel intriguing and could attempt to eat it. Chicken or turkey bones can be dangerous to dogs and cats who often consume them entirely, ending up with bone splinters in their throat or digestive tract.

With an understanding of some of the dangers, coupled with some preventative measures and suggestions from you on how owners can deal with the trials and tribulations of pets and the holiday season, pet retailers can sell relevant products and assist customers in a fashion that creates a win-win for all concerned.



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Set Your Sights on a Bigger and Better Year

Create realistic goals for a successful 2016.

BY SARAH JULIAN

Do you know where you want your business to be this time next year? Can you envision what it's going to take to get there? Aiming for a bigger tomorrow means putting thought and intention into your definition of success for the year to come and identifying the goals you will need to accomplish to get there. Goal setting can have a huge impact on your ability to bring about the vision you have for your business. It is a skill you need to have to inspire, empower and challenge your team to do better than they've ever done. By understanding how to set effective business goals, you will set the stage for a bigger and better 2016.

Look Ahead

When setting goals for next year, it's imperative to consider those long-term goals. Where do you want your company to be in three, five or ten years? Are you positioning for sale? Will you be expanding into new categories? Will you increase distribution or have multiple retail locations? Having these kinds of visions will enable you to set effective annual goals and set you off on the correct path. What you accomplish this year, how you grow and the decisions you make will directly affect your ability to achieve long-term success, however you may have defined it.

Set "SMART" Goals

We've all heard it before: when setting goals make them specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely, or SMART. But it's often hard to under-

stand what that looks like in practice. For example, let's try generating a larger email list as a starting goal. Understanding why you want to do this, if it matters to the success of your company and determine how many customers you need on the list to succeed. Those are your very first defining factors.

Once we know if the goal is worth pursuing, then we make it SMART. To make it specific, we need to address the who, what and when of this goal:

The what: Growing our email list by 35 percent by creating gated assets.

The when: By the first quarter.

The who: Marketing these assets through our social media channels.

This goal is now specific, measurable and timely. Your next step will be to address whether it is attainable with the time, budget and talent you currently have and if it is realistic given any other priorities that will be competing for those same resources.

Get Buy In

From top to bottom, the people that you have brought into your company will be the united force behind your success. Hopefully you have surrounded yourself with smart, passionate, driven employees. Harness their energy, ask for their ideas and input, and make sure that they believe in the vision you have for the company and the goals you have set to make it a reality.

Once you have your team aligned behind your goals, be sure to arm them with the resources to succeed. If they know they have the time, manpower and money to meet the goals, they can

focus fully on smart, creative strategies and execution.

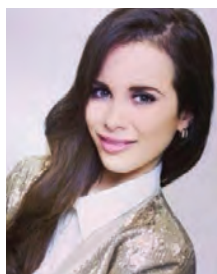
Write Them Down

We all know that conversations quickly disappear and that once an idea is spoken it can easily be forgotten. Therefore, you must put structures in place to remember and the easiest way to do this is to write them down. Each business goal should be documented and, ideally, should be the impetus for every objective in every department for the year. Companywide strategies should map back to these goals and they should be referred to and measured against in review sessions throughout the year.

Measure and Analyze

Set it and forget it is the worst kind of business strategy. Once you establish your goals for the year, they should become your team's mantra – a driving force that underpins your daily activities. And although you know exactly where you want to go, you aren't going to be able to account for every variable along the way. That is why it is important to hold quarterly meetings to measure the effectiveness of your strategies, the validity of your assumptions and the impact of any outside forces. As you and your team test and learn, your strategies may change, but your goals will remain a guiding force.

Sarah Julian is owner of OffLeash Communications, a branding and marketing agency dedicated to companies offering pet products, services and solutions.



Data vs. Instinct

Why operating on a hunch is no longer a viable option for retailers.

BY STEPHANIE BRAUN

Instincts can save lives, but they can also cause trouble. When it comes to making decisions about your business, leave basic instincts to the animals.

“While having an intimate relationship with your business can help make decisions on gut feeling or instinct, it’s not enough when many big box stores today have automated systems to keep their bottom lines in check,” said Raff Paquin, director of data science at Lightspeed POS. “Having good instinct is an asset, but merchants need data for successful retail planning.”

Data is information providing insight into a business. It comes in many forms and can emanate from three sources: internally generated from the point of sale, such as sale totals; manually collected, like customer contact information; and externally derived from reports sourced or purchased from suppliers, like demographics. Major companies use data to identify opportunities and target audiences. Small retailers can too.

Paquin believes retailers can use data to improve two major areas: attracting and managing customer relationships and streamlining operations.

“Data collected from customers helps retailers personalize customer service and promotions,” Paquin said. “It’s easy to target campaigns if you know customers’ pets and favorite brands.”

Customer data can also be used to uncover groups to target. With customers’ workplace email addresses, you may contact people working at banks, media outlets or specific companies with deals or event invitations geared to their interests. Data from a census or postal service can also help you find where to send direct mail.

“Data is also great for managing inventory and forecasting sales,” Paquin said. “Without it, how can you tell which product typically sits on the shelf for longer periods of time? How can you tell which brands have the highest sell-through and how often to reorder certain products?”

Big box retailers use data from automated systems to decide when to apply discounts to slow moving items and when to order from vendors. Smart independent retailers do this too, and in the pet industry, many merchants are investing in this technology.

Having an automated point of sale is just the first step. Essentially, data equals opportunity. Powerful aggregated information can help create marketing campaigns and improve your sales.

To learn how to use data to make changes to your business, download a free guide at: <http://www.lightspeedpos.com/white-papers/putting-your-data-to-work/>

Stephanie Braun specializes in retail customer experiences and is a regular contributor to the Lightspeed POS blog (<http://www.lightspeedpos.com/blog/>)

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RETAILERS	MANUFACTURERS	DISTRIBUTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwarranted operational regulations Pet sale bans Internet sales restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special taxes Production restrictions Sales source limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation regulations Higher regulatory costs Importation restrictions
GROOMERS	ANIMAL SUPPLIERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory state licensing and certification Increased licensing fees New taxes on pet care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased inspection requirements Onerous facility regulations Transport and import laws 	

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The Pet Age staff is happy to present the winners of our Forty Under 40 awards. Our intention is to honor the up-and-coming movers and shakers of the pet industry. They all share a commitment to the growth of the pet industry, to professional excellence and to the community.

Individuals qualifying for a nomination met selection criteria that included working in the pet industry, possessing significant authority for decision making within a company or organization and being 39 years old or younger at the time of the nomination.

Winners were chosen by an independent panel of judges. The judges were Dana Humphrey, owner and lead publicist, Whitegate PR, Inc.; Kerry Sutherland, principal, K. Sutherland PR; and Linda Cope, global marketing manager, Marshall Pet Products.

The 40 individuals featured here have already had a big impact on the industry despite their young age. We expect them to continue to be leaders in the pet world for a long time to come.

CONGRATULATIONS to all the winners!



JENNIFER BEINKE

Owner
KISS MY MUTT
Santa Barbara, California

28

Company description: With our design smarts and canine adoration, we've crafted striking collars, leashes, harnesses, and accessories for you that are perfect for showing off your pup.

Primary job function: Lead design, manufacturing, sales

Years in industry: 6

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? KISS MY MUTT started with a passion for dogs and a love for design. Being able to bring that passion to work every day was important to me when I started this business six years ago. Whether we're creating a unique pattern or playing around with fun colorful combinations, we put a fresh spin on typical pet products. I wanted to create something that was light, fun and could make people smile.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I love that I am able to bring my passion for dogs and design to work with me every single day. We know how much you love your dogs; we know they're a part of your family, because of course our dogs are a part of ours. I believe the KISS MY MUTT product line has become of reflection of who our customers are, and their dogs, too.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Following your passion may not always be enough to find success within the pet industry. There is a lot of competition, just like any other industry, and you must always be one step ahead of your competition to stay relevant.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I studied media, design and art at the University of California Santa Barbara. I started a career in media journalism and decided that entrepreneurship was the path I wanted to take, so KISS MY MUTT began just a few months after graduating from college at the age of 22.



ERIC BITTMAN

CEO and President
WARREN LONDON
Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey

34

Company description: A U.S. manufacturer of natural high-quality dog spa and grooming products

Primary job function: Run all aspects of Warren London

Years in industry: 5

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My love for dogs and animals in general has always had me interested in working in the pet industry. When I got my first dog, Maurice, a Boston terrier, he suffered severe skin issues, which was very tough for my wife and I to watch him go through. We tried so many different products and medicine and not much helped. So I set out to create my own high-quality natural line of products that I knew would get the job done to give my dog that high quality of life.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry?

Innovation is something that is very important to me. I am always trying to think of new products, not just to sell and make money, but products that will be a counted on solution to problems that many dogs face. Our Deep Cleaning Paw Fizz Tablets are an example of our innovative idea that with a paw soak with our tablet will fight fungus, bacteria and yeast, which will result in helping to eliminate paw licking. The e-mails we get from so many customers thanking us for solving a decade long problem make us really happy.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I knew how many companies out there are selling dog shampoos.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Before I started my own company I was an accountant for many A-list celebrities/musicians.



STEVEN BLUSTEIN

CEO
PRIDEBITS PET PRODUCTS
Austin, Texas

28

Company description: PrideBites allows pet owners to design, customize and buy beautiful pet products through PrideBites.com.

Primary job function: Directs the company strategy, investor relations and overall pet happiness

Years in industry: 4

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My business partners and I were inspired to create better products for our dogs.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? We believe our biggest contribution is providing more choices for high-quality pet products that are not limited to pre-set or stock designs. In the future, when pet parents everywhere take advantage of having everything unique for their pup, we hope they remember a time when they were forced to buy the same product as everyone else and laugh.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I would have never imagined how much of an impact a pet could make on a family.



KATIRNA BOLDRY

Owner and Designer
BOLD LEAD DESIGNS LLC
Aurora, Colorado

37

Company description: Bold Lead Designs offers premium quality leather dog leashes, collars, harnesses, and service dog equipment, all artisan crafted in Colorado with a lifetime warranty.

Primary job function: Product design, marketing, sales, customer service and daily business operations

Years in industry: 7

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I'm very proud of my service dog equipment designs and work with the disabled community. Customers often contact us to share how much their new custom leash or harness has changed their lives. Perhaps they are finally able to leash up their dog on their own without assistance, or walk on their own with the help of their service dog because they got the right harness that meets all their needs.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I'm a bit of an outsider. I'll be the first to admit I don't know much about the pet industry. I think not having a background in your industry can be an advantage, because you approach things from a unique perspective.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? People always are surprised to learn that my company and the products we make even exist. They are surprised that I actually make things by hand, instead of reselling or outsourcing. They're stunned to know that not only can I make a living doing this, but have created jobs and successful business around something I am so passionate about.



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TARA ROBERTSON

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CAITLYN BOLTON DUDAS

Executive Director
PET INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY COALITION
Longmont, Colorado

32

Company description: The Pet Industry Sustainability Coalition is a nonprofit collaborative exclusively within the pet industry with over 125 members including brands, retailers and suppliers. The Coalition is transforming the industry through sustainable business solutions.

Primary job function: Delivering business tools, education and collaborative opportunities to proactively address the environmental and social impacts of the pet industry

Years in industry: 3

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I was approached by a very passionate environmentalist who had over 20 years of experience in the pet industry. Chris Bentley formerly of Aspen Pet and "I and love and you" had the vision and the audience from which we could launch the concept of a grassroots Coalition that would help companies simplify the process of moving toward sustainability through delivering tools and resources as well as collaborative opportunities for companies to work together to address those environmental issues too large for single companies to address.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? The Coalition creates a platform for the pet industry to proactively address problems that are increasingly at the forefront of consumers' minds: Where is it made, what is it made of, and is it made responsibly? We help deliver strategies that help companies address these questions and ensure that their company will endure in the face of consumer doubt, limited affordable resources, employees that crave engagement and labor injustices around the world.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? My career started out with a position guiding high school students into the backcountry of our national parks to hand build trails in areas unreachable by heavy machinery.



JONATHAN BOLTON

Chief Operating Officer
METRO PAWS LLC
Los Angeles, California

35

Company description: Design, manufacture, distribute, market and sell products while being socially responsible and donating money to no-kill shelters across the country

Primary job function: Sales, marketing and overseeing manufacturing

Years in industry: 8

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? The dog owner. My wife and I realized that there were high-end fashion options for people's kids but not people's pups. My wife said she could make cuter dog waste bags, and I said we could make better, more fun, chic ones for the same price point.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Clean design and innovation. We work really hard to change the game. Invest in clean, white, fashion forward packaging and offer our customers something that is not offered at every outlet. We make the only compostable poop bag holder made here in the USA. It costs us a lot to make it, change it, tweak it and a risk to put that on the shelf with low price-point options, but our customers get it and so do our stores.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Politics is huge. We sell to all of our stores direct. The politics and copying of product lines and designs is super disappointing by a select few. I worked for corporate America before working in the pet industry, and it shocks me to this day how amazingly similar two items can be on the shelf.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I used to be a hip-hop deejay. I traveled deejaying and managing and setting up sponsorship packages for Wu Tang records in the 1990s.



A dedicated animal advocate, Beckie currently serves on the Chicago Canine Rescue Board of Directors and is a proud pet parent of three rescues. Her passion for the industry truly shines through all she does. For over a decade, Beckie has helped clients the likes of The Company of Animals, Spring Naturals and TropiClean stand out from the crowd. We salute her on her commitment to the pet industry.

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VICTORIA BOULDIN

Vice President
PRIMETIME PETZ LLC
Rockwall, Texas

36

Company description: Primetime Petz manufactures beautiful furniture-quality pet gates and crates. Our goal is to provide superior-quality pet furniture through innovative designs that combine elegance and function.

Primary job function: Provides overall directions and guidance to the operational activities of Primetime Petz

Years in industry: 5

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Out of all the industries that are out there, I believe the pet industry is the best industry in the world. The pet industry is fun, and filled with people who ultimately want the best for animals.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? As a consumer goods manufacturing company that is leveraged more toward high-end products, our success validates the claim that high-end pet is a successful category.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I had known how much fun the pet industry is. I would have joined a long time ago.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Most people would be surprised to learn that I served in the U.S. Army Reserves for 9 years and served overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. I have a deeply rooted love and appreciation for this great country of freedom and opportunity.



JEFF CAMOSCI

Vice President, Marketing and Sales
PARAGON PET PRODUCTS
Travelers Rest, South Carolina

39

Company description: Paragon Pet Products is among the most advanced, innovative and forward-thinking manufacturers of dog chews in the world. Headquartered in The Netherlands, it's our mission to make the healthiest, most fun and highest-quality dog chews.

Primary job function: Creating and developing sales and marketing strategies for the United States, Canada and Mexico

Years in industry: 8

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I was working in sales in a different industry and I saw an ad for an outside sales rep for a small dog food company. I had a dog and thought that would be a great industry to work in and a great fit for my personality and interests.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Without a doubt, the biggest contribution I've been able to make is providing education to pet parents and pet specialty retail store associates. With new discoveries and advancements, there is always so much to learn – and it is special when you are in a position to be able to share that knowledge to make life better for pets and the people that love them. As we continue to humanize our pets, we must elevate the quality of solutions that retail partners provide to customers and the communication and education that help pet parents make more informed decisions.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? The industry's competition creates opportunity and helps makes you better.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I am a big college football fan, and I am slowly working toward my goal of watching a live game at every Division 1 stadium in the country. There are 128 stadiums on this list and I have been to 70. There is something special about the pageantry and the traditions that surround college football.

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Brian Thanks so much you do Congrats Charlie

Congrats Brian! So proud of you and your accomplishments! Tracy

Woo Hoo! Congrats! You Rock Stacy Becky

Congratulations Brian! Eloise

WAY TO GO BRIAN! Jessica

Congratulations Brian George!

'Forty Under 40' Recipient

Keep up the great work! Catherine

Congrats Brian! Liz

Awesome Job Brian! Angela

Wonderful job Brian! Joan

Nice Work BRIAN! Jamie

800-893-9893
www.petrageousdesigns.com



TIP CAMPBELL NICHOLS

Owner
UGLY PUG PRODUCTIONS
Woodbury, Tennessee

36

Company description: Pet boarding resort and salon, grooming show producer, speaker, educator, author, consultant

Primary job function: Serves as creative director, chief strategist

Years in industry: 11

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? A drunk driver changed my life in 2001. After working in politics, including being a 2000 staff member for VP Gore, my life changed permanently. My mother, a groomer and speaker, offered to teach me a skill that would allow to me work when I was able after my injuries sustained in the wreck. I have always felt obligated to pay it forward.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I hope that kindness/charity to those in need and education to those who seek it are considered my biggest contributions.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Dogs are easy to read. Humans are much more difficult. But if you win over an owner, you will have a client for life. Too many give up on difficult dogs. Those are some of the most rewarding stories.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I have Asperger's syndrome. And I recently gave up everything – my show, my salon, my house – to take care of my grandparents. I moved back home to my hometown of Woodbury, Tennessee.



CHLOE DIVITA

Chief of Everything
BLOGPAWS
Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania

38

Company description: BlogPaws vision and mission is to empower pet parenting influencers to amplify their voices, expand their reach and help them monetize their influence, while supporting fellow members' efforts to give back to the pets we love so much.

Primary job function: Operate and manage all aspects of BlogPaws business

Years in industry: 6

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My passion for seeing all pets thrive helped propel me into the pet industry. When I was younger, I wanted to be a veterinarian ... until I learned you had to operate on pets. My end goal is to do things that help all pets everywhere live better lives with homes and love.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry?

BlogPaws works with both influencers and brands, and our bottom line is to create relationships that help information get to pet parents. Our impact is through our community and supporting everything they do to help all pet parents of the world.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I'm a recovering accountant who ran an accounting company for 10 years before getting into the pet industry.



JOSH FEINKIND

Founder and President
REFINEDKIND PET PRODUCTS
Irvington, New York

38

Company description: Designer of high-end pet furniture that combines functionality and aesthetics, under the brands The Refined Feline, The Refined Canine, and The Refined Fin

Primary job function: Oversees all operations and new product development

Years in industry: 11

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I've always been entrepreneurial, from a snow removal business as a young teenager to a goods exchange website in college. When I formed the idea a decade ago for cat furniture to compliment a home's modern décor, it was unique to the market. There seemed to be a need and a willingness to pay, which make the foundation for any good business idea. Though I saw the potential, I didn't expect it grow as it has and become my career.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? When I first started the company the only cat furniture options available were beige shag carpeted eyesores. I believe we were among the first companies to see the opportunity to build something both pets and owners would love. Our products and success inspired others to design aesthetically pleasing towers and beds. While that may have resulted in competition, the true winners are consumers with more options and retailers who can up-sell pet owners.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Don't rely on factories for quality control.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Though I own a pet furniture company, I don't have a pet nor grew up with one. My constant traveling lifestyle would make me a poor pet guardian. Of course I have a love for pets, and one day, when I'm settled, I plan on adopting a kitten and a puppy so they can grow up to be best friends.



TRACIE FLORA

Co-founder and Vice President
MONARCH PET PRODUCTS
Denver, Colorado

33

Company description: Monarch Pet Products is one of the premier wholesale distributors of natural pet foods and supplies serving independent retailers in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah.

Primary job function: Responsible for the oversight of customer support, inside sales and marketing

Years in industry: 9

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I was inspired by my grandpa, a serial entrepreneur, to join the pet industry and contribute to the well-being of pets. I have been provided a platform to live out this dream and work with amazing people on a daily basis.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Monarch Pet strives to offer only the finest pet foods and products to independent retailers in the Rocky Mountain region. Being able to provide value to other independent vendors and retailers has allowed us to continue to develop the industry throughout our distribution territory.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I knew earlier about the entrepreneurial opportunities that have been created in the pet industry. We are surrounded by many brilliant individuals that continue to revolutionize pet foods.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I grew up on a farm and showed sheep and pigs while part of the 4-H program. This taught me at an early age the importance of work ethic and helped to develop my passion for animals.



ABE GEARY

Principal
PETPAINT
Camamrillo, California

37

Company description: PetPaint makes all things “fun” for pets, from color sprays to doggie hair extensions.

