

AMERICA'S COOLEST  
HEALTHY PET PRODUCTS & TECA TU

PRODUCTS+  
CHEWS, BONES & BODY PARTS

REAL DEAL  
THE CASE OF THE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

# pets+

NOV-DEC 2022  
THE BETTER  
BUSINESS  
MAGAZINE  
FOR  
AMERICAN  
PET PROS



**BIG  
SURVEY  
ISSUE**



# THE RESULTS ARE IN! **520**

pet retailers and service providers took our inaugural industry survey — and they had a lot to say!





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WHAT'S HAPPENING ONLINE IN NOV-DEC



EXPLORE OUR ARCHIVES AT [petsplusmag.com/archives](https://petsplusmag.com/archives)

### PETS+ SAMPLE BOX

Scan to see what cool products were in the October and November boxes. Apply to be a member of this popular program at [petsplusmag.com/samplebox](https://petsplusmag.com/samplebox).



### RENEW NOW OR MISS OUT ON PETS+!

The magazine remains free, but you have to request it. Simply scan the QR code or go to [petsplusmag.com/subscribe](https://petsplusmag.com/subscribe). NOTE: You must be an active subscriber to take part in cool programs like the PETS+ Sample Box.



### FACEBOOK PETS+ COMMUNITY

Not yet a member of the PETS+ Community on Facebook? Join us at [facebook.com/petsplusmagcommunity](https://facebook.com/petsplusmagcommunity) for discussions of all things pet. It's a fun and super-smart group of indies!



PHOTO BY JILL GARRETT PHOTOGRAPHY

# THANK YOU!

520 INDIE PET PROS TOOK OUR INAUGURAL 'BIG SURVEY'

## 5 smart tips from this issue

- 1 Hold a "Stocking Stuffer Extravaganza." (*Calendar*, p. 8)
- 2 If you give holiday bonuses, hand them out in late November or early December. (*Manager's To-Do List*, p. 10)
- 3 Don't let customers in a rush, rush you. (*Tip Sheet*, p. 54)
- 4 Save time and money with a virtual assistant. (*Lashonda Geffrard*, p. 55)
- 5 Strategically placed focal points lead customers to where you want them. (*Lyn M. Falk*, p. 56)

**A**s a regular reader of PETS+, you know we love a good survey. Our monthly Brain Squad questionnaire goes out to independent pet retailers and service providers — owners and top managers — across the U.S. (and even a few in Canada). To receive the PETS+ Sample Box, store owners must agree to take a survey on the products included. And now we've added the Big Survey to our annual lineup!

Our first-ever look at the state of indie pet businesses in this country asked 69 questions, covering everything from what retailers look for in products and how they find them to the ways all respondents are overcoming current challenges such as supply-chain issues and staffing shortages.

Exactly 520 qualified pet pros took the survey! We can't thank them enough — and we also want to express our gratitude to the American Pet Products Association for being its inaugural sponsor.

You'll find the answers to all 70 