Primary job function: Bring more people to the PetPaint community

Years in industry: 4

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My dogs would not wear bulky costumes so in trying to find an outfit my dog did not know he was wearing PetPaint was developed. People’s overwhelming reactions to the PetPaint is what sparked the thought this could be a business.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? We brought color to the everyday pet parent. If you want to paint your dog up for Halloween, a birthday party or just a day at the park, you can easily and safely do it with PetPaint.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Retail distribution channels and pricing strategy.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I don’t know what people know about me already so that is hard to say. I’ve eaten dog food and it isn’t that nice, so throw them something good every once in a while.



BRIAN GEORGE

Vice President, Sales
PETRAGEOUS DESIGNS
Burlington, Massachusetts

37

Company description: PetRageous Designs is a whimsical, functional, outrageous pet product manufacturing company.

Primary job function: Sales and marketing

Years in industry: 9

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? What inspired me to get into the pet industry was the love of animals and the growth of the industry.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? My biggest contribution to the pet business is making sure that all products that we sell and develop are 100 percent safe for all animals.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? What I wish I had known earlier is how wonderful all the people are in the industry. And, being a pet lover, how passionate people are.



Congratulations Caitlyn!

West Paw Design thanks you for helping make the planet a better place for people and pets!



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Congratulations

Brian on this
prestigious honor!

Margie and Jim Silver,
and the staff at
Silver Investments



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ANTHONY GIUDICE

Vice President
WERUVA, INC.
Natick, Massachusetts

39

Company description: Great products for pets, great people that partner at retail with caring, kindness and diligence paid to both pets and their pets

Primary job function: Head of all operations

Years in industry: 26

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Being an aquarium nerd as a child and young adult led me to get my first job as soon as it was legal at the local pet store. I soon learned that there was no other industry I'd rather be in ... 26 years later, I still feel the same way, nerdiness and all.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? My passion for education runs through our organization. With that said, Weruva conducts hundreds of seminars yearly at retail pet shops (and if you sit next to me on an airplane). When applied, they can lead to healthier animals and cash registers.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? The only position that I would leave this industry for is the starting goalie of the New York Islanders. Since that roster spot is full, I think I'll be a lifer.



PHIL GOSS

President
UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION
OF REPTILE KEEPERS
Lebanon, Indiana

37

Company description: USARK is a national non-profit advocacy group protecting the freedom of responsible owners to keep reptiles and amphibians at the local, state and federal levels.

Primary job function: Head of all legislative affairs

Years in industry: 18

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Biology and nature, especially animals, were always a driving force for me to become better educated. Without personal interactions with animals at educational outreach programs, pet shops, zoos and private keepers' homes, my desire to learn would have halted.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? USARK has allowed me the opportunity to provide a voice for responsible owners and keepers of reptile and amphibians, known collectively as herps. Herpetoculture, the keeping of reptiles and amphibians in captivity, is a continuously growing segment of the pet industry. Unfortunately, these animals are severely misunderstood, and even feared, by a large portion of people. USARK is educating legislators and the general public about these amazing animals, while fighting the false propaganda, misinformation, false statistics and bad science provided by anti-pet and animal rights groups. For those unaware, animal rights is a radical movement to end all pets and animal agriculture.



KRISTIE HAMILTON

Director of Sales
IMPERIAL CAT
Morrilton, Arkansas

33

Company description: From scratching and playing to snacking and grooming, nobody offers more ways to promote the happy, active lifestyle of a feline than Imperial Cat.

Primary job function: Sales and marketing

Years in industry: 7

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Our company was founded by my aunt and uncle in the mid-80's and continues to be family owned and operated. So, in some ways, you could say that I was born to work in the pet industry. I started working for the company in high school, labeling thousands of catnip bags by hand.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Helping to launch the Imperial Cat brand, and bring high quality, eco-friendly and U.S. made cat products to retailers worldwide. I've also helped expand our outreach program for animal shelters/rescues to include our Scratch 'n Bits, which are pieces of scrap produced during our manufacturing process that have been re-purposed into affordable, cage-sized scratching pads.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I have limited vision in my right eye as a result of cat scratch fever. It's a relatively common disease carried by cats, and most people infected never even notice. The odds of having a severe case like mine were one in a million.



DANIEL HEREFORD

President
PETS GLOBAL, INC.
Santa Clarita, California

39

Company description: Pets Global is a premium pet food company committed to healthy dogs and cats with its foods, Zignature and Fussie Cat based in nutritional science.

Primary job function: Oversees all aspects of company

Years in industry: 18

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I fell into the industry through a temporary position and realized quickly that this was the business I wanted to be in. It has a small industry feel, even though it's a \$50 billion industry. The pet industry brings me so much satisfaction because our work is about feeding and supporting pets that bring people nothing but joy.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Providing quality pet food nutrition. Zignature and Fussie Cat focus on a dog's or cat's physiology and are finely tuned to meet individual nutritional needs. We understand the emotional attachment pets have to their human companions and we want to extend the time pets and people have together through proper nutrition.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? That it's such a welcoming business community with great people on all fronts. It's very satisfying to make a difference with the work we do for dogs and cats.



RYAN HOLDEN SINGER

Founder and CEO
K10 HOLDINGS LLC
New York City, New York

38

Company description: K-10 is a unique new line of super premium vet-recommended supplements dedicated to the ultimate health and wellness of your pets.

Primary job function: Manage daily operations and oversee product development

Years in industry: 2

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Needless to say I've always had a huge love for dogs. I had recognized an overall lack of choice and excitement in the supplement category. It was also evident to me that the category has huge growth potential as more and more owners become educated to the benefits of supplements and a healthy diet.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Providing owners with a line of honest quality products they can trust that directly impacts the overall health and well being of their beloved pet.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? How to weed out bad manufacturers and people who waste your time and money.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? That I used to be a photographer. When I was 22, I lived with the bushmen in Namibia. Fifty-two of my photographs were permanently put in the archives of The Smithsonian Institutes National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.



TREVOR JENSEN

Founding Partner
PET INDUSTRY EXPERTS
San Diego, California

35

Company description: PIE is a company dedicated to helping the pet industry evolve by helping the next generation of pet entrepreneurs.

Primary job function: Help entrepreneurs

Years in industry: 4

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I was hit by a car while walking my dog. The driver left the scene and I sustained pretty severe injuries. I did save my dog though. This led to my first line of pet products, LED dog collars and leashes. I have been involved with many early stage pet companies since that time.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Helping to create Pet Industry Experts with Jim Dougherty and Phil Cooper. We are now able to help pet companies succeed with tools that would not ordinarily be available to them.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I had known how the industry works as a whole. There are many nuances to the pet industry that can be hard to understand. Luckily, treating people well and making genuine friendships goes a long way in the pet industry, so I survived the early learning process.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I never took any formal dog training classes or courses. I just read a few books and was able to teach my dog over 100 commands. She closes doors, turns off the lights, puts things in the trash, cleans up her toys and does all the basic commands as well. It's really not hard if you understand a dog's motivation and use positive reinforcement.

CONGRATULATIONS
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TARA ROBERTSON



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Congratulations
Katie!

From your associates

Nobis
Sales &
Marketing





JOHN LANCE

Owner
A&E CAGE COMPANY
Burlington, New Jersey

33

Company description: Leading wholesale distributor for bird cages, toys, java wood and small animal products

Years in industry: 11

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Growing up, I watched my family turn their passions for birds into a profitable business. I took that passion and placed it where I thought the industry was lacking.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? At A&E Cage Company, we offer products that are not only high in quality but have safety features that benefit the overall health of birds. Our goal is to design and sell products that are made of materials that are safe and that enhance the life of birds.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I always have a light on in my house because I am afraid of the dark.



AARON MERRELL

CEO
PLATO PET TREATS
Fresno, California

35

Company description: High-quality, all-natural pet treat company based in the San Joaquin Valley. Plato prides itself on sourcing local ingredients to create these treats in our own quality-controlled facility.

Primary job function: Oversees all aspects of business

Years in industry: 10

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I grew up in the pet industry; I started working on the production floor of an industry supplier since high school. After college, I saw a huge opportunity and loved the industry, so it was a perfect fit.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I can easily say that my biggest contribution to pet business and to pet owners is the integrity and quality of the products that we have made and continue to make.

What do you enjoy most about the pet industry? What I enjoy most is that it's centered on love and fun. We bring pets into our homes and make them a part of our family because we cherish the deep connections.



MEG MEYER

Co-founder
THE BEAR & THE RAT
Denver, Colorado

36

Company description: The Bear & The Rat produces healthful frozen and freeze-dried yogurt treats for dogs.

Primary job function: Manages the growth of the company while planning for the future

Years in industry: 5

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My husband Matt had the idea when he was eight years old; he couldn't understand why there wasn't a healthy ice cream for dogs. And 28 years later, we decided to go for it.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? It's our responsibility to produce high-quality treats that distributors, retailers and pet owners trust. And while we're at it, we like to have a little bit of fun. We produce frozen and freeze-dried yogurt for dogs. Best not to take ourselves or our brand too seriously.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I love to dance. My first dream was to be a performer in musicals on Broadway. I went to a performing arts high school (like Fame) and studied drama.



MICHELLE O'HOLLAREN

Owner and Designer
SOPHISTICATED PUP
Chicago, Illinois

36

Company description: Sophisticated Pup is a designer of premium pet products and pet-themed home decor items.

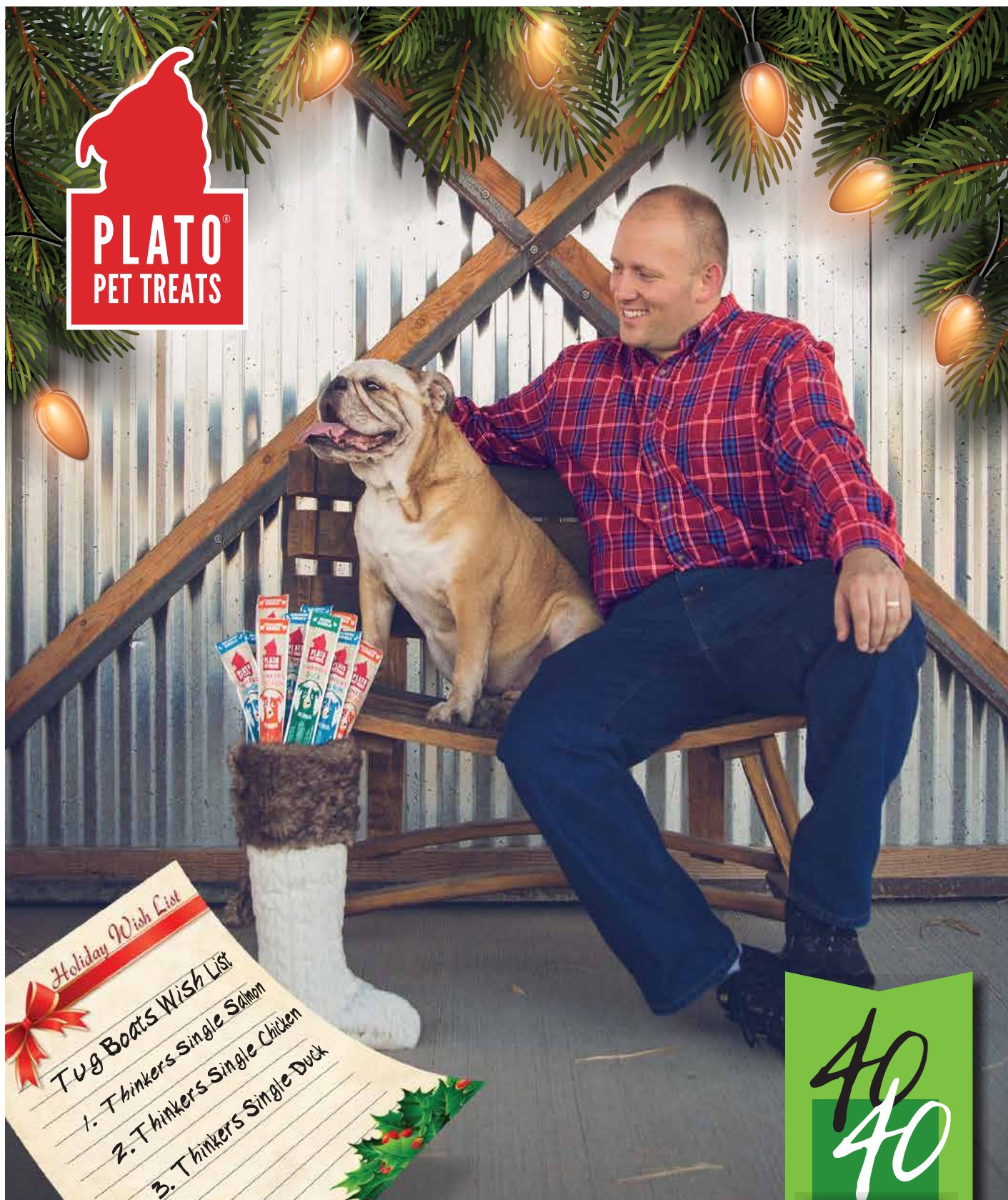
Primary job function: Designer of all pet products

Years in industry: 9

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Sophisticated Pup was born out of the love for my little pug, Penny. She came into my life August 3, 2005, and life hasn't been the same since. I used to design my own clothes growing up, so designing for her seemed an obvious next step. Creating things and watching my ideas come to life is an important part of my personality.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? What I have always offered is high-quality, handmade items for pets. We offer unique, fashionable designs that are all made in the USA. We offer the boutiques we work exceptional customer service, personal attention, and the ability to provide their customers a unique product they know was designed and manufactured locally

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Some fun facts are that Penny and I appeared with the "Real Housewife of New Jersey" Teresa Guidice in an interview on the Jonathan Brandmeier Show in 2012. We also had our products in the celebrity swag bags at the 2012 MTV Movie Awards. Sophisticated Pup was a top-ten finalist in the 2012 "Martha Stewart American Made Awards" out of over 2,000 nominees, and we were featured in the December 2012 issue of Martha Stewart Living.



Plato Pet treats would like to congratulate our CEO Aaron Merrell for the honor of being recognized as a 2015 40 under 40 finalist.

40
40

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ELAN OVADIA

Vice President, Sales
ALL STAR DOGS
Marlboro, New Jersey

31

Company description: All Star Dogs, a proud U.S. manufacturer, holds the license for over 300 collegiate and professional sports teams. Our extensive catalog includes nearly two dozen styles of pet apparel and accessories for every team.

Primary job function: Heads sales in United States and Canada

Years in industry: 9

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My father. He started the company with my uncle 15 years ago in three storage units and has built it into a healthy growing business. His work ethic and dedication is admirable. He sets a strong example for all our employees - most of all, me. Working with your dad every day is not always a walk in the park, but we challenge each other and make each other better. We strive to improve our business operations a little bit every single day.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I love educating new store owners, giving them the advice they need to be successful. Some have strong retail background, others have virtually none. Their success is dependent on each and every one of us and it feels great to help them. I always invite new retailers to contact me directly if they ever need a vendor recommendation, merchandising advice, or just have a general question that a seasoned industry vet has the answer to. I've also paired up many new store owners with existing in-state retailers to be a point of contact and line of communication.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I lived in an apartment building in Manhattan for the last 10 years that didn't allow pets. I recently relocated back to New Jersey and a dog-friendly building.



JEREMY PETERSEN

Executive Vice President
WILD CALLING PET FOODS/ZOIC PET FOODS
Greeley, Colorado

27

Company description: Wild Calling Pet Foods is the marketer of a portfolio of luxury dog and cat foods under the brands Wild Calling and Zoic.

Primary job function: Responsible for all aspects of brand development, including execution and strategy, profit and loss management, creative direction, package design, advertising and distribution

Years in industry: 4

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My path toward the pet food industry has largely been a life-long journey. When I was a kid, my dad owned a large pet distribution business in Denver, Colorado.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I feel we are really one of the first pet food brands to market itself as an aspirational brand and to directly and explicitly target millennial consumers at an affordable price-point relative to the target audience.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? The emerging importance of price in the marketing equation. Since our economy hasn't seen much inflation in the past eight or nine years, there is a unique dynamic occurring where the price of pet food continues to rise at retail, but pet owners do not necessarily have the appetite or disposable income allowance to pay more for pet food.



KATIE PUSATERI

Director of Marketing
COASTAL PET PRODUCTS
Alliance, Ohio

27

Company description: Coastal Pet Products is committed to enriching the interactions between pets and people by providing high-quality, lifestyle products that support the care and safety of dogs and cats.

Primary job function: All aspects of marketing

Years in industry: 4

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Two of my greatest passions are marketing and pets. The fact that I'm able to combine the two is very rewarding.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I've had the opportunity to be part of a team that launched multiple social media platforms and a new website that aim to provide information on how to use our products and tips on responsible pet ownership.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I was a majorette in college and can twirl three batons (at least I used to be able to).



DOUG RATNER

CEO and Founder
I'D RATHER BE WITH MY DOG
Atlanta, Georgia

28

Company description: A lifestyle brand for people who would rather be with their dog (or cat).

Primary job function: Promoting the brand

Years in industry: 2

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I've always been an enormous animal lover, and after I started the clothing side of the business, I knew I had to get into the pet industry somehow and this was an easy step in. Very organic and natural.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? The biggest would be the amount of animals we've saved through all the donations we've made to various animal rescues and shelters. Also providing the industry with an extremely healthy and affordable dog treat.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I was a professional musician before getting into the pet business.



TARA ROBERTSON

National Director of Sales
CURRENT USA & ECOXOTIC
Vista, California

34

Company description: Current USA & Ecoxotic provide innovative lighting products in the aquarium and related industries.

Primary job function: Manage customer communication while developing and implement strategies for building the brand; collaborating with product development to produce leading-edge products

Years in industry: 13

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I love to study behavior, both human and animal. I try to understand apprehensions, likings, inherent nature and the ways we react to each other in all settings. What inspires me is in my role as a sales manager trying to understand the psyche of a customer and influence them in a way where they feel like they are making the best decision for both themselves and their business.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry?

Collaborating with product development to develop truly unique and innovative products for the aquarium hobbyist while establishing strong consumer brands and setting an example for the social and environmental responsibilities we have as pet industry manufacturers.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I think most people would be surprised to know that when I do get some time to myself my favorite thing to do is go camping with my dog and not say a word.



BRETT AND CHELSEA SHER (TWINS)

Co-founders and Co-owners
AGAINST THE GRAIN PET FOOD
Wheeling, Illinois

28

Company description: Evolutionary, revolutionary, next generation superfoods for the eco-conscious pet parent.

Primary job function: Running the company, building the brand

Years in industry: 8

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Our parents worked in family businesses for 20-plus years before they took ownership of Evangers together. They grew Evanger's from a small regional business to a worldwide brand. Their dedication and hard work to achieve their own success was an inspiration to us, and a big reason why we wanted to run and devote ourselves to our own company.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? We have been able to deliver unique foods that are unparalleled in the industry to fussy dogs and cats.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? You have to sell a lot of pet food to pay your generous parents back for the loan that got you started.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Our parents were gymnasts and all five of their kids were competitive state gymnasts. Now, Chelsea takes a picture in front of an iconic landmark doing a cartwheel everywhere she travels, and you can follow her at @cartwheelextreme on Instagram.

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JARED SHLAGER

CEO
BOSTON TREAT HOUSE
Boynton Beach, Florida

24

Company description: Boston Treat House is an empire that creates some of the healthiest and most innovative dog treat brands on the market.

Primary job function: To start, build and grow innovative brands of healthy dog treats

Years in industry: 18

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Getting involved with the manufacturing of dog treats has inspired me to provide the industry with the some of the healthiest ingredients in existence. Not only do I hope that my innovation makes animals healthier, but I hope that someday my innovation changes the world.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I created the first and only pomegranate dog treat brand on the market, where every unique flavor contains real pomegranates. Studies have shown that pomegranates are very nutritious and beneficial to good health in many ways.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I knew how long it took to build a brand of dog treats. Time is money, but more importantly, innovation will not wait for anyone.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I believe that most people would be surprised to learn that I entered this industry when I was 6 years old. Growing up, I was mentored by a lot of well-respected businessmen and women. It surprises most people that I have almost two decades worth of experience, yet I am only 24 years old. I was also honored with the first Governor's Young Entrepreneur Award this year. I was invited to the cabinet and was given the award by Governor Rick Scott.



JENNIFER SKELLEY

Associate Director of Communications
and Public Relations
AMERICAN PET PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION
Greenwich, Connecticut

34

Company description: APPA is a trade association for pet product manufacturers. Its mission is to promote, develop and advance pet ownership and the pet products industry.

Primary job function: Overseeing all communications and public relations programs for the company

Years in industry: 12

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Even though I had been a pet owner my whole life, I had no idea that this was a multibillion dollar industry. I was intrigued and wanted to be part of something I experienced personally, but could also learn so much from on a professional level.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? The work I've done with APPA has led to the creation of our company's public awareness campaign, Pets Add Life, which promotes the joys and benefits of responsible pet ownership to the public.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? Everyone I encounter in this industry seems to be driven by a genuine love of pets. You don't find that kind of inspiration in any other industry.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I had planned to become a psychologist but instead found myself drawn to the communications and marketing fields once I was in college.



LEA SMITH

Marketing Manager
QT DOG, LLC
Dallas, Texas

28

Company description: QT Dog, LLC is a pet manufacturer located in Dallas, Texas, operating since 1997. Manufacturing and selling all natural chews and treats, raised feeders and stainless steel bowls and buckets.

Primary job function: Both marketing and day-to-day functions

Years in industry: 1

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My family has been a part of the pet industry since I was 10 and I have grown up with it always around me.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I think having the opportunity to grow up in this industry and then step out of it has been my biggest help. I have had the ability to really look at things from the pet owner's perspective.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I grew up taking ballet and danced for 14 years, even in the "Nutcracker" with the Russian Ballet.



NAME: NEIL SMITH

Key Accounts Manager
MIDWEST HOMES FOR PETS
Muncie, Indiana

29

Company description: MidWest Homes for Pets designs and manufactures a variety of containment products and accessories for dogs, cats, birds and small animals.

Primary job function: Work with key account customers in the pet industry

Years in industry: 5

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I grew up with multiple pets and thought it would be a rewarding experience to make a career in an industry that I am passionate about.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Educating and working with customers about responsible pet ownership and practices.

WELL DONE JEFF, BEST IN SHOW!



Congratulations to our respected colleague, Jeff Camosci, on being named one of Pet Age's Forty Under 40 winners for 2015.

Jeff, your hard work and dedication is one of the biggest reasons our whimsically fun dental chews are enjoyed by dogs around the world. We appreciate everything you do and our team is proud to celebrate you as a recipient of this prestigious award.



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J. NICOLE SMITH

Owner and Director
DANE + DANE STUDIOS
Twickenham, United Kingdom

33

Company description: dane + dane is a boutique creative studio with a decade of experience growing pet brands through focused marketing strategies, emotive pet photography and clean, elegant design.

Primary job function: Director of studio

Years in industry: 10

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? Like many petpreneurs, I was inspired by my dog. I was 22, she was a Great Dane puppy, and from the instant I met her, I knew my life, career and sleeping arrangements would never be the same.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? I think my great gift is the ability to quickly understand, interpret and make tangible that which my clients can't quite verbalize. My experience in so many aspects of pet business: as a dog owner, dogpreneur, visual artist, author, journalist, salesperson, retail shop owner, consultant and dog marketing expert allows me to always have the big picture in mind.

What do you wish you had known earlier about the pet industry? I wish I had known how easy it is to reach out to fellow business owners – how similar all of our needs, concerns and victories are and how open most people are to connecting.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? My first animal passion was horses. As a child I would get the Sunday paper, circle the classified ads of all the horses I wanted, then set about drawing them fancy expansive stables and barns.



TRAVIS SMITH

Warehouse and Sales Manager
BRAKE-FAST
Dallas, Texas

32

Company description: Manufacturer of premium dog chews and treats, and stainless steel bowls and buckets.

Primary job function: Sales and marketing manager

Years in industry: 3

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? There was a job opening so I guess I lucked into it.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? My good looks and southern accent.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I was a college tennis player at the University of Hawaii.



MARIE SVET

Principal
ORGANIC OSCAR
San Diego, California

35

Company description: Pet grooming products manufacturing and distribution; now, pet treats and food distribution

Primary job function: Entrepreneur

Years in industry: 5

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? The desire and passion to make a difference for people and their pets. I have two loving dogs who taught me so much by loving me so unconditionally.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? The biggest contribution would be to be provide holistic alternatives to regular products and be the proof that you can live a healthy and holistic lifestyle at an affordable price.



COURTNEY TAYLOR

Director of Customer Care and Marketing
IN CLOVER
Boulder, Colorado

29

Company description: In Clover creates innovative pet supplements through hands-on, research-based formulation for fast, noticeable results, allowing pets to live healthier, more vibrant lives.

Primary job function: Providing strategic coaching, training and sales support for existing and new customers

Years in industry: 3

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? As a child, I had several pets, including guinea pigs, ferrets, a gecko, cats and a dog, and I adored riding horses. This early love of animals evolved into a rich curiosity and a passion for animal welfare. I studied animal science and business at Colorado State University before launching my career path into the animal industry.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry?

Every day, I guide pet retailers through ever-changing landscape of pet supplementation. I serve as a trusted advisor to retail owners and employees, helping them get beyond puffery to understand the science behind ingredients and formulation.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? Some people may be surprised to learn that I was a cowgirl in the truest sense of the word. I started young horses, competed in the rodeo circuit and chased maverick cattle across the prairie to return them to the herd. It was hard work that built character and somehow proved to be both thankless and rewarding at the same time.

Congratulations Jennifer Skelley

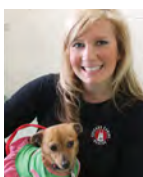


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REBECCA TOMALA

Vice President, Client Services
MATRIX PARTNERS
Chicago, Illinois

39

Company description: Matrix Partners is an award-winning brand strategy and communications firm specializing in pet product advertising, public relations, design and strategy.

Primary job function: Design efficacious marketing campaigns that successfully create and launch new pet brands and grow established ones.

Years in industry: 11

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? My tenacious love of animals. Marc Anthony once said, "If you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life." And I genuinely love what I do. I love my clients, I love being the channel to help get pet brands from the manufacturer, to the distributor, to store shelves, into the hands of loving pet parents.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry? Helping the little guys prevail. Working at a mid-size, family-owned company, we tend to attract small to mid-sized pet companies. Many of these firms are also family-owned or independently held businesses. The companies we represent share the same philosophies as we do, they are very dedicated to our industry and looking to provide solutions to keep pets healthy. With the recent changes in our industry, it can be a challenge to break through the clutter. My role as a marketer is to define a unique selling point and relay that point to potential customers in an engaging and meaningful way.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? I am a proud vegetarian whose first client at a national advertising agency was a meat manufacturer for human consumption.



IAN WEISS

Vice President, Sales
ARLEE PET PRODUCTS
New York City, New York

39

Company description: Arlee Pet Products is the pet supply division of Arlee Home Fashions, a 40-year-old, family owned and operated home decor company

Primary job function: Oversee product development and sales

Years in industry: 21

What inspired you to get into the pet industry? I have always had a love for animals. I grew up collecting every type of pet that could fit in my New York City apartment and spent much of my high school and college life working in retail pet stores. I had so much fun working in that field that it seemed to make sense that I should go to vet school but soon found that the pet supply industry offered far more opportunity for me

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to the pet industry?

Throughout my career, I have been extremely fortunate to have some very smart people advising me. These mentors have each taught me valuable lessons in specific areas of the industry as well as how to be a better person to do business with overall. My biggest contribution is to pass these learnings on to both my customers and co-workers.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? My background is quite diverse when it comes to animal husbandry. I'm not just well versed on the needs of companion animals. I also hold certifications in farm and laboratory animal care.

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Continued on page 56



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THE CLOTHES MAKE THE DOG

The options for dog clothing keep expanding.

By Maggie Marton

Pet fashion isn't just about Halloween costumes anymore. There are ready-to-wear day and night looks, bikinis, licensed apparel and even ball gowns and wedding dresses. The category is starting to explode as pet owners deck out their dogs in duds designed to reflect their personalities.

"As pets become more accepted in public places and people become more enthused by trends and stylish alternatives to the ordinary selections they find at big box stores, the pet fashion category is bound to grow," said Amber Lee Forrester, president of Kane & Couture. "Pets have personalities, and what they wear can help communicate their personalities."

Options for Pet Fashionistas

One of the biggest growth drivers has been the availability of fashion apparel at multiple price points.

"When I started ZigZag Wags, there didn't seem to be many choices for

pet products and accessories in the \$20 to \$30 price range," said company founder Sara Jade. "Or better put, there didn't seem to be many good choices. At the time, I saw a lot of disparity between price and quality, and I think that's still true today. You shouldn't have to spend \$50, \$60 or \$100 to purchase a well-made, durable product for your pet, unless of course you really want to. There is definitely a market for quality products at mid-range price points, with plenty of room for retail profit."

Customers are also looking for a suite of coordinating items that carry over into the human end of the leash.

"Our new, fun pieces are our carriers and matching accessories, such as the Somerset Key Purses and Lahser and Woodward Keychains," said Forrester. "All of the pieces in the line stylishly coordinate with matching pieces. You can have our Street Chic or Front Row Carrier, with a matching harness, collar, leash and attached key purse to

put all of your necessities in while on the go."

Couture for a Cause

Last year saw the rise of licensed products, and sports-related items are still popular. This coming year, though, is all about cause-related marketing.

Jade has spotted that among her customers.

"I think there will always be innovations in product development, if for no other reason than differentiation to drive sales," she said. "However, I have noticed a sharp increase in cause-specific marketing, particularly with respect to pet products," she said. "The passion consumers have for animal welfare and rescue is the dominant force behind viral campaigns, fundraising efforts and overall awareness, and retailers would be smart to contribute to these causes in a meaningful way." Think pink breast cancer awareness items in October and similar pet-related campaigns that

SPECIAL SECTION: APPAREL & TRAVEL

could feature merchandise supporting specific rescues.

Racking up the Sales

In the store, Forrester suggests the key to making more sales comes down to merchandising.

"Display and point of sale are key," she said. "Retailers often get monotonous in their displays, and customers expect nothing different when everything looks the same. When Kane & Couture sells into a store, we offer to help with display ideas, fixtures and POS to let the customer know that these items are special and unique. A great display shows how well the collection coordinates and encourages the customer to buy multiple items in their purchase."

Jade pointed out that online retailers are upping the ante in this segment, so brick-and-mortar stores need to adjust their strategies.

"Smart shoppers are really paying much more attention now that there

are so many online stores to buy from," said Jade. "It will be the [manufacturers] that design quality accessories with these shoppers in mind who will see the most growth over the next few years. It isn't just about name brands anymore. Purchasing decisions are increasingly based on price and quality comparisons, so those [manufacturers] who still mass produce low-quality items to sell at inflated price points are just missing the mark completely."

"There is definitely a market for quality products at mid-range price points, with plenty of room for retail profit." — Sara Jade

"I think there has been a shift in the way consumers look at retail products, not just in the pet product industries but in general," said Jade. "Maybe it started with the troubled economy a few years ago, or perhaps it's simply the evolution of e-commerce and

the online shopping experience, but whatever the cause, shoppers now have some basic expectations that retailers must meet to remain successful."

In the fashion segment, that comes down to the quality of the piece. Consumers don't want to purchase an item — even a frivolous one like a bikini or ball gown — to last only a single season. The exception may be those Halloween costumes, but stocking items that last will help customers build their pet's wardrobe.

Ultimately, it comes down to customers wanting to reflect their own personalities through their dog's apparel. Whether that's a tuxedo, a tutu, a football jersey, a cause-related piece or a hipster-inspired sweater set, consumers will gravitate toward items that reflect themselves, so keeping a variety stocked — even if you don't have a huge inventory of any one item — will appeal to the clothes-loving pet shopper.



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TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

No matter where customers take their pets, these products make getting there easier.

By Maggie Marton

Pet-friendly travel ranges from a quick day trip to a national park, to holidays with the in-laws, to family vacations and more. Regardless of the destination or duration of the trip, families traveling with pets require some essential supplies to keep things tidy, calm and convenient.

Keep It Clean

Cleanup solutions start with poop bags. Eco-friendly, biodegradable options like those from Earth Rated are favored by customers who don't want their pets to leave an impact. For roadside stops or for nature areas that require you to remove all your trash when you leave, a scented version that ties easily is key to keeping vehicles odor-free.

For those brave customers who choose to travel with their cats, The Green Pet Shop offers a disposable litter box. There's been an increase particularly in feline-friendly RV travel, and this product provides a perfect solution.

"The KatPak is a disposable, portable litter box that is made of recycled paper. It comes folded flat and folds out accordion-style to the length of a conventional litter box," said Larry Wright, president and CEO of The Green Pet Shop.

Simply add litter and it will last for about a week, after which you grab the handles and toss it in the garbage.

"The KatPak is the most convenient, value-priced, unique, and environmentally conscious cat litter box on the market today," said Wright. "It's very portable and easy to travel with, comes in a pack of four, and customers will never have to touch dirty litter ever again."

Cleanup also includes drying off wet dogs and wiping up muddy paws. The Soggy Doggy Super Shammy is made with a highly absorbent, durable microfiber material that soaks up five times more water than a cotton towel. It's a great solution for customers who travel because the fabric remains odor- and bacteria-free, and they can toss it in the washer.

Insects are another cleanliness issue while venturing away from home. No pet-friendly traveler wants their dog to bring pests into the car, RV, hotel room or their in-laws' house. Insect Shield offers a range of products to keep pets bug-free.

"Insect Shield for Pets products, such as the lightweight, easy-to-pack bandanas, hoodies, tees and blankets are ideal for travels with your pet to buggy locales," said Janine Robertson, the company's marketing and public relations manager. "You just never know when you are going to find yourself in tick- and flea-infested areas, and these items provide built-in Insect Shield repellency to ward off bugs on the road. The technology is odorless, effective and long-lasting and is utilized for human apparel and gear products by the U.S. military and in the outdoor lifestyle, work wear, equestrian and global health arenas."

Less Stress, More Fun

For dogs that get nervous while traveling, calming products are must-haves. Supplements like those from Ark Naturals and Nelson's Rescue Remedy provide pets with stress relief, and they take up little shelf room. Additionally, calming products that pets wear, like the ThunderShirt and Anxiety Wrap, are convenient, washable, packable options.

"When we first rescued our dog, he was not accustomed to traveling. He was stressed, and the addition of the Anxiety Wrap has cuddled our boy into a new level of comfort. He feels the light pressure, and it allows him to travel in a better way," said Larry Cobb, the U.S. vice president of sales, marketing and operations at The Company of Animals. "Retailers can advise their customers that this will allow them to take the family dog with them in a safe and fun way. The stress can be reduced, and the dog will then stay in one location while driving, and the trip is now more fun for all."

Safety First

For safety, especially when exploring outdoor environments you may not have visited before, carrying a small, lightweight animal deterrent like SprayShield from PetSafe may be a good idea.

"SprayShield is great for traveling as it can offer protection for you and your dog against any unfamiliar and nosey animals you may potentially encounter," said Nicole Backus, product manager for toys and behavior at PetSafe. "Unlike other spray deterrent products, there is no harmful blowback, and it is extremely safe and will not cause pain or injury to animals or humans. Since it's completely safe, it can also be used to interrupt an unwanted behavior and distract your dog in the event that he gets overly excited by anything he sees or experiences during your travels."

Pack It Up

Finally, convenience items that help owners pack up and carry their pet's belongings can simplify the traveling experience.

Ruffwear offers two solutions. The Kibble Kaddie is a portable dog food carrier that holds up to 42 cups of kibble, which it dispenses through a side chute that has a magnetic closure. The fabric is grease resistant, and the roll-down top allows you to adjust for volume and space. A built-in stash pocket accommodates bowls.

The brand's Haul Bag stores all travel essentials: food, bowls, leashes, poop bags and even toys. With handles and an over-the-shoulder strap, it's easy to carry, and it includes a built-in ID sleeve for keeping important information on hand.

While this category is broad, all pet-friendly travelers need a range of essential items. Consider merchandizing them together in a travel-themed section to make shopping as easy as their trip will be.



AWAY WE GO!

Owners seek safe ways to travel with their pets in cars and on planes.

By Maggie Marton

Traveling with a pet can be a fun adventure, perfect for bonding. It can also be a stressful mess of logistics and, well, accidents. Thankfully, for your customers who love to travel with their pets, there is a wide array of accessories now available to make the journey both easier and safer. Beyond the basics — leashes and collars, food and water dishes — products specifically designed for use in cars and airplanes give consumers the confidence to take their pets with them wherever they go.

Safety Restraints

Restraints and harnesses are necessary for car travel, though they may often be overwhelming to consumers: Where do all those straps go?

Stock your shelves with versatile options that are easy to explain — and use. For instance, Ruffwear's Load Up Harness is designed to safely restrain dogs during vehicle transport. Built with strength-rated hardware and components, the Load Up Harness has been dynamically tested at MGA Research Corp. (a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration contracted test facility) under the conditions outlined in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213. It boasts a few bonuses appealing to round-tripping customers: It offers a universal fit that attaches to existing seatbelts, it can remain on for bathroom breaks, and dogs can sit or lie down during the ride.

Another multipurpose option is the CLIX CarSafe harness from The Company of Animals.

"The CLIX CarSafe is designed as a safety harness that can also be used as you take your dog in and around your car," said Larry Cobb, the brand's U.S. vice president of sales, marketing and operations. "I travel with my dog

Sebo, and he always has a CLIX CarSafe harness on when we travel. The secure seatbelt portion 'CLIX' right into my seatbelt. I also know that I can snap his lead into this same hardware to allow his safe entry or as he leaves the car. I have also found that the way this seatbelt buckle stows away into the harness makes it easy to put our CLIX CarSafe on in the safety of our home."

Carry On

Carriers work well for car travel with a small dog and are requisite for air travel.

Ann Greenberg, founder of The Underground Chic, took her eco-conscious handbags and expanded the concept into a line of fashion-forward, eco-friendly pet carriers and accessories called A Pet with Paws. Its Madison Pet Carrier is airline approved and fits under the seat in front of the traveler. The breathable mesh back, side and top allow the pet easy entry and exit. End pockets and a shoulder strap add function to the design.

Other popular brands include fashionable options from Bark n Bag, functional ranges from Gen7Pets and hard plastic carriers from Marchioro.

Remember: Every airline sets its own standards for what types of carriers they allow on board. Encourage your customers to research these requirements before purchase, or you may be dealing with exchanges and returns.

Or, consider finding the specifications for a handful of major airlines and have them on hand to provide information (with the caveat that airline rules are ever-changing, of course).

Travel safety isn't just for dogs, either. Earlier this year, Sleepypod introduced CLEO, a crash test cat that records video footage of the tests from a pet's point of view. For plane travel, Sleepypod

Air's unique design allows it to contract in size to fit into the space below most airline seats during takeoff and landing. Then, once the plane is in the air, it can be expanded to allow a pet the largest possible space during the trip.

Necessary Accessories

Beyond harnesses and carriers, consumers seek accessories that provide convenience and cleanliness. For example, as owners take their dogs on more adventures like hiking and swimming, seat covers and cargo liners continue to grow in popularity.

The Dirtbag Seat Cover from Ruffwear is one such product. This durable, machine-washable, waterproof cover shields vehicle seats from muddy paws and other pet messes. The convertible design can be installed in traditional or hammock configuration while still allowing access to seatbelts. Secure attachments keep the cover in place, while cleats and nonslip fabric keep pets stable while the vehicle is moving.

"Today's consumer is more educated when it comes to selecting products for their dog," said Greg Freyberg, Ruffwear's brand manager. "They do their research prior to entering the store, so anything you can provide to guide them in the right direction will truly be beneficial. Consider merchandising products by key family brands or product categories. And prominently displaying [them] in key locations in your store [is] definitely helpful."

Per his "product categories" suggestion, grouping these plane and car accessories together might simplify the shopping process for your travel consumer. Just be ready to answer super-specific questions about the products on offer because, as Freyberg pointed out, these are typically savvy consumers.



WINTER WONDERLAND

Coats, sweaters, boots and more — keeping pets warm has never been easier.

By Maggie Marton

Cold climate apparel for pets is all about function. When traveling in frigid temps or snowy

weather, keeping pets warm is the first priority. However, favoring function over fashion does not mean con-

sumers want stripped-down basics; instead, they're looking for technical products that reflect what they purchase for themselves.



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Pet Parkas

"I think we've kind of moved beyond the basics of winter wear for dogs," said Rebecca Gadd, president of Gold Paw Series. "Most everyone shopping at a pet supply store is already accustomed conceptually to rain jackets, sweaters, etcetera for their dogs, so they're really looking for garments with something extra, whether that's adorable accessories or really sumptuous textiles."

"The most common trend we have seen [comprises] products that enable easier, safer and more convenient travel with your dog," said Ruffwear brand manager Greg Freyberg. "Customers are looking for items that provide a solution to what they've found as challenging in past travels with their dog."

Ruffwear's Powder Hound is a problem-solving jacket: Its hybrid design combines technical fabrics and

insulation for warmth, breathability and weather resistance but is stretchy to give the dog range of motion. The sleeved style provides full coverage, and the side-zipper closure allows for a high-performance fit. It's available in three on-trend colors: red currant, larkspur purple and Baja blue.

"I think consumers are looking for well-built items that fit properly and enable them to better enjoy adventures with their dog," Freyberg said. "The consumer puts a lot of trust in us when they purchase something like a life jacket for their dog, and they expect it to perform when needed. With features like the hybrid insulation system and fit of our new Powder Hound jacket, they want quality items that last, with superior fabrics, strong zippers and reflective material for safety."

Kurgo's line includes three solid winter-weather options.

The Loft Dog Jacket is a reversible, waterproof, quilted shell made from Microtomic ripstop material and 140 msg Polytech fill. It's a lightweight jacket that can work on cold-weather walks or hikes on rugged terrain.

The Allagash Jacket is made of a waterproof Hydroweave material that holds up in harsh conditions. This tough style is built for trails.

The North Country Coat is made from a durable ripstop and 1200 denier material that stands up to tough trails and effortlessly sheds water, wind and snow. The coat is lined with soft fleece for warmth and comfort.

Gold Paw Series delivers warmth with an extra helping of style. The company's Duluth Double Fleece Pullover has two layers of soft stretch fleece to keep dogs (and cats) cozy. The layers feature bold but complementary colors, and the available styles include plaids and tartans too. These sweaters are made with recycled content and are machine washable.

Cold Feet

Cold-weather wear isn't only about coats and jackets. Accessories make great add-ons to a sale, while serving to keep dogs warm, comfortable and safe in harsh conditions.

For example, before incorporating them into her line, Gadd's customers were requesting snoods.

"People use them to improve the warmth of existing coats, for ear

coverage and also just as a colorful fashion accessory," she said. "Merchandising a snood basically requires a mannequin. Otherwise, your customers are looking at a tube of fleece. We generated a lot of interest from eye-catching color combos of the snood and stretch fleeces on solid black mannequins from Ronis."

Boots are another necessary accessory for hiking or climbing in snow and ice. Ruffwear's Polar Trex and Grip Trex dog boots provide all-terrain protection. The Polar Trex is specifically designed to provide traction and insulation from snow and ice. Muttluks are immensely popular all-weather, all-purpose dog boots, though they tend to sell at a much higher price point than other options. Boot manufacturers size their products differently, so be prepared to help customers try them on their dog to ensure the best fit.

Compared to other apparel categories, functional winter wear is often sold at a higher price point because of the technology involved. Being able to explain the benefits of different products will help consumers meet their purchase goals. That starts with merchandizing, but it also helps to have useful signage and products that provide educational information.

"Ruffwear has just completed an entire overhaul of its product packaging," said Freyberg. "We expanded the physical structure for many products to provide more space for product features and benefits, making it easier for customers to determine the best Ruffwear product for their activity and their dog's needs. Line drawings of the products with short descriptions of key features also act as a silent salesperson to help the customer make the right purchase for their needs."

Winter adventurers are often savvy consumers too, and have some idea of what they're looking for. Typically, they want the same technology that they find in their own gear. Most will generally come shopping armed with research, so be prepared to answer technical questions. Their most important concern will be choosing the right fit, as well as a product that will ensure safety and comfort in the elements. Capitalize on that by testing and fitting gear onto the customer's dog to complete the sale.

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FUN IN THE SUN

Here are the pet products owners need for safe, warm-weather fun.

By Maggie Marton

With winter right around the corner, many pet-friendly travelers seek more temperate climes. So whether they're traveling to a warm place or they're lucky enough to live in a beach area year round, product selection is focused on choosing the right equipment for sun, water and heat safety. And if your store is under winter's thumb, it's not too early to start thinking about ordering merchandise for the hotter times ahead.

Sun Dogs

Sunburns and sun-related skin diseases, including skin cancers like basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, are becoming more common in dogs. When your customers are heading out to a beachy locale, suggest sun-protection products.

One cool option is EzyDog's Dog Rashie – UV Protection & Swim Shirt. Originally worn by surfers to guard them against sunburn and heat rash while in the water, the Rashie vest protects dogs from heat and UV rays. Made from high-visibility Lycra with a stretch fit, it's designed for safe, comfortable, all-day water use.

Likewise, Gold Paw Series' Sun Shield Tee is a lightweight stretch jersey with a UPF50 rating that blocks 98 percent of the sun's UV rays. The brand will also customize the tee with sleeves at the customer's request.

For hot, sandy destinations, paw protection is a necessity. Consider easy-to-pack rubber options like Pawz Dog Boots, or suggest a rugged-terrain version for dogs that run, climb and swim on rocky beaches.

Beyond wearable protection, sun-screen-type products for dogs make an easy add-on to beach-bound travelers' purchases. It's important to caution your customers that human sunscreen is unsafe for pets, so stock an array of

pet-friendly versions, like those made by Epi-Pet.

Additionally, My Dog Nose It offers affordable sun protection for sensitive canine noses. A balm that dries quickly, it heals existing problems, adds moisture, and prevents nose color from fading. It's also appropriate for other exposed, sensitive areas like the ears.

Cooling Off

In hot regions, overheating is a real risk. Cooling products mitigate that problem.

Ruffwear's top-selling cooling vest, the Swamp Cooler, provides full coverage to keep dogs more comfortable in the heat. The vest's three-layer construction includes a wicking outer layer that facilitates evaporation, an absorbent middle layer that stores water for evaporation and a comfortable inner layer that transfers a cooling effect to the dog. To use it, consumers need to soak the vest in the sink or tub, wring it out and then put it on the dog for the cooling effect.

Beyond heat and sun protection, water safety is a big category. According to a 2014 article on PetPlace.com, nearly 5,000 dogs drown in pools each year.

"There's a common misconception among pet parents that all dogs are naturally strong swimmers, but the fact is that dogs need extra support just like people do," said Paul Banker, Outward Hound's senior manager of content marketing. "Understanding the differences between our three jackets is a great start for retailers. For dogs that are already strong swimmers, the Neoprene Life Jacket is a great choice, while pups that are new to swimming will benefit most from the Ripstop or Fun Fish jackets. Each of our three jackets offers superior buoyancy and support in the water. These products

are commonly merchandised alongside our water toys and games to help pet parents gear up for summer fun."

The neoprene version affords added mobility due to its flexibility, giving dogs unrestricted movement while still incorporating the safety-orange high-visibility color and rescue handles. The Fun Fish Life Jacket was new at SuperZoo 2015 and is based on the brand's bestselling Ripstop Life Jacket. These jackets are made with durable nylon material and feature multiple reflective strips, quick release buckles and easy-grab handles.

Ruffwear's K-9 Float Coat capitalizes on a dog's natural swimming position with strategically-placed closed-cell foam panels. The strong, low-profile handle is optimally positioned to help get dogs out of the water, and a telescoping neck closure adjusts for a range of dog sizes and is permanently attached and secure. The water-compatible webbing remains stable in wet environments, and easy-to-clip sheltered buckles keep straps firmly in place over time.

Once all of your customers' safety needs are accounted for, don't forget the fun: Toys that float in the water are popular for beach goers. Ruffwear's Lunker, Chuckit's Amphibious Gator and Kong's Aqua are popular options. Stock brightly-colored toys that are easy to spot in the water and durable options that will withstand numerous retrieves. West Paw Designs and Katie's Bumpers also offer fun, long-lasting toys that increase interactivity.

Finally, round out your water-bound offerings with travel must-haves like waterproof leashes and collars. Blissful Hounds manufactures chewproof, waterproof leashes in a range of on-trend, beach-worthy neons. Collapsible water dishes that are easy to stow, like Kurgo's Collaps a Bowl, are a must.

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Adapting to Your Customers

Boosting sales through merchandising, displays and customer outreach.

BY JENNIFER KORNGIEBEL

The pet industry is regularly bombarded with news headlines such as, “Nimble, Savvier, Regional Chains Entering Your Market,” and “Canadian Pet Stores Expanding all over the U.S.,” or “Big Box Pet Opening Small Format Stores.” These are constant reminders of how difficult it is for local, independent pet specialty stores to compete in this fragmented, competitive retail world.

The good news is that smaller specialty stores can deliver something many of their competitors cannot—customized products and services based on the personal needs and preferences of the core

shoppers you’ve come to know and love. These include product solutions for harried shoppers; fun, rewarding in-store shopping experiences; and knowledgeable staff to engage pet lovers and keep them coming back to find products that will surprise them and delight the pets they adore.

Think Seasonally

The largest percentage of pet owning households are families with kids, and there’s a very specific calendar of events that dominate those families’ lives. In the fall, it’s back to school, Halloween and Thanksgiving. In the winter, there’s

Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, followed by a long cold and flu season and Valentine’s Day. Spring means Easter, Mother’s Day and graduation ceremonies. Summer brings with it Independence Day and the long-awaited outdoor season. All of these events present significant opportunities to bridge family and pet activities that drive sales. Even single pet owners are tuned in to this cycle. You can leverage both their nostalgia from when they were kids and their desire to include their pets in the fun to drive store sales.

Start by setting aside an area of the store for themed holiday events. Back to

Feature

school, for example, can include special healthy treats, toys and puzzle games to occupy pets now home alone more often. Fall has always been a time to buy new clothes and shoes for growing children. Why not for pets, too? Showcase dog slickers and booties for the tougher weather, and new reflective leads and collars for safe nighttime walks, which are becoming increasingly common.

Think similarly about other seasonal shifts and holidays as the calendar moves through the year. Pet owners want to care for and indulge their dogs and cats with the rest of the family and if you present them with fun, useful ideas, your sales will expand from mostly quick pet food one-off purchases to include higher margin items, too.

Fun Finds for Persnickety Pets

Many pet owners love to spoil their pets with new toys, accessories and treats, but they often don't have the time to identify new products or aren't sure what their picky pets will enjoy. Help them out by creating a section close to the checkout area to creatively display new products and 'fun finds' that shoppers might want to try. Be sure to include items in a range of prices, from a few dollars to more expensive items, so there's something for everyone. Ensure staff are engaged and ready to explain why these picks are being featured.

Integrated Product Displays

How often do you see food- or treat-only displays? Food is by far the most often purchased category, but many of your shoppers are already coming in to buy a favorite food. With this in mind, why not use your displays for their true purpose—to promote impulse buys of non-staple products? Brainstorm about your customers' key activities.

For example, if your store is located near a variety of walking/hiking trails, provide an assortment of gear and treats to make the trip fun. If your customers are interested in health and wellness, be sure to create eye-catching displays with the latest food, treat and supplement items, complete with nutrition informa-

tion. For a dog walking display, you can feature on-the-go treats, water bowls, collars and non-pull leads. Sport or high activity dog foods and treats can also be showcased for highly active dogs. Test out a few different integrated theme displays and determine which ones are most effective to keep for future rotations.

Health and Wellness

Health and wellness concerns are gaining ground with all consumer segments,

including pet owners. Providing a year-round health and wellness display with rotating product categories is a great way to keep shoppers engaged. A specific month could feature the best cat and dog supplements, and another could educate shoppers about new wet food additives on the market. Other themes might be healthy skin and coat products, oral health or grain-free food options.

Another great way to boost sales is to include staff recommendations or ratings





similar to those you find in independent wine stores. Have cards that you can affix to display shelves with the staff member's name and why he or she likes and recommends a product.

Personalized associate endorsements work well with more complicated product categories, such as aquarium equipment or bird toys. This is especially when shoppers might be struggling to decide which new products are best for their pets.

Boosting Sales

One way to boost sales is to take a page out of the big retailers' playbook. Organize a BOGO, or a buy one, get one, month twice a year. Enlist the support of your suppliers and distributors so you can have a wide selection across the store. If margins are too tight for a 'free' item, offer the second item at 50 percent off. Pair dry food with wet food or treats and mix up accessories to

engage and encourage shoppers to try items they wouldn't necessarily purchase during their standard food buy.

From the opposite side of the spectrum, take advantage of what makes a small pet retailer so powerful when competing against a big box player: you can know and have a personal relationship with your customers and their pets in ways they can't match. Gather profiles on customers, their pets and their buying habits. What type of food do they buy and how often? Use this data to set up text or email reminders for your customers when their food supplies are running low or let them know about an in-store event that is appropriate for their pet.

Launch a pet club with on-going promotions, discounts on product and a platform for owners to meet each other. Send pet birthday cards with a free in-store treat to encourage shoppers to bring their pets into the store. Organize

food drives for local pet shelters; pet owners love to support pet related causes, especially when they are local. These are just a few of the great ways you can solidify your relationships with your customers to secure long-term loyalty.

There are many effective merchandising, display and general marketing strategies that work to encourage shoppers to come into your stores and buy products that they might not have considered before their visit. Think about what's going on in a pet owner's broader world and leverage those factors in your stores. Your shoppers, their pets and your cash registers will all approve.

Jennifer Korngiebel serves as Daymon Worldwide's senior category manager for the pet category on the Global Business Development team. She collaborates across all of Daymon's retail teams, providing category and consumer insights and recommendations to create best-in-class pet programs.



Chew On This

Consumers look for easy solutions for dog dental health.

BY MAGGIE MARTON

The problem: Very few dog owners brush their dogs' teeth weekly or even monthly, let alone daily, which is what the American Veterinary Medical Association recommends. This presents a huge issue. Dental disease affects 91 percent of dogs over the age of three, according to Banfield Pet Hospital's State of Pet Health 2014 Report.

The solution: A range of dental products that span every category from treats and chews to toothpaste, oral wipes and rinses. No matter what type of dental care your customers want to provide to their dogs, there's a product to meet those needs.

Treats for Healthy Teeth

Treats simplify the process and make keeping up with dental hygiene more

convenient while letting pet owners feel like they're spoiling their pet.

"As people become more educated about how to keep their pets healthy and happy, we see consistent growth in the category of natural and functional treats," said Chris Meiering, director of innovation at Zuke's. "The fact that dental health can impact a pet's overall well-being has caused an increased interest specifically in natural dental treats, which is perfectly in line with the industry's overall move toward natural products made in the USA."

"We launched our Z-Bones in the edible dental market to offer a healthy, grain-free dental bone alternative to many of the current wheat-dense products on the market," Meiering said. "Our all-natural potato and pea-based formu-

la, designed specifically with a dog's digestive system in mind, supports fresh breath, clean teeth and healthy gums with antioxidant rich, whole food ingredients."

Chews are another easy option for pet owners, though consumers are savvy about what goes into edible dental chews.

"Currently, pet parents are regularly seeking out products that are grain-free and corn-free, as well as products that offer limited, natural ingredients," said Jeff Camosci, vice president of sales and marketing, North America, Paragon Pet Products, the maker of WHIMZEES dental dog chews. "They offer all of the benefits that help to promote healthier gums and teeth, but in a more fun, delicious and highly digestible way than

anything else on the market.”

“Product safety and quality are incredibly important to our entire company, as well as every retailer, pet parent and pet customer,” Camosci said. “WHIMZEES are produced according to human grade standards, and this unwavering commitment to quality will continue to drive us each and every day.”

PetSafe offers a line of dental products including both treats and chews.

“In dental treats, consumers are selecting more natural products and treats with whole food ingredients,” said Sarah Beene, PetSafe brand treats’ category manager. “As the cases of canine periodontal disease continue to increase, so does the demand for superior dental products. Wholesome, made in the USA dental treats, like the PetSafe indigo Fresh dental treats, will continue to grow in popularity. Grain-free continues to be a trend across all treat categories, including dental, so treats like our PetSafe indigo Fresh Floss Bones, made with potatoes and peas, are popular. Weight management also continues to be challenge for pet parents, and products like the indigo Fresh Dental Sticks provide a substantial, but low-calorie, chew.”

Another option to cross-promote with dental is a long-lasting chew that isn’t necessarily dental-specific.

“Pet owners are always seeking new, innovative ways to keep their dog happy, healthy and occupied, and Barkworthies’ natural chews are a triple threat to meeting these needs,” said Bill Chilian, marketing vice president at Barkworthies. “Unlike many dental specific pet products or manufactured chews that promote dental health, the oral benefits of Barkworthies’ single- and limited-ingredient products are inherent to the chew. For example, our naturally shed antler selection are not only long-lasting, they promote dental health because of their texture and natural vitamin and mineral make up. The hard texture of these chews naturally scrapes away plaque and tartar when chewed.”

Better Brushing

The humanization trend plays a role in the dental category; many customers

seek oral care products that remind them of the products that they use. For those customers who do want to provide their pet with daily dental care, Petsmile Professional Toothpaste and Petsmile Applicator Swabs do the trick.

“Petsmile Professional Toothpaste is the first toothpaste to be awarded the Veterinary Oral Health Council seal for plaque inhibition which prevents plaque buildup,” said Lucia Smigel, president and CEO of Petsmile. “This is important because plaque left undisrupted can turn into tartar, which can only be removed if you take your pet to the vet and put them under (anesthesia). Undisrupted tartar can lead to serious periodontal disease, subsequent tooth loss, internal diseases and much more.”

Displaying Dental Products

Placement in the store is the key to successfully selling the dental category. Beene suggested grouping items together on an endcap display to encourage shopping.

“Typically dental products are merchandized by category with treats in one place and other products elsewhere, but retailers can periodically feature dental solutions endcaps to help consumers dis-

“The fact that dental health can impact a pet’s overall well-being has caused an increased interest specifically in natural dental treats.”

– Chris Meiering

cover a broader spectrum of dental care options,” Beene said. “For example, PetSafe brand offers the indigo Fresh dental treats and the Busy Buddy Bristle Bone toy, two different ways for dogs to have fun while cleaning their teeth.”

According to Meiering, “The dental aisle at retail, like the treat aisle, is becoming a very crowded marketplace. We recommend merchandising functional treats by function to make it easier for consumers to find the exact solution they need. Another great way to gain traction with dental treats is to cross merchandise them with other health and dental products to showcase the many options pet owners have in caring for their dogs.”

Maggie Marton is a freelance writer and pet lifestyle pro. She lives in Bloomington, Ind., with her husband, three dogs and a cat.



Home Cooking Goes to the Dogs

The popularity of home-cooked, raw frozen and freeze-dried dog diets takes off.

BY SANDY ROBINS

There's no question that the Slow Food Movement, which embraces farm- to table-styled fare, is also influencing the way we feed our dogs.

While whole-food nutrition is not exactly a new canine menu item, the variety of freeze-dried, raw frozen and completely cooked meals in cans has expanded rapidly to become an important category in the pet food aisle.

Cooking for Canines

Many dog owners like to prepare meals for their pets, but look to pet food companies for guidance on assembling a nutritious diet.

According to Lucy Postins, founder and CEO of The Honest Kitchen, the San Diego-based pet food company that pioneered dehydrated meals for pets, the company's base of mix products to create home-styled meals continue to gain momentum.

"Many customers are interested in home preparing either raw or cooked meals for their pets, but it can be an intimidating process and challenging to be sure that they are in fact achieving the proper nutritional balance," Postins said. "Our Base Mixes are made with a human-grade vitamin/mineral premix and simply require the customer to add their own choice of protein and water to create a meal. The Preference Mix with fruit and veggie base mix is the most popular, with Kindly, one of our newer base mixes, rapidly gaining ground!"

"Many customers select a Base Mix as a result of protein sensitivities," Postins said. "Also, a Base Mix allows them choices to add the meat or fish that's right for their pet—raw or cooked—and (they can further) rotate proteins to add variety without changing the entire meal."

According to Postins, food allergies are a big factor influencing the decisions pet owners make for their pets.

"Consequently, we've created a line of

three limited ingredient minimalist diets to respond to this growing trend. Our LIDs (limited ingredient diets) contain no more than six whole food ingredients (plus vitamins and minerals) so they're perfect for pets with multiple food sensitivities."

In the Raw

Research has shown that interest in raw frozen and freeze-dried diets are growing among pet owners.

"According to the German research institute GfK, in the last year raw frozen sales rose 32 percent to \$69 million. And freeze-dried growth is outpacing natural, grain-free, refrigerated and limited ingredient diets," said Eric Emmenegger, senior brand manager for brand development at Nature's Variety, Inc. "And according to GfK data, in just the past year, pet specialty retail sales of freeze-dried dog and cat food have jumped 64 percent to \$40 million. These figures do not include pet food products that combine kibble with freeze-dried pieces. Freeze-dried is growing quickly both in dollar sales as well as distribution. In 2011, according to GfK data, 51.4 percent of stores selling pet food included freeze-dried food as part of their inventory. By March 2015, the percentage reached 70.8 percent."

"Consumers are more aware than ever before of what they're feeding their pets and we're focused on supporting the growing level of pet food consciousness with raw solutions for every pet and pet parent," Emmenegger said.

"Our Instinct Raw frozen diets are formulated to mirror the ancestral diet of dogs (and cats)—all natural, never cooked—with 95 percent meat, organs and raw ground bone; 5 percent wholesome fruits and vegetables; and 0 percent grain or gluten. We use raw, natural and whole food ingredients and pure animal sources," Emmenegger said. "Our diets are complete and balanced so there's no need for mixing, measuring and supplementing. To deliver simplicity and accessibility, Instinct Raw is

offered in various forms, including pre-portioned medallions and patties, and ready-to-serve bites."

Last June, the company introduced Instinct Raw Boost Mixers.

"They complement—rather than interrupt—current feeding behaviors," Emmenegger said. "With Instinct Raw Boost Mixers, pet parents can add raw to their pets' meals without changing their current kibble or primary food."

The company offers an extensive selection of point-of-sale materials and support for retailers through both traditional and social media advertising, couponing and public relations. They also work with stores to help place glass door freezers, which are critical to making raw food more approachable.

According to Ward Johnson, president of Sojos, the company has seen phenomenal growth in the sales of the pre-mixes, namely Sojos Original and Sojos Grain-Free, which were the company's original food selections.

"We believe this is because the mixes give pet owners such control of their pet's diet by allowing them to add their own protein choices," Johnson said.

However the company then added to its lineup a selection of products called Sojos Raw Dog Food.

"Our most popular product remains Sojos Turkey Complete, which was the first food we introduced with freeze-dried meat already in the bag," Johnson said.

Recently the company added some exotic protein to the line-up, such as wild boar and venison.

"Because they are so new, it's hard to compare their popularity to our other diets, which have been around for years. But there's no question that pet owners rally appreciate variety," he said.

New from Stella and Chewy's is a larger version of its Freeze-Dried Dinner Patties for dogs.

"The new bag is 25 ounces and avail-

able in Chewy's Chicken, Stella's Super Beef and Duck Duck Goose," said Katie Wassil, the company's director of public relations and communication. "The new bag is ideal for households with multiple dogs or larger breeds because it offers the same great quality, but at a lower cost per meal."

"We never use grains, gluten, fillers, added hormones or antibiotics," Wassil said. "Stella & Chewy's was built on the philosophy that pets thrive when they eat the same foods they would find in the wild. That means only the good stuff—pure ingredients as nature intended, raw and minimally processed. Our products are available in the U.S. and Canada in more than 5,000 neighborhood and on-line pet retailers."

"One of our most popular products remains our Meal Mixers because they are such an easy and convenient way to add raw food nutrition to any existing diet," Wassil said. "Meal Mixers helps entice picky eaters, adds an extra boost of nutrition and delights dogs with tasty

variety. An independent taste preference study showed that nine out of ten dogs preferred their kibble with Meal Mixers versus just their kibble alone."

Bravo, a company known for its extensive raw line, recently redesigned its packaging, introduced a new logo and slogan, and further added freeze-dried dinners to its product lineup with Homestyle Complete Dinners for Dogs.

Created to uniquely meet the nutritional needs of dogs of every age and breed, these great tasting recipes feature premium meat or poultry as the top ingredient. Then Bravo adds wholesome ingredients like organ meat and chickpeas, plus a generous helping of garden vegetables and cranberries, as well as natural herbs such as turmeric and sage. Homestyle Complete dinners are available in three different proteins: beef, pork and turkey.

Quick and Easy

Caru Natural Stews are the first USA-made pet food to be packaged in Tetra Pak

cartons making them easy to serve with no mess and no fuss. According to owners Adrian Pettyan and Pamela Pettyan, the four flavors – beef, chicken, turkey and pork – can be lightly heated in a microwave to bring out their natural aromas.

In many households, Sunday night suppers are quick and easy meals. According to Betsy Berger, communications manager for Merrick Pet Care, Merrick's Chunky Cans are ideal for those quick easy suppers on a cold winter's evening for pets, too. With comfort food names such as Pappy's Pot Roast, the cans contain chunks of meat in a hearty gravy accompanied by a variety of real vegetables.

"These recipes rank high on visual appeal and aroma for pet parents, and have a meaty and delicious taste dogs will devour," Berger said.

Sandy Robins is an award-winning multimedia pet lifestyle expert, author and pet industry spokesperson. Her work is visible on a variety of print, digital and TV platforms.



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Encouraging Feline Fitness

More owners seek cat weight management solutions.

BY STACY MANTLE

According to the State of Pet Health Report by Banfield Pet Hospital, obesity in cats has reached epidemic levels in the United States.

Research shows that 25 to 40 percent of pets who visit a veterinary clinic are overweight or obese—that's approximately one in three cats that are considered overweight or obese. The only good news about pet obesity is that it can be resolved, relatively quickly, with a little hard work.

The health risks associated with excess weight in cats are similar to those for humans. Among the many obesity problems a cat can encounter are osteoarthritis, Type 2 diabetes, heart and respiratory ailments, many forms of cancer and a

decrease in life expectancy by nearly 2.5 years.

Despite these well-publicized findings, most cat owners continue to resist change. In fact, the 2015-2016 APPA Pet Owners Survey shows that while the number of obese cats is the second highest reported since 2008, the number of cats on a special diet is the lowest it's been since 2000. 14.6 million cats are obese or overweight and 6.0 million cats are on a special diet.

Diets for Cats on a Diet

Most cat experts agree that there is not just one solution to the obesity problem among felines. Nutritional support, portion control, exercise and mental stim-

ulation are the keys to resolving the epidemic. However, diet is one of the key indicators of weight loss in cats.

Pet food manufacturers such as Natural Balance have launched entirely new formulas to help keep dogs and cats fit. The company recently introduced the Fat Dog and Fat Cat lines of pet food, an entirely new line of food for dogs and cats focused on reducing weight. According to the Natural Balance website, these diets contain “a blend of protein and fiber designed to keep pets nutritionally balanced, even when your pet is eating less calories.”

“The most important part of feeding is to know how many calories your dog or cat requires each day to maintain an

ideal adult weight and then this amount can be fed once or split into multiple feedings accordingly,” said Bettie Hamilton, vice president of marketing/product development at Halo, Purely for Pets. “Your veterinarian can help you determine how many calories your pet needs each day to avoid obesity.”

Halo’s Spot’s Stew line includes cat dry foods that help cats maintain the proper weight. The Healthy Weight cat diets are grain-free and nutritionally complete. It comes in two varieties, Game Bird Medley and Whitefish & Salmon.

“In order to recommend appropriate treats to pet parents, retailers must have a strong understanding of how to communicate nutritional benefits.”

– Chanda Leary-Coutu

“Just like in humans and the old adage we are what we eat, pets are the same and we believe better nutrition, health and vitality is created from the inside out,” said Holly Sher, owner of Evan-ger’s Dog and Cat Food Company. “We encourage retailers and consumers alike to utilize our Evan-ger’s Problem-Solution Guide on our website, which makes helpful diet recommendations.”

Supplements can help decrease appetite, therefore supporting weight loss. The addition of fiber to diets may help decrease calories by making cats feel full and eliminating boredom eating.

“Pet superfoods are known to decrease digestive problems as well as promote weight loss and add to the overall wellbeing of your pet,” said Emily J. Hall, marketing manager, Nummy Tum Tum. “Pumpkin is a low-calorie superfood that can help your pets lose weight, just by making them feel less hungry. Its high moisture content makes it especially valuable to animals who refuse to drink enough water.”

Reducing Pudge with Portion Size

Portion control is critical for keeping

cats slim. The majority of obese cats live in households with three or more children. This is likely due to children being the family member that is responsible for feeding their pets. Fortunately, there are many innovative solutions to this problem.

“Portion control is key during feeding time,” said Jeff Logan, director of marketing for Dexas, Inc. “We’ve done research to learn that the moment of making a decision and adopting a rescue is filled with emotion that people don’t really register the proper feeding habits that moment. You almost need a face-to-face lecture from a vet, but people are making up the amount to feed their adopted pet.”

The KlipScoop from Dexas can help. It is a scoop that ensures cats get the same portion for every meal. It then collapses flat and has an attached clip to keep the cat food bag closed.

Feeders can also help alleviate the problem of overeating—even in homes with multiple cats. The SureFeed Microchip Pet Feeder is easily programmed for individual cat recognition making it simple to use more than one feeder in a household with multiple cats. The feeder is battery powered and will operate for up to six months on four C cell batteries.

“This is a high-tech answer to an age old problem,” said Piers Hampson, marketing director for SureFlap. “This feeder has a lid that seals over the food bowl that will only open when it recognizes and identifies the cat that is trying to access the food. No longer will you be stuck trying to control who eats what; this feeder will do it for you.”

Treats can be a quick way of adding excess calories and they are often given to express affection. The added danger is that anyone in the home could be giving your cats treats.

“For successful weight management, it is important to know your pet’s ideal weight and how many calories (including food and treats) he should consume daily,” Hamilton said.

Consider exploring single-ingredient treats and specially-designed low-calorie treats, such as Quickies from The Hon-est Kitchen. Each treat is crafted into a



tiny, bite-sized heart shape and made with 100 percent wild- and line-caught Icelandic haddock. At just 1.1 calories per treat, Quickies allow owners to treat their cats with less worry about weight gain.

“In order to recommend appropriate treats to pet parents, retailers must have a strong understanding of how to communicate nutritional benefits,” said Chanda Leary-Coutu, senior manager, marketing communications, WellPet. “A key approach to training employees on food labeling is understanding the order in which ingredients are listed, what the nutritional value and health benefits of these various ingredients are and how each type of treat can satisfy different flavor preferences, lifestyles and nutritional needs.”

Changing a diet, however, is not enough.

Exercise is just as important, so getting cats up and moving is necessary. This provides retailers a great opportunity to place interactive cat toys near the food aisle. Some even suggest an entire aisle devoted to weight loss may be an interesting layout for a store.

Stacy Mantle is an award-winning writer and multi-species pet lifestyle expert, author, and spokesperson. She is the founder of PetsWeekly.com and a regular contributor to national publications including Pet Age, Cat Fancy, and Animal Behavioral College.

Not Having a Ball

New solutions for hairballs include diets, treats and more.

BY SANDY ROBINS

Hairballs are an unwanted bonus of cat ownership. Cats shed and ingest hair as part of their self-grooming routines. Fortunately, there are lots of different weapons of attack to fight the shedding hair wars that collectively will benefit retail store coffers.

Prevention Through Grooming

“Hair is essentially indigestible to cats and can build up in the gut, eventually resulting in that rather unpleasant hairball surprise on the living room carpet,” said Dr. Adelia Ritchie, CEO and founder of DERMagic Skin Care for Animals, Inc.

“To prevent or reduce the occurrence of these events—in addition to daily brushing—bathing cats can help to remove loose hairs and dander that would otherwise contribute to hairball formation,” Ritchie said. “Because cats can be sensitive to chemicals and perfumes, and even some essential oils, I created a special organic shampoo bar that is safe on

all cats and kittens too.”

The DERMagic Rosemary Shampoo Bar for Felines is an all-purpose gentle deep fur cleanser with anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial properties.

“Our special feline formula also helps reduce flakiness and regenerate healthy soft skin and fur. Using a shampoo bar allows the cat owner to hold the cat with one hand, while creating a thick, rich, easily-rinsed lather with the other. This helps make bathing a cat an easy, relaxing experience,” she said.

According to Rikki Mor, founder and owner of Groom Genie, “Plenty of people mistakenly believe that because cats are such terrific self-groomers, they don’t need additional grooming by their humans. But grooming a cat is extremely helpful in removing excess hair, distributing oils, stimulating the skin and more. Of course, the first challenge with cat grooming is making sure the cat will let you groom him!”

“We have had excellent customer feedback that often the Groom Genie is

the only brush their cats will tolerate and even enjoy,” Mor said. “Our secret is in the different lengths of bristles, which detangle and remove the hair without pulling. Cats seem to like the feel of the bristles on their skin too. Plus, the handle-less shape of the brush enables a grooming session that’s more like petting.”

There are two sizes with the Teeny Groom Genie, which are 2.75-inch by 4-inch in size, designed specifically for cats.

The Andis Company has a comprehensive line of professional grooming tools for home use as part of its Premium Pet Tools line. The 7.5 steel comb has wide and narrow teeth for working different areas of the coat. It helps remove tangles, mats, loose hair and dirt.

The Premium soft-tooth slicker brush has bent wire bristles that remove undercoat and prevent matting. It stimulates hair follicles to promote growth and healthier hair. The range also includes a large pin brush, a two-sided brush and a large firm slicker brush for cat owners to add to their toolbox. The Andis grooming team cautions about the use of de-shedding tools, because if not used properly, they can damage a cat’s very delicate skin.

There is also a variety of self-grooming accessories for cats such as Omega Paw’s Arch Groomer, a free-standing, hands-free grooming arch that is covered with rubber nibs inside and out for cats to rub up against to remove loose hair.

The Catit Design Senses Massage Center, which is part of the Catit line of interactive cat products from Rolf C. Hagen, Inc., is a self-grooming rubber massage unit that appeals to a cat’s sense of touch by offering a variety of textures that provide a luxurious pampering experience. The ripple massager provides intense rubbing pleasure to a feline’s head, neck and face, and the body stroke groomers on the product offer easy-access



“To prevent or reduce the occurrence of hairballs—in addition to daily brushing—bathing cats can help to remove loose hairs and dander that would otherwise contribute to hairball formation.”

– Dr. Adelia Ritchie

and an intense massage, removing loose hair in the process. It comes with a sachet of catnip to attract feline attention to the unit.

Foods, Treats and Remedies

Perrigo Animal Health have two products in its anti-hairball arsenal that specifically target hairball control, namely its Sentry Hairball Relief Gel in a malt flavor which comes in a 4.4 ounce tube and its Sentry Hairball Chewables in a chicken flavor which comes in a 2.5 ounce pouch.

Sentry Hairball Relief gel helps relieve the constipation, dry cough and vomiting associated with hairballs. This product uses the company's proprietary Petromalt technology and acts as an intestinal lubricant that helps prevent the formation of hairballs and eases the passage of hair that is ingested. It is safe and effective for cats and kittens over four weeks of age.

Sentry Hairball Chewables are also an effective intestinal lubricant that helps combat vomiting associated with hairballs. The company advises that cat owners feed one or two pieces daily as a treat reward after brushing their cat's coat. The treat formula contains no added salt or artificial colors.

According to Chanda D. Leary-Coutu, senior manager, marketing communications for Wellness Natural Pet Food, the company recently released a new cat food formula to combat hairballs.

“Our new Wellness Natural Hairball Control recipe is made with a precise blend of fiber that helps move hair and already-formed hairballs through the cats' digestive track,” Leary-Coutu said. “The natural recipe includes wholesome, savory protein sources cats love like deboned chicken and turkey, and also includes vi-

tamins and minerals to support skin and coat health, resulting in fewer stray hairs being ingested.”

“Similarly, our new grain-free Wellness TruFood CocoChia Bakes are treats with salmon, coconut oil that contain a healthy dose of coconut oil and chia seeds, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics. These tasty treats are great for a cat's skin and coat while helping promote

digestive health,” she said.

These morsels are a colorful slow-baked snack. They contain antioxidant-rich ingredients like beets and spinach formulated to keep cats happy and healthy—and hopefully hairball free.

Sandy Robins is an award-winning multimedia pet lifestyle expert, author and pet industry spokesperson. Her work is visible on a variety of

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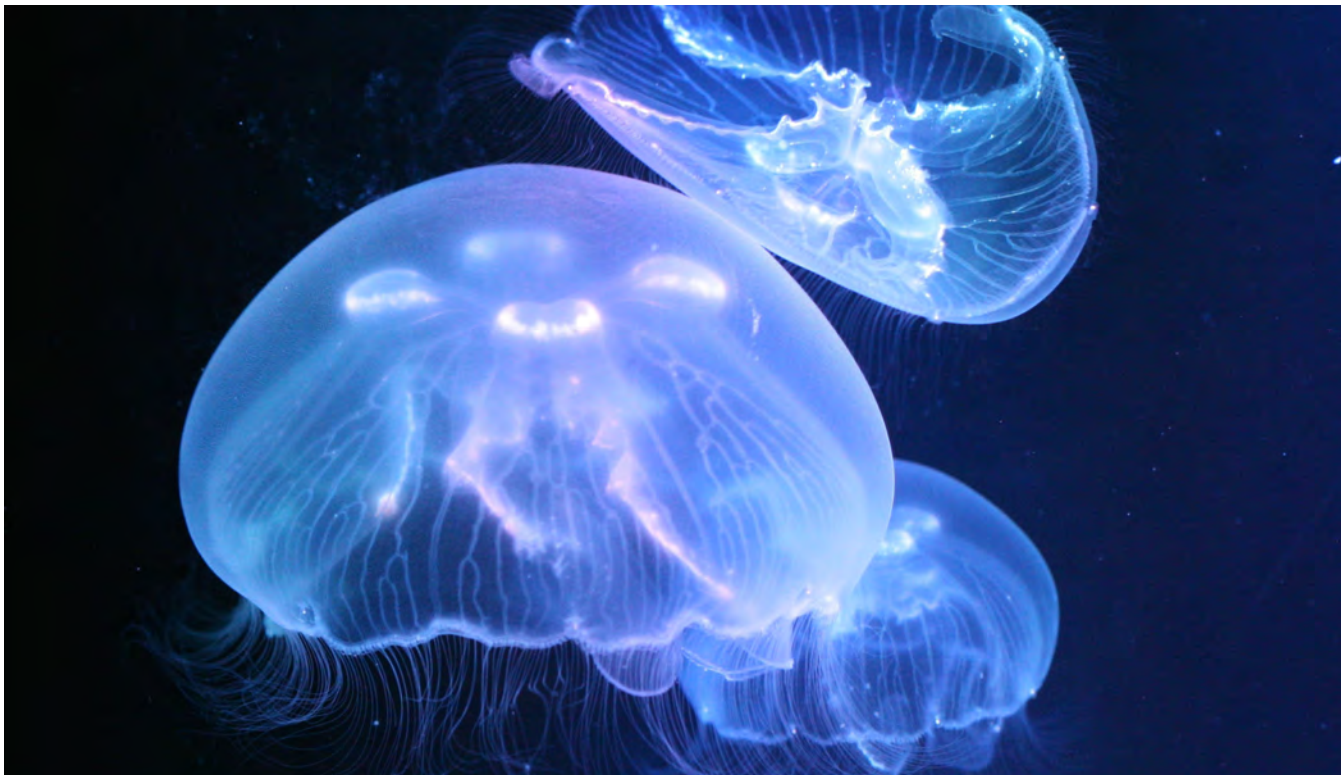
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Cast of Characters

Jellyfish, shrimp and other invertebrates steal the spotlight from fish.

BY KAREN M. ALLEY

It's no surprise that the awards for movies and television shows include awards for best supporting actors and actresses in addition to awards for the lead roles. After all, in many cases the supporting actors play just as large a part and sometimes outshine their leading men and women. The supporting cast is vitally important in movies—and aquariums.

For years, invertebrates have had an important yet supporting role in aquariums. Snails and crabs eat algae and uneaten food, sea stars and sea cucumbers take care of unwanted waste and serve as great natural aerators, and anemones make excellent homes for clownfish. These crea-

tures are beautiful and interesting in their own right, and thanks to some new varieties of invertebrates and new types of equipment, more of them are getting to play leading roles in aquariums.

Mesmerizing Jellyfish

One of the up-and-coming stars of the invertebrate category is jellyfish. These creatures are fascinating to watch as they glide through the water, but their delicate bodies have made them challenging to keep in home aquariums. Advances in lighting and filters have enabled specialized aquarium kits for jellyfish to hit the consumer market, making it easier for people to own jellyfish. Both Jellyfish Art and Cubic Aquarium Systems have kits that include everything you need to make start up easy.

"One of the things that is really important for healthy jellyfish is the proper temperature," said Joe Turner, general manager, Jellyfish Art. "They like a stable temperature in the mid-60's to only as high as about 78 degrees. Our kits come with an air pump that doesn't input heat into the system. We also use LED lights, which provide great visual effect without

the heat of a traditional light."

Jellyfish Art aquariums also come with a substrate, salt and a bio starter for set up and food for the jellyfish.

"Introducing jellyfish to the consumer is a good way to bring more diversity into the category," said Patrick Egan, store manager and invertebrate curator at Absolutely Fish, based in Clifton, New Jersey. "We've definitely had a lot of interest in our store displays; it's the first place most of the kids will go. But it's important to keep in mind these are delicate creatures that take a lot of maintenance. Customer education is very important when choosing to add these products to your inventory."

Vibrant Freshwater Shrimp

Another category that is seeing growth lately is freshwater shrimp, thanks to their hardy nature and new varieties with bright colors.

"Freshwater shrimp are pretty easy to take care of," said Rebecca Noah, marine one aquarist, Absolutely Fish. "They aren't too fussy about water conditions, will tolerate a range of pH values and they work well in small tanks, all of which helps

make them popular.”

The fact that they’re relatively easy to care for might keep shrimp lovers happy, but it’s the vibrant new colors that seem to attract people to the species in the first place. Red cherry, blue tiger, orange sunkist and black rili shrimp all live up to their names with vibrant colors that pop when walking around in a tank with a few green plants.

As consumer interest in freshwater shrimp grows, so does the category itself.

Manufacturers have met the demand with products specifically designed for freshwater shrimp. Substrates such as Aquasolium Black Humate from Seachem and ProDibio’s AquaShrimp powder have small granules that make it easier for shrimp to get around comfortably and lay their eggs. Fluval’s Shrimp Granules contain the vitamins and minerals these creatures need, including iodine which helps in the molting process.

Dedicating an endcap to freshwater shrimp is a good way to build customer awareness.

“We’ve seen the success of dedicated endcaps over the years with hermit crabs and bettas, and I think the time is ripe for a similar solution with freshwater shrimp,” said Brian Shavlik, Hydor’s sales manager.

Nothing grabs a person’s attention more than a nicely planted aquarium with a few brightly colored shrimp walking around. An endcap provides the place to highlight all of the products designed specifically for shrimp.

Mixing It Up

Single-species aquariums are gaining in popularity, but the majority of people purchasing invertebrates are still getting them for aquariums that contain a variety of fish and invertebrates. In these cases, it is important to have products that are safe for both.

Fritz Industries has recently introduced a new product in its Mardel line of treatments, Maracyn Plus, which is an antibiotic that comes with a new form of application that allows you to deliver the antibiotic straight to the fish.

“This way you can get your fish the medicine they need without changing the

water quality of the entire tank and possibly affecting the invertebrates,” said Mike Noce, sales manager at Fritz Aquatics.

Another new product is the Hydor 3rd Generation pump, which comes with three different attachments, two sizes of fish guards and a flow diffuser. These options make it easier for people with a variety of species of invertebrates to set the pump to help keep animals that crawl around from getting sucked up in the pump.

“We’ve also made some substantial increases to the energy consumption, so our largest pump produces 2,450 gallons per hour of flow with just 6.5 watts of energy,” Shavlik said.

Whether kept as a single species or in a group, now is the invertebrate’s time to shine.

“Many species in this category are beautiful and interesting outside of the practical functions they provide in a

tank,” said Daniel Griffin, tech support specialist at Seachem Labs.

The new color variants in shrimp, new crayfish like the dwarf orange Mexican crayfish, and new crabs like the red devil and purple vampire are just a few examples of colorful invertebrates that will draw the eye of your consumer and help create diversity and excitement in this category.

Karen M. Alley is a freelance writer who specializes in writing for retail and marketing publications.



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Reef Building

The right mix of products, knowledge and salesmanship creates success in the reef category.

BY JOE OLENIK

Reef aquarium keeping has never been more popular. The array of support products available today is truly endless. From consumable items to major components, such as protein skimmers, programmable lighting systems and reactors, reefers will always want and need something new for their aquarium.

Building a Reef Clientele

Reef hobbyists love to indulge in their aquariums and are usually willing to spend more money for quality and performance. Adding a new accessory or upgrading a piece of equipment is fun and typically enhances their success rate, which in turn keeps hobbyists engaged. Shops that stock reef products and offer knowledgeable advice usually enjoy strong sales and maintain a steady clientele.

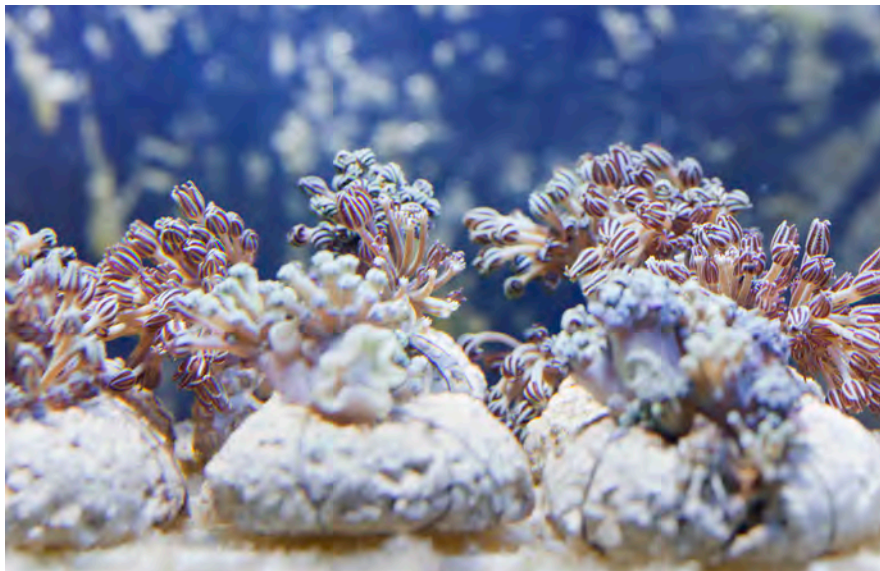
"The key is building relationships with your customers," said Ralph Cabage, president of SICCE USA. "Make it personal. Create solutions for your customers that make their desires work."

Cabage also said that stores need to focus on products that they can earn a living on.

"SICCE sells to independents at the same prices as online vendors, making it possible to remain competitive while enjoying a livable profit margin. Authorized dealers also enjoy rebates and incentives on SICCE purchases," Cabage said.

When deciding on your reef product inventory, Bill Trufant, owner of Mobile, Alabama-based B & B Pet Stop Inc., has some advice.

"Important factors are quality, brand recognition, customer request/demand,



availability from distribution, ease of use for the customer, easily understood packaging, and reasonable pricing," he said. "You also can't just carry obscure brands. If you do stock these brands, have them in addition to a name brand then sell off of it."

Something for Every Reefer

Reef products can be separated into several groups. Essential items like supplements, test kits, sea salts, filter media and specialty foods are strong sellers that support a healthy profit margin.

For additives and supplements, Seachem's standard line and their premium Aquavitro line offer hobbyists a complete selection of support products that address virtually any water chemistry need.

For hobbyists who want test kits that combine precision with ease of use, Salifert kits have both at a fair price. Tropic Marin salt mixes can be offered as a premium option to brands like Kent, Coralife and Reef Crystals. Tropic Marin PRO-REEF Sea Salt is made especially for reef tanks.

Live and refrigerated foods designed

to keep live corals in prime condition and color have evolved dramatically in recent years.

Reef Nutrition products like Phyto Feast are well researched and backed by the manufacturer. Coral Gumbo by Hikari is a frozen blend of ingredients that support the health of corals. Prohibitive shipping costs and logistics from online vendors make these foods great sellers for independent retailers.

Key mechanical devices such as circulation and primary drive pumps and heaters represent the next group of reef products. Quality is key here, since any failure could be catastrophic.

SICCE pumps are time tested and independent retailers are protected by their dealer price structure. Cobalt Aquatics offers a quality line of internal circulation pumps, including the original MJ series. All Cobalt pumps are all backed by three-year warranty. Jaeger submersible heaters, formerly Ebo Jaeger, can be calibrated to pinpoint accuracy, a major selling point for the brand. Cobalt Aquatics and Hydor offer in-line heaters that help maintain aesthetics and don't tie up valuable space in sumps.

Protein skimmers, ultra-violet sterilizers, high output lighting systems, controllers and sophisticated filtration systems represent the last group of reef products. Perhaps the widest range of quality, complexity and pricing can be found in this group. Many retailers struggle with tying up large amounts of money in these items, as they tend not to turn over rapidly and profit margins can be slim.

"You must support brands that enforce M.A.P. (Minimum Advertised Pricing) and be willing to sell at those prices," Trufant said. "You probably won't make the margin that you would ideally like, but it is better to make something than nothing."

Eshopps offers an affordable line of protein skimmers, sumps, overflow boxes and other reef filtration components that are well-built and affordably priced. Reef Octopus provides retailers a high end version of these products, as well as media reactors.

An effective strategy for selling high ticket items without tying up resources is to have working models in your store and just keep one or two popular sizes in stock. There's nothing like an eye popping live reef display to get people's attention and demonstrate the equipment you sell. Have all components clearly visible and invite customers to inspect and learn about them. Sales staff should be knowledgeable and trained to ask key questions to help shoppers make good buying decisions.

Some shops are reluctant to stock reef products because their customers don't ask for them.

"You have to create demand, otherwise you're not providing a service to your customers," Cabage said. "You have to show people what they want, have it on your shelf and tell them how you use it in your store. Make it your solution, your sale, your show! Don't be an order taker; be a salesman. If you build relationships with your customers, they'll listen to you. Their success goes up as a result."

"You can't serve your customers properly without having the products that they need to be successful," Trufant said. "Without the proper products you force your customers to look elsewhere!"

Reef keeping is too popular for aquatic retailers to sit on the sidelines and let online vendors reap the rewards and profits.

"Be cutting edge, focus on unique, quality products and don't be afraid to charge a fair price for them," Cabage advised. "Remind shoppers that you've helped them solve or avoid problems. Do your homework on pricing and give

shoppers a reason to come back to your store."

Joe Olenick is an aquatics industry veteran, having managed one of the nation's largest retail aquarium departments for more than 25 years. He founded and currently owns Aquatic Environments, which designs, installs and maintains custom aquarium and outdoor water exhibits.



Ask the Expert



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Q: With winter's busy season in full swing, how can I make my store stand out from the competition?

A: There are two very important aspects to maximizing your store's success throughout the year. First is to keep it clean! Shoot for spotless displays, well stocked shelves, dry floors, and importantly, a clean bathroom. Every moment that a customer is in your store is a moment that they are drawing conclusions about the shop. If the bathroom is a wreck, they assume the back of the store is a disaster as well.

Second is all about stocking. Ensure a wide variety of fish and corals are on hand at all times and make sure there are a couple "big ticket" items in there too. These are not only what your more advanced customers are looking for, but are also food for the imagination of every hobbyist that comes through the door. Make sure you stock quality livestock; customers aren't going to leave if your fish cost a couple bucks more, but you can be sure that they'll stampede out the door if they see sick, skinny fish.

Quality Marine has made their mark on this industry by consistently providing quality, sustainable livestock for over 40 years of business, don't make the mistake of shopping somewhere else.

This general information is not intended to provide individual advice. PAID CONTENT

Variety Is the Spice of Live Foods

Reptile owners embrace diversity in feeder insects.

BY TOM MAZORLIG

While there is nothing wrong with traditional crickets and mealworms, many reptile owners seek a diverse diet for their pets because of perceived health benefits. This has caused live food suppliers to offer an increasing variety of species.

"Pet stores offering variety in feeders can help customers promote health and longevity in insectivorous pets. Variety keeps them healthy, happy and prevents hunger strikes due to boredom," said Brian Birchall, owner of Mulberry Farms, a live feeder insect supplier. "Each individual feeder has its strengths and together they re-create the nutritional diversity they crave and thrive on."

A Can of Worms

One species that is growing more popular black soldier fly larva, known as the Phoenix worm, Calciworm and Reptiworm.

"Feeding Calciworms to your reptile significantly reduces the dependency on gut loading and dusting," Eric Stein, marketing coordinator at Timberline Live

Pet Foods, said. "When used correctly with our Vita-Bug feeder insect line, gut loading and dusting can be eliminated. Although Calciworms contain naturally high levels of calcium, and a desirable calcium to phosphorus ratio, they shouldn't be used as the staple food item. A diverse diet should be given to reptiles, using crickets, mealworms and superworms as the main courses [and] saving waxworms and Calciworms as supplemental items."

Timberline offers some of their live foods in convenient, no-mess packaging.

"Timberline is developing a new line of in-store cricket display cases that will make the storage, maintenance and sales far more efficient and cost effective for retail stores," said Stein. "Timberline also always recommends our pre-packaged retail items including cupped worms in various counts and our Reptile Lunch Boxes – the easiest way to stock and sell crickets."

Mulberry Farms offers several less common feeders, including butter worms, hornworms, dubia roaches and lobster roaches. The company is best known for

producing silkworms.

"Silkworms are high protein, nutritious, moist, soft-bodied, easy to eat, highly palatable and good for stimulating a feeding response when animals are on 'hunger strikes,'" said Birchall.

According to Birchall, butter worms are high in calcium and require no care when refrigerated.

"Hornworms are relished by many species," said Birchall. "They are easy to keep at room temperature in their pre-packaged container. When warm they grow very fast, so can become too large for some animals to feed on."

More Bugs to Bite

Pet stores with a healthy percentage of reptile keeping customers should consider offering more feeder species.

"We offer a variety of live foods from insects to rodents," said Geoff Marshall, store manager at the St. Petersburg, Fla. location of Pinellas County Reptiles. "Our insects include superworms, giant mealworms, mealworms, butter worms, waxworms, Phoenix worms, silkworms, hornworms, crickets, fruit flies, isopods and discoid roaches. We breed many of our feeders—rodents, crickets, roaches and isopods—and we're expanding breeding this year to supply growing demand for waxworms and European nightcrawlers."

Jabberwock Reptiles in Winchester, Mass., offers a similar list of live foods for reptiles.

"We offer several live insects including crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, superworms, waxworms, hornworms and flightless fruit flies," said owner Stephen Ayer. "We also sell live mice, rats and feeder lizards. These are usually sold to people with a finicky snake that won't eat frozen rodents. Crickets and dubia roaches are our best sellers."

"We offered dubia roaches (*Blattella dubia*) as an alternative to crickets and our customers took to them," said Ayer.

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“They aren’t loud like crickets, live longer and are nutritious. We offer products that big box stores don’t carry to differentiate ourselves from the competition.”

Try it. You’ll Like It

Convincing customers to try new live foods – especially potentially disgusting ones – requires education from store staff.

“Our live foods promote themselves. All we do is explain the nutritional value of live foods and offer good quality,” said Marshall. “We tell customers that feeding the same feeder insects continuously is not the best option. They should offer a variety, like their animal would get in the wild.”

“We offer promotions for frequent customers,” said Marshall. “We advertise Feeder Fridays and offer an additional 10 percent off our already low prices for all feeders purchased on Fridays. We have an insect club too, which allows anyone who would like to prepay for insect feeders to get an additional 25 percent off.”

And never underestimate the value of a free sample.

“Free with purchase’ samples or special smaller quantity sampler packs get customers to try new feeders,” said Birchall. “Once they see how their animals respond they are likely to buy more.”

Ayer’s experience matches that advice.

“To convince customers to try unfamiliar live foods such as the hornworms or roaches, we explain the benefits of these feeders. If they’re still reluctant we offer free samples to see if their pet will like it,” said Ayer. “Often the customer returns and says their bearded dragon or other lizard loved the new insect! And the customers weren’t as disgusted by these new insects as they thought they might be.”

A free sample may generate a purchase, but offering quality feeders creates a steady customer

“Pay as much attention to the quality of the feeders as possible,” said Ayer. “It takes more time and energy to do it right, but customers want the highest quality food for healthier pets. One compliment we receive is that our crickets live longer than crickets from big box pet stores. This keeps customers coming back even if they have to go out of their way to get to our store.”



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The Price Is Right

Pricing is the final keystone for successful reptile sales.

BY JOHN MACK

In our last three articles, we've looked at the basic elements of incorporating reptiles into your pet store. In our final installment of this "back to basics" series, it's time that we examined what we consider the nuts and bolts of including reptiles in your sales: pricing.

Properly pricing reptiles in your store means a significant reevaluation of your revenue streams. A traditional thought is that reptiles should be priced to provide direct net revenue to their sellers. With this in mind, a seller may not sell many reptiles, but the reptiles that are sold will make significant profit for their seller.

We, however, believe that there is a better way.

Selling more animals at significantly lower price points brings in a higher amount of net profit, based on the subsidiary and background sales brought in by the higher volume of reptiles overall. Our research demonstrates that a good profit margin to work on would be to set at a maximum gross profit margin of 40 percent. This allows for large discounts in comparison to your higher-priced competitors while still allowing plenty of room for aggressive promotions and sales within your store.

Why would we encourage this? Simply put, the best source of net revenue for a pet store owner is not the sale of an animal itself. There is more money to be made through residual sales: the components necessary for the care of that reptile, including caging, lighting, heating elements, substrate and food. With these elements only rarely available in mass market venues, a canny store owner can leverage a reptile owner's basic needs for continual, evergreen profit.

Based on our observations of stores throughout the nation, we've assembled a baseline scenario that demonstrates the

profitability of our pricing methodology.

Let us consider Pet Store A and Pet Store B. Both stores start to sell bearded dragons, purchased at wholesale for \$35 each. However, these stores begin selling with one very distinct difference: Store A prices bearded dragons at \$77, while Store B prices them at \$55. Based on our observations, we can assume that Store A will sell approximately 50 bearded dragons in a year, grossing \$3,850, while Store B will sell approximately 84 bearded dragons, grossing \$4,619. By pricing reptiles at a lower price point, Store B ensures that it moves more animals, which more than makes up for the discrepancy in pricing.

However, the fiscal benefits of capping your pricing extend much further than the animals themselves. Consider that each bearded dragon also requires a cage, substrate, an under-tank heating element, an overhead heat lamp and regular food, most of which cannot be purchased at local big-box stores. If Store A sells only 50 animals, their gross revenue from these items will come to a total of just over \$31,000 yearly. However, Store B's increased number of reptiles sold equates to an increase in subsidiary items sold; Store B's 84 bearded dragons means a gross revenue of nearly \$51,000, approximately a \$20,000 increase in gross revenue for Store B over Store A.

The differential in profits does not end there. Consider that 77 percent of reptile owners own at least one other pet, which also requires supplies, food and other materials that may not be available at local big-box stores. Each time one of your reptile customers picks up kitty litter at your store, each time your selection of leashes and collars catches a customer's eye as they wait on a bag of crickets or mealworms, you've made a sale that would have normal-

ly gone elsewhere. These incidental sales can make up for a sizeable portion of your net profit margin, potentially increasing the differential between our sample stores from \$20,000 to a whopping \$70,000.

Savvy retailers not only know this information, but they maximize it to significant advantage. Coupled with well-timed, targeted sales, reptiles can form a solid foundation upon which your store can be built. Once you've established a baseline price for reptiles, stick to that price. However, don't be afraid to offer specials, incentives or other deals to would-be reptile owners. As we mentioned in our inventory article, if a given animal hasn't moved from your stock, consider lowering its price. In some circumstances, offer the animal for free with the purchase of an appropriate cage or tank. Again, the most important point to remember is that the animal itself is not the focus on your profits. The reptile in question is the key that opens the vault of follow-up sales of numerous, reptiles-specific equipment and supplies.

Starting new endeavors can be challenging in any business. Within the pet trade, it is easy to rest on one's laurels. Time and again, though, we have seen stores that cater to their customers' needs and wants succeed. Stores that don't go that extra mile to meet customers' needs fail. As you put forth your first reptiles for sale, keep our four keystones in mind: selection, inventory, presentation and pricing. Choose your reptiles carefully; keep them well-stocked in attractive, clean displays; and price them reasonably. Do this and you'll earn customers for years to come.

John Mack is the founder and CEO of Reptiles by Mack. He is on the board of directors of PIJAC and a member of PIJAC Zoonotic Diseases Committee.



Squawk Hard, Play Hard

The latest bird play stands and gyms feature more bang for the buck . . . and beak.

BY ERIK J. MARTIN

Life inside a cage can get monotonous. It's only logical that boredom and stress result when birds are denied regular physical and mental enrichment in their environments.

Thankfully, outdoor recess opportunities for pet birds are ample, courtesy of a wide variety of play gyms, play stands and related products offered by manufacturers today.

"In the wild, our fine feathered friends spend a good chunk of their time foraging and exploring. From swinging, climbing, reaching and goofing off, these activities are important," said Mary Ann Loveland, associate brand manager of Kaytee Hard Goods in Chilton, Wisconsin,

who added that recreating this natural behavior in a home environment is important and can be accomplished with an appropriate playpen, stand or gym.

Fun Is In Fashion

Noadays, popular and diverse features are built into play stands and gyms. Among them are:

- **Increased portability, thanks to more lightweight materials, innovative designs and wheels.** MidWest's Parrot Playstand, for example, features heavy duty casters for easy movement. Caitec recently introduced a Bird Window Recreation Center (winner of a best new product award at SuperZoo 2015),

which boasts a see-through base that attaches to glass via suction cups.

- **More natural materials, including various hardwoods and specialty woods, such as java and coffee wood.**

A case in point is A&E Cage Company's Table Top Java Tree stand and perch, carved from naturally durable java wood from a single coffee tree and mounted on a base made from kapur wood.

- **Sports-inspired challenges that encourage birds to work a little harder for a playtime reward.** Caitec's Instinct Birdie Basketball Playground, equipped with a mini hoop and basketball, dispenses an automatic treat if the bird drops the ball in the hoop.

- **Quicker and easier assembly with no glues used and no tools required.** MidWest Homes for Pets' Recreation Center is equipped with user-friendly interlocking panels.

- **Plentiful chains, cotton ropes, hanging toys and ladders that offer stimulating climbing opportunities.** The Prevue Hendryx Pet Parrot Big Steps Tabletop Playpen features horizontal dowels arranged to create a spiral staircase leading to the top beam, where a treat or water bowl awaits.

- **Dishwasher safe and easy to remove and clean components that reduce the mess.** Zoo Max's Umbrella hanging play stand includes PVC pipe perches that can be easily cleaned. Katye's EZ Care Activity Center Playground features an oversized scatter guard for reduced waste and splatter, plus a removable plastic tray for simpler cleaning.

- **Upscale wrought iron products.** These include King's Cages' Metal Tabletop Playstand, sporting copper-toned

and antique silver finishes for a classic and durable look.

Other relatively recent trends identified in this product segment include play gyms and stands that feature even more compact designs, appropriately sized and textured perches, archways, eye hooks for hanging additional toys and wedge-assembled parts and screws that are deeply countersunk for additional pet safety.

Must-Have Merchandise

Terry Gao, president of Caitec Corporation in Baltimore, said although consumers generally like to buy all-in-one products, they prefer purchasing play stands and play gyms separately from cages.

"Our company stopped selling cages with play tops built in several years ago," Gao said. "Retailers should encourage consumers to use a separate play stand or gym that can be an accessory to their bird's cage. These play products should be viewed as necessity purchases for bird

"Retailers should encourage consumers to use a separate play stand or gym that can be an accessory to their bird's cage."

— Terry Gao

owners." Loveland agreed.

"We suggest educating your customers by informing them about relevant products and encouraging them to allow their companion bird to enjoy time outside their enclosure to reduce birdie boredom," Loveland said.

Turning Store Space Into Play Space

Melanie Allen, avian product specialist with Mansfield, Massachusetts-based Rolf C. Hagen Corp., said a play gym and stand should be recommended to store patrons as an essential product to be purchased within the first year of bringing home a new bird.

"The play gym will help break up the monotony for a single cage-dwelling parrot and also deter cage territorialism," Allen said. "Additionally, customers should be encouraged to use incentives to get birds, especially older birds, to use their gyms effectively—such as a seed treat hidden in a foraging toy hanging just out of reach for a parent, which promotes worthwhile exercise."

In addition, Tara Whitehead, marketing manager for Muncie, Indiana-based MidWest Homes for Pets, suggests assembling play gyms and stands in your store whenever possible.

"This allows consumers to see the construction, materials, finish and overall quality," Whitehead said. "It's also easy to cross merchandise these products with bird toys, treats and feed. And these gyms and stands can also be used to display live birds for sale within your store."

Erik J. Martin is a Chicago area-based freelance writer whose articles have been featured in Cat Fancy, WebVet.com, AARP The Magazine, Reader's Digest, Costco Connection and other publications.

Jerky Treats

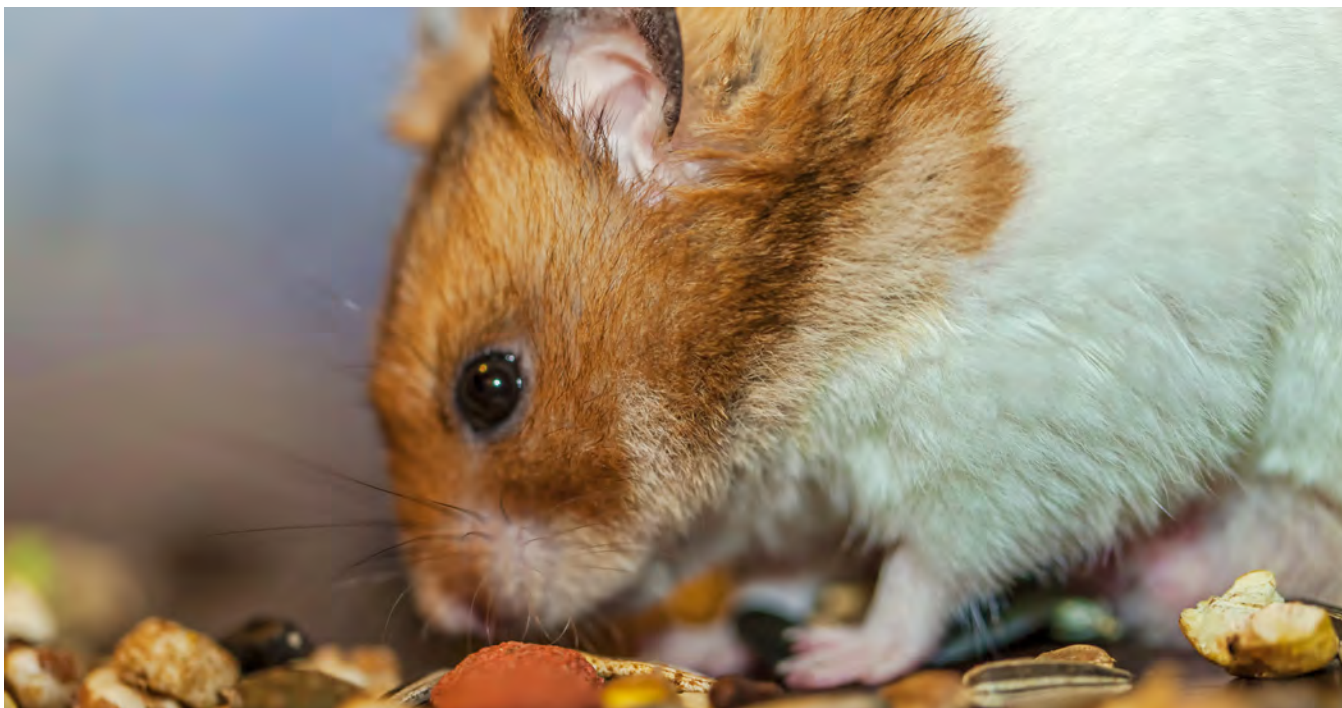
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Gnaw-Inspiring Niche

Hamsters and related products can build a loyal clientele.

BY ERIK J. MARTIN

Good things come in small packages, they say. That can certainly be true of hamsters, which are among the most adorable and attention-getting small animals a retailer can carry. With more diverse arrays of edibles, habitats and other miniature merchandise available nowadays—including tunnel-based toys, chewable challenges and ample accessories to make your head spin faster than an exercise wheel—it's easy for patrons to get hooked on hamsters and the goods they require.

A Gateway To Greater Sales

Most retailers will tell you that hamsters are not a predetermined purchase or the go-to small pet segment for consumers. But with the right retail strategies, selling hamsters and associated supplies can result in plenty of happy repeat customers, said Daniel Infurna, assistant manager for Pratt's Pets & Feed in Glendale, Arizona.

"Hamsters can be a great starter pet for families with younger children. We consider them to be transitional or segue pets in that they could be a good fit as a first pet for kids, who will eventually move up to rabbits, ferrets or other larger-sized small animals," Infurna said. "In our store, hamsters are a spontaneous impulse purchase, typically a child sees one and falls in love at first sight. But we make better margins on the supplies and subsequent shopping visits for the hamster."

Infurna's operation carries a wide assortment of Syrian hamsters, including teddy bear, panda bear and black bear color varieties, as well as dwarf hamsters—charging \$10 for each. He and his team offer popular bundled starter kits, composed of products from various manufacturers, that include a wire cage equipped with a water dropper, plastic dish, bedding and food, retailing collectively at \$30 (a discount of approximately

\$10 when compared to components sold separately).

Stocking Up On Essentials

Retailers who want to entice shoppers with hamster offerings need to concentrate on beefing up SKUs in a few key staple categories, including diets, habitats, bedding and toys.

When it comes to foods, Lisa Kniceley, marketing and trade sales specialist for Vitakraft Sunseed in Bowling Green, Ohio, said manufacturers in recent years have rolled out more species-specific diets, including edibles for dwarf hamsters, as well as more natural foods.

"As consumers become more aware of the ingredients in the pet foods they purchase, they're going to continue to demand foods and treats which are natural or have additional benefits," Kniceley said.

In response to this demand, Vitakraft Sunseed created SunSations Natural For-

SPOTLIGHT

KAYTEE® Complete Rabbit Kit Habitat by Pets International

Pets International introduces the new Kaytee® Complete Rabbit Kit Habitat. This all inclusive starter kit for rabbits is the largest cage ever offered by Pets International in a complete format. Featuring an extra-large 42"L x 18"W x 20"H size, the cage offers plenty of activity room for pet rabbits and features chew proof latches to keep pets secure and a large front access door. The Complete Rabbit Kit includes Kaytee® Fiesta® rabbit food, Kaytee® Clean & Cozy™ bedding, water bottle and food dish. No tools are necessary to assemble the safe and durable base and wire technology. Full-color packaging allows for superior merchandising. Suggested retail for the Kaytee Complete Kit Rabbit is \$124.95 and is available now at your preferred distributor.



- Website www.kaytee.com
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mula for Hamsters—which contains no artificial colors, preservatives or flavors added—and Vita Prima Dwarf Hamster food, specifically formulated for the unique needs of dwarf hamsters. Both food lines contain probiotics and DHA omega 3 fortification.

Other reliable brands include Kaytee's Forti-Diet Crunch, which blends palatable pellets, extruded pieces and natural hay fortified with essential nutrients; Healthy Pet's carefresh Complete Hamster & Gerbil Food, filled with crunchy pellets made from 10 real fruits and vegetables; and Living World's Timothy Toppings, available in Fruit, Vegetables, or Flowers & Herbs varieties, a complementary food that blends crunchy and tasty natural edibles with Timothy hay.

Several major manufacturers provide hamster starter enclosures that many consumers gravitate toward, including Marshall Pet Products' Small Animal Starter Home, Kaytee's Complete Hamster Kit and Habitrail's Ovo Pad, which consists of a four-piece transparent plastic dome roof with two ventilated retractable dome doors for panoramic viewing.

Bedding options also abound. Two prominent products in the space are Oxbow's Pure Comfort line, which boasts 100 percent never-printed paper bedding, and Healthy Pet's Critter Care line, which includes Shavings Plus and Natural Paper Bedding, both made from natural wood fibers to absorb liquids quickly.

The category that often inspires the most excitement among shoppers is hamster toys, boasting more shapes, colors, materials and features than ever before. Super Pet excels here with its Combo Chews, which combine a toy and chew in one product, easily hung from its Ka-Bob refillable treat dispenser, and its Puzzle Playground, an expandable, connectable jungle gym with interlocking pieces. Habitrail continues to spur enthusiasm with its 3D Mazes, chewable interactive toys with pre-cut slots to hold food and treats in place. They are offered in various fun shapes, like a treehouse, dollhouse and truck.

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Chew on These Retailing Tips

"Selling and merchandising hamster products has become easier as hamsters have grown in popularity as pets, but it remains a challenge to dedicate ample space to some of these products, including hamster nutrition and care products," said Lucas Stock, communications manager for Murdock, Nebraska-based Oxbow Animal Health. "Real estate is often times limited for the small pet segment. But one way for retailers to embrace this challenge is by making special efforts to create a spotlight area for hamster products whenever feasible."

That means placing a hamster habitat—filled with enticing fur balls—in a prominent area of the store, perhaps near checkout. This high-visibility placement gives customers the chance to see and interact with hamsters during their shopping experience and creates a great opportunity for staff to provide facts about hamsters, habitat set up tips and word-of-mouth product recommendations.

Experts agree that the key to growing this segment is educating customers about the benefits of owning and properly caring for hamsters.

"A knowledgeable sales staff can make all the difference when it comes to promoting small pets and small pet products," Stock said, who recommends stocking a good variety of species-specific pet care guides, including a primer on hamster ownership.

To aid in your merchandising efforts, consider using signage or product recommendation clings near or on display cages. Offer incentives, such as a free bag of food with the purchase of a live hamster, and participate in manufacture promotions when available. One popular promotion includes Vita-kraft Sunseed's frequent buyer program, where customers can redeem one free bag of food for every 10 bags they buy.

Erik J. Martin is a Chicago area-based freelance writer whose articles have been featured in Cat Fancy, WebVet.com, AARP The Magazine, Reader's Digest, Costco Connection and other publications.

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SPOTLIGHT

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Pets International introduces two new Kaytee® CritterTrail® habitats for pet hamsters, gerbils or mice.

The new Kaytee® CritterTrail® Quick Clean Habitat is the first new CritterTrail® habitat that includes the Bedding Tray disposable cartridge! Designed with premium features, the new CritterTrail® Quick Clean Habitat includes narrow wire spacing and a spring-locked door for added safety and security. Other premium features include a side-mount water bottle, larger exercise wheel and food dish. Suggested retail for the CritterTrail Quick Clean Habitat is \$39.95.

The CritterTrail® Simple Start is a fun and colorful value habitat that includes a top mount water bottle, exercise wheel and food dish. The habitat features new quick-release twist-knob side latches and integrated wire front access door. Suggested retail for the CritterTrail® Simple Start Habitat is \$29.95.

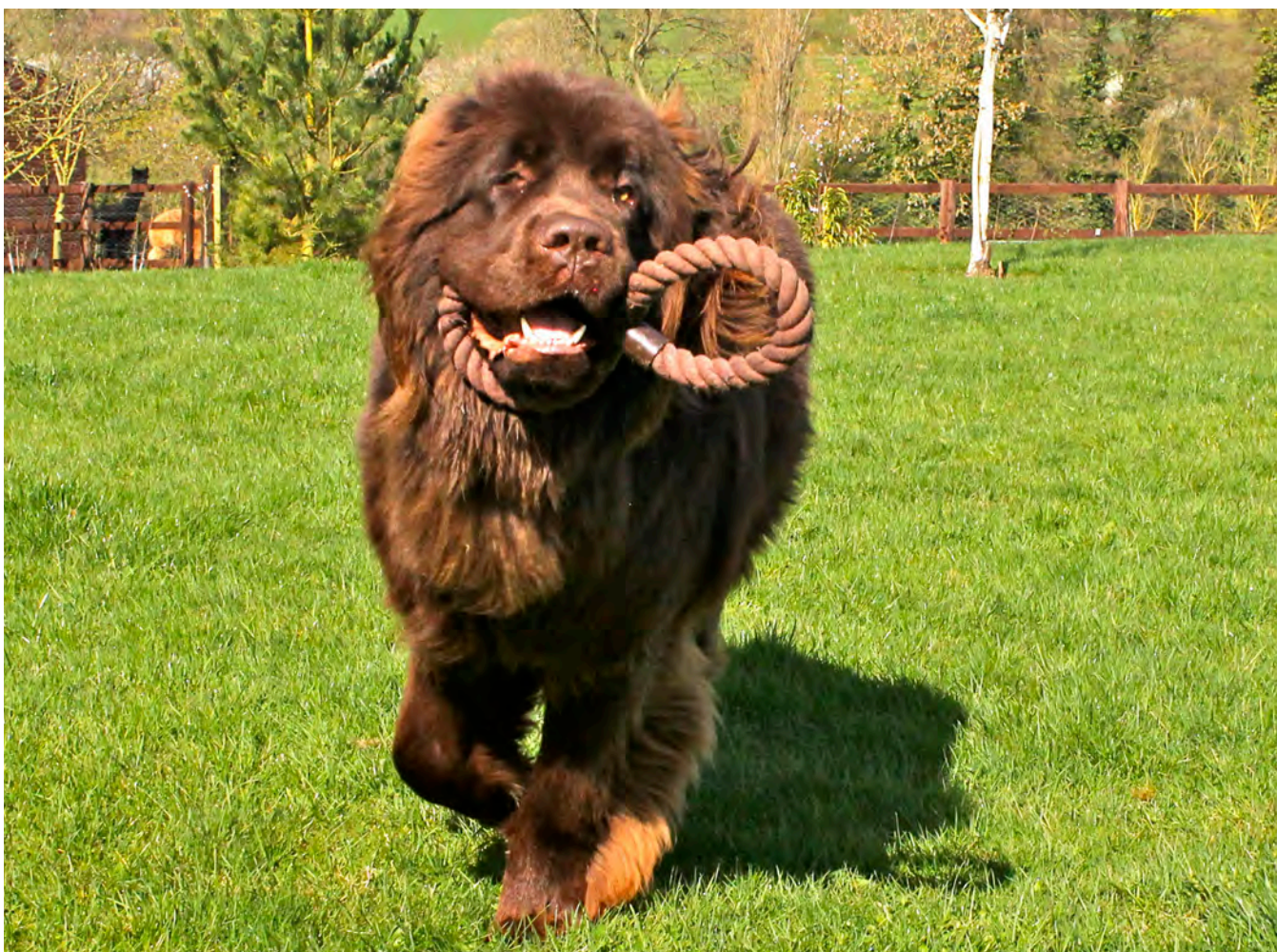
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Having Fun Naturally

There are plenty of options for eco-friendly pet toys.

BY STACY MANTLE

The use of sustainable materials in manufacturing is increasing in popularity – from coconut husks for birds to hemp and wool for dogs and cats. Retailers should remain updated on the benefits of organic and natural materials and be able to inform customers about their many benefits.

“Retailers have the opportunity to educate consumers about which products and brands support the environment,” said Eric Abbey, president of Loving Pets. “We hope that retailers will consider creating an endcap specifically for earth-friendly products and highlight brands making a difference.”

Oodles of Organics

Organic products are those that avoid synthetic chemical inputs, such as fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics and additives. Manufacturers of organic products are subject to periodic onsite inspections at their facilities, making the organic seal of approval expensive and time consuming to obtain. This labor intensive process is worth it when it means creating a safer toy and reducing the carbon paw print, and consumers are willing to pay for the extra time and attention necessary to create such products.

Expanding its global reach into the North American pet market, fami-

ly-owned Aumueller-Korbwaren recently introduced its line of Bavarian Cat Toys. The toys utilize valerian, lavender and anise to stimulate cats who don't normally respond to catnip. The toy bodies are filled with safe organic spelt.

The appeal of valerian is a well-kept secret among cat lovers.

“In our market, most cat lovers only know about catnip toys,” said Stacey Gelkopf, project manager for Bavarian Cat Toys. “They don't realize there's an alternative for encouraging cats to play.” Aumueller-Korbwaren believes in using ecological and sustainable raw materials that put the pet's safety first. Ingredients

are the highest grade available, certified to meet the same standards as those used in pharmaceuticals. The toys are hand-crafted in Germany without the use of any glue.

Bamboo has been utilized in manufacturing for ages. It has a number of appealing qualities for consumers seeking eco-friendly product options.

"Bamboo requires one-third the amount of water to grow compared to cotton," said ShareBrands Co-Founder, Connor Knutson. "Bamboo grows with similar characteristics to many common weeds, therefore has few naturally attracted pests. Bamboo can be grown with little to no use of pesticides or herbicides, whereas cotton often requires a large amount of pesticides to maintain growth. The bamboo used in the ShareBrands color line is all approved organic."

Hemp is being touted as "the new cotton" and is quickly becoming a favorite in the pet industry. Naturally durable, anti-bacterial, anti-microbial, mildew-free and nearly twice as strong as cotton, hemp makes an excellent choice for creating durable pet toys. Organic hemp uses no pesticides or other harmful chemicals during growth and is 100 percent biodegradable, meaning the remains of any shredded hemp toys do not linger in landfills.

"We've been doing the hemp thing since 1996, before most others knew about it," said David Colella, owner of earthdog. "As people become more aware of the benefits of hemp, there is a common misconception that it's indestructible. But that's not the way hemp is. It's a great choice for toys because it's natural and there is nothing absorbed into fiber, and durability is very high."

"We choose to use hemp to make our products due to its strong and durable nature," said Pascal Bedard, owner of From The Field. "Hemp fiber is a renewable, earth-friendly replacement for paper, cotton and other synthetics building material. Hemp seed oil is a cost effective food and clean energy source. We believe in creating products that are biodegradable, pet safe and pet friendly."

"Our new Fetchin' Stick dog toys come in three sizes," said Mary Wolff,

founder of Honest Pet Products. "Inside each Fetchin' Stick is a core of hemp rope surrounded by compressed wool, which allows the toy to float. Each toy is screen-printed with nontoxic, lead-free, water-based, eco-friendly ink."

While hemp and bamboo are the clear leaders in the industry, other natural materials abound.

"Natural sisal and seagrass are two renewable plant fibers used to create handsome and durable scratch surfaces for SmartyKat scratchers," said Rob Morgan, chief operating officer for Worldwise. "The ability to refill and interchange the scratching surfaces makes it easier than ever to offer the variety that satisfies a cat's instinctive need to scratch."

"As with all of our products, these scratchers are designed to fit your pet's specific needs," Morgan said. "They are a part of the Petlinks System that is comprised of a variety of different products that are designed to meet the emotional, instinctual and physical needs of a cat."

Sustainable Manufacturing

In addition to using organic materials in manufacturing, companies are focused on reducing their carbon paw print by implementing responsible manufacturing processes. In fact, natural manufacturing has become so popular in recent days that the Pet Industry Sustainability Council developed a Web-based toolkit designed to support sustainability projects for retailers.

West Paw Design is another company that takes its environmental commitment seriously. From constructing an eco-friendly, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Bozeman, Montana, to creating near-zero-waste dog and cat toys, Materials such as IntelliLoft has diverted nearly 8.2 million plastic bottles from landfills, and its Zogoflex toys are made from BPA- and phthalate-free material that's FDA compliant. West Paw Design even encourages customers to return old toys to be recycled into new toys. The proof can even be seen in its unique packaging, which uses soy-based ink to print on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper.

Many companies have initiated responsible global practices by developing smart partnerships with animal rescue groups and environmental associations, as well as employing people with cognitive and developmental disabilities in the manufacturing process. Creating a unique value proposition not only encourages consumers to purchase the products, it provides an opportunity to teach consumers about environmental responsibility so that we are all better Earth stewards.

Stacy Mantle is an award-winning writer and multi-species pet lifestyle expert, author, and spokesperson. She is the founder of PetsWeekly.com and a regular contributor to national publications including Pet Age, Cat Fancy, and Animal Behavioral College.



Pampering Pooches Going Mainstream

More owners seek spa-quality grooming products for their dogs.

BY MAGGIE MARTON

Most salons and stores have their tried-and-true, go-to grooming brands. Customers' favorites stay consistent from season to season, so it makes sense to keep those products lined up in key space. However, the spa niche of grooming products is a booming and growing market segment.

The big difference between traditional grooming products and those in the spa segment is that function isn't the primary sales driver. With most

grooming sales, customers are seeking a specific action: cleaning, deodorizing, moisturizing, soothing and so on. With spa grooming sales, customers are seeking luxury upgrades like scent or fancy packaging.

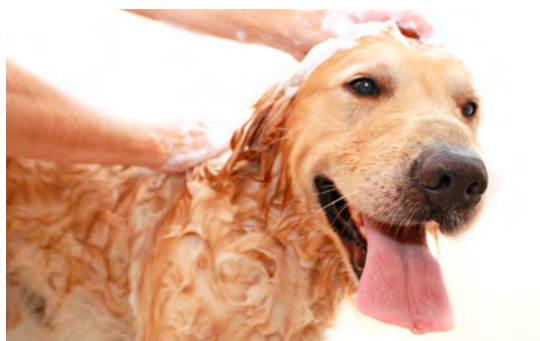
Humanizing Pet Grooming

It starts with a relationship to the human spa market. Many of the same ingredients and techniques have trickled into pet spa grooming. Clay, for example, is available in the Armonie Nat-

urali line manufactured by Schaussi's Alpen Schatz. Mineral-infused items, coconut oil and flower essences—all popular in human spa treatments—are cropping up in pet grooming products, which allows spa-going pet owners to feel like they're able to extend the same pampering that they get to their pets.

Bubbles n' Beads two-in-one shampoo and conditioner has a unique formula that includes microencapsulated beads that penetrate the coat and burst against the skin, releasing vitamins and conditioners right into the follicle. The formula, which is scented with lavender essential oil, sounds like a human hair care product: 11 amino acids like arginine, glycine and alanine; a gentle coconut based surfactant; Brazil nut oil; and an array of minerals, proteins and enzymes – it's also free from sodium laureth sulfate and sodium lauryl sulfate. Those familiar ingredients appeal to a spa consumer. The brand also includes spa essentials like eye pads and fur butter.

Consumers gravitate toward the familiar, and spa brands like Burt's Bees and Kiehl's have launched grooming products. Burt's Bees offers a complete line, including convenient wipes, shampoos, ear cleaners and deodorizing sprays. Kiehl's Cuddly-Coat Grooming Shampoo is a mild, soap-free option emblazoned with their recognizable brand name. Pet Head products evoke the familiar with the product names and packaging. Those brands that consumers know and love for themselves make an easy sale because trust and familiarity are already in place.



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“With spa grooming sales, customers are seeking luxury upgrades like scent or fancy packaging.”

Going Natural

When it comes to trusting spa products, there's an emphasis on naturally-derived ingredients. Organic is a big seller in the spa category. Small brands perform well in boutique settings. Mad About Organics offers a range of spa products from their Organic Healing Herbal Salve to Organic Oatmeal Shampoo and every category in between – from oral and ear care to healing ointments.

Small batch products have grown in popularity among spa consumers, though sourcing provides a challenge. Most small producers only sell in a particular region. For instance, Mad About Organics is primarily available along the West Coast.

Shampoochie, a 100 percent biodegradable and all-natural herbal shampoo soap, leverages both small-batch production and natural ingredients for a bottle-less shampoo. The brand's herbal dog shampoo soap is a bar made from vegan ingredients, which include eight natural plant oils and five pure essential oils.

Odds and Ends

Within the spa segment, there's also a slice of business dedicated to superfluous products like nail polish. Those smaller products work well as point-of-sale add-ons or on endcaps.

Just as those products are for good for show, the packaging of spa products is highly important. In fact, many consumers often choose products based on packaging alone, so a selection of attractive packages serves this category well. Gift sets, especially for holidays, also perform well.

Spa products aren't only in dog form, either. Cat grooming is a growing market segment with spa a slice of that overall pie. Companies like Purrinlot offer cat-specific, high-end grooming products. Purrinlot has three types of cat shampoo: Healthy Coat pH Shampoo with Shea Butter; Healthy Coat, Face and Body pH

Shampoo; and Honey, Almond, Oatmeal pH Shampoo. Those products offer the same level of sophistication as the dog spa products, but for a cat-loving consumer.

In the salon, spa products and services can be offered as an upgrade or premiere package. Regardless of the choice—polish, coat shine spray, deodorizer or shampoo—spa products are all about helping owners feel like they are pampering their

pet. They want to feel like they're spoiling their dog with luxury ingredients and fancy packaging, but still feel like they are making a healthy choice that takes care of their pet's grooming needs.

Maggie Marton is a freelance writer and pet lifestyle pro. She lives in Bloomington, Ind., with her husband, three dogs and a cat.

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NEW CATEGORY!!

The advertisement features a French Bulldog on the left. In the center, there are several pet grooming products: a yellow spray bottle labeled 'Dry Clean', a red bottle labeled 'Life's Ant', an orange bottle labeled 'Oatmeal', a green bottle labeled 'Crazy Cat Lady', and a blue bottle labeled 'Fizzy Kitty'. Below these products, there are four colorful flower-shaped accessories (red, black with white dots, yellow, and pink) and a striped tie. At the bottom, there are three cat-shaped grooming products in red, pink, and blue. A small cat is shown sitting in a black grooming product.



Come Together (For a Cause)

What is crowdfunding's role in the pet industry?

Why should pet retailers care about crowdfunding? Crowdfunding is unique in that it allows everyone to get behind very specific initiatives not for financial purposes, but for a cause. This year, the global crowdfunding industry is set to once again double in size, generating nearly \$35 billion in revenue, according to Massolution's 2015 Crowdfunding Industry Report.

The Pet Industry Sustainability Coalition and LoveAnimals.org, a crowdfunding platform, have partnered to advance and promote the funding of brilliant ideas that further the goals of sustainability.

In 2013, LoveAnimals.org was created and launched to support the animal sector with the mission to create an engaging way for consumers to donate. LoveAnimals.org is the only animal focused nonprofit platform that charges no fee and does not retain a percentage of the funds raised by the campaigns. Today, LoveAnimals.org has facilitated more than \$1 million in donations to more than 550 campaigns run by animal nonprofits across America.

The Basics

Crowdfunding is when many people give small contributions to bring an idea or project to life. Online platforms focused on crowdfunding have expanded upon this notion by creating a forum where ideas can rapidly gain momentum and funding as contributors share that idea through social media.

Crowdfunding campaign types can be grouped into two categories, those with no financial return and those with financial return. This article will focus on campaigns with no financial return, also called philanthropic crowdfunding,

where nonprofits run a specific campaign and small donors pool their resources to bring the campaign to life. In return, the donor is part of a movement for change. For example, while the average nonprofit crowdfunding campaign raises \$3,000, during the heat of summer a campaign to help a shelter fix its broken AC system raised \$39,000 through LoveAnimals.org in just 24 hours across 637 donors. This demonstrates that consumers have an interest in donating and represents an opportunity to engage customers in corporate philanthropy. While this is not widely used within the pet industry, it signifies an untapped resource to differentiate your brand.

How to Use Crowdfunding

Today, consumers donate an average of "4.7 percent of their total income to charitable institutions" according to the Mosaic Blog article "The Shifting Paradigm of Philanthropic Crowdfunding" by Loni Coelho. Based on a 2014 study published by Cone Communications, 64 percent of consumers hold corporations to the same standard of charitable giving, stating that they believe brands should be actively involved in solving environmental and social problems.

While most companies are already involved in social giving, only 36 percent of U.S. consumers believe that brands are working hard enough to be part of the solution. This underscores that few brands are getting recognition for their efforts.

Crowdfunding is revolutionary. It not only promotes the corporate social responsibility initiatives of a company, but it puts control into the hands of small donors. Using crowdfunding technology, the company defines the parameters of philanthropic giving

and the customers decide which cause or project gets funded with their purchase. Suddenly consumers can decide exactly what project their money supports—even if they only have \$10 to give. As an active participant in the company's CSR programs, the customer is left with the knowledge that the company is meeting the requirements for social good. The result: a happy and loyal customer.

Where Is Crowdfunding Headed?

"Funding for causes ... is serious business" as the crowdfunding industry is projected to yet again double, according to Heesun Wee's article "Millennials Want to Donate to Charities, Save the World. Really." With the age of the Internet and smartphones, people "naturally feel comfortable with technology and online payment systems."

As of a 2014 Pew Research Center study, 74 percent of online adults utilize social media. Without a doubt, many of your customers have either seen someone within their social network promote, are personally following or have contributed to a crowdfunding campaign.

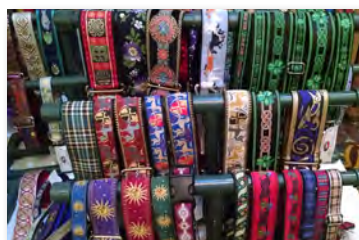
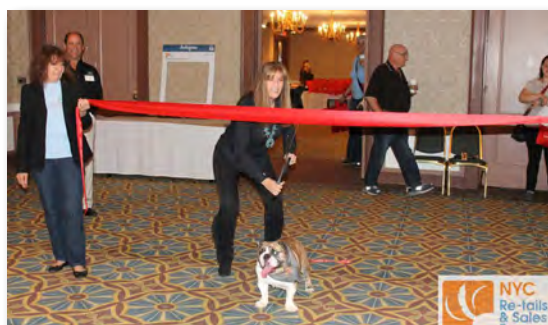
Engaging consumers in the pet sector through social media and encouraging them to donate to a cause of their choice is an untapped opportunity. Now is the time to establish your company as an industry leader while pushing the bar for positive, sustainable change.

To get involved, join PISC by visiting <http://petsustainability.org> or go to LoveAnimals.org. LoveAnimals.org is launching a new way for the pet industry to participate in crowdfunding with an easy-to-use customized version of its technology that will allow companies to engage customers in deciding what projects to fund.

Community News and Events in the Pet Industry

NYC Re-tails & Sales Expo

The NYC Re-tails & Sales Expo was held on October 13 at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York. Retailers, groomers and other pet professionals perused made in the USA products offered by over 15 vendors. Pet Age was the media sponsor of this event.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

Dec. 5 Holiday Pet Festival,
North Mall, Scottsdale, Ariz.
www.holidaypetfestival.com

Dec. 12-13 Winter Wonderland Pet Expo, LA Convention Center,
Los Angeles, Calif.
www.holidaypetexpo.com

January

Jan. 9-10 Bay Area Pet Expo, Santa Clara County Fairgrounds,
Santa Clara, Calif.
www.bayareapetexpo.com

Jan. 9-10 Reptile Super Show,
Pomona Fairplex, Pomona, Calif.
www.reptilesupershow.com

Jan. 30 Great Lakes Pet Expo,
Wisconsin Expo Center at State Fair Park,
Milwaukee, Wis.
www.petexpomilwaukee.com

Jan. 30-31 Edmonton Pet Expo,
Edmonton EXPO Centre,
Edmonton, Alberta
www.petexpo.ca

February

Feb. 4-7 Groom Expo West,
Pasadena Convention Center,
Pasadena, Calif.
www.groomexpowest.com

Feb. 6-7 Vegas Pet Expo,
Cashman Center, Las Vegas, Nev.
www.vegaspetexpo.com

Feb. 8 Phillips Pet Food & Supplies Western Buying Show,
Meritage Resort & Spa, Napa, Calif.
www.phillipspet.com/customers/
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Just Keep Swimming

Fritz Aquatics expands and releases new products through research and innovation.

BY NICOLE GIFFORD

Pet Age spoke with Fritz Industries specialty sales manager Mike Noce about the brand's arrival into the aquatic pet category and its sustained success as a supplier for aquaculture hobbyists and professionals alike.

Nicole Gifford: *How did Fritz get started in the aquatics market?*

Mike Noce: Fritz Industries was founded by chemist and entrepreneur Fredrick "Fritz" Weisend in 1956. Fritz was an avid aquarium hobbyist. He was dissatisfied with the aquarium products on the market in the late 1960's and 1970's, and felt he could provide innovative products of superior quality. Fritz pioneered research into nitrifying bacteria that would quickly and naturally remove the ammonia and nitrite from aquatics systems during setup. The resulting product line, FritzZyme, remains a staple in today's professional aquatics industry. Today, Fritz Aquatics manufactures hundreds of products serving both the hobbyist and professional aquatic markets. We still have a passion for development and innovation.

Nicole: *What sets Fritz Aquatics apart from other aquaculture product manufacturers?*

Mike: It is a specialty division of Fritz Industries, a chemical and biological manufacturer that serves several industries. We are heavily driven by research and development, and our primary markets include

aquatics, wastewater, aquaculture, agriculture and oilfield. Our broad range of manufacturing operations allows Fritz Aquatics access to personnel, equipment, research and infrastructure resources that many of our competitors do not have. The quality of Fritz products also sets us apart from our competition. Our products are produced in an FDA approved facility and Fritz Industries recently achieved ISO 9001 quality certification.

Nicole: *What products of yours are most popular? Why do you think that they are so popular?*

Mike: Fritz remains a world leader in the manufacturing of nitrifying bacteria, so our FritzZyme brand of biological products are what most of our customers think of when they see the Fritz name. Since acquiring the Mardel and AP brands, products like CopperSafe, Quick Cure, Crystal Clear and the Maracyns are quickly becoming the most popular. They continue to gain popularity because they are effective and perform as advertised.

Nicole: *Do you find that aquaculture professionals and hobbyists have significantly different needs of your brand?*

Mike: It might surprise you that the chemical and biological products that are required to operate a large shrimp aquaculture company or public aquarium are very similar to that of someone with a reef tank or even a betta bowl. Obviously, the scale of application is much different, but the core products remain the same and professionals and hobbyists experience the same issues. For example, we offer our Reef Pro Mix Sea Salt in 14 pound bags for the hobbyist market, but one large aquarium in the U.S. recently purchased over 1.5 million pounds of sea salt that had to be delivered in 44,000 pound pneumatic trucks! The professional side is not swayed by flashy packaging or exaggerated bullet points on labels. Experienced biologists and chemists know what works and are sold on quality.



Nicole: *What is a typical day like for you?*

Mike: The Mardel acquisition has made this a very busy year. Many people are not aware that Fritz manufactures private label products for other companies and was manufacturing the Mardel line of products as a private label for Sergeants for several years. Being able to publicly associate the popularity and quality of Mardel with Fritz Aquatics has brought about a huge resurgence in the awareness and popularity of the Fritz brand. I frequently get phone calls and emails from dealers who fondly remember the Fritz name and look forward to offering the brand to their customers.

Nicole: *Why do you think that the company has been a success for over 30 years?*

Mike: Fritz himself was an inventor and was always looking to develop products that were unique and cutting edge. He pioneered many of the products that are staples in the aquarium industry today. I feel the spirit of Fritz is still alive and well today within our company.

Nicole: *What new products are on the horizon for Fritz Aquatics?*

Mike: 2016 should be a very busy year for us. For the hobbyist market we recently released our new complete marine salt blend, Reef Pro Mix, which we are very proud of. We will also be releasing several new reef chemical products as well as several new formulas that share the patented technology of the Mardel "Shield" line of reef safe herbal treatments.

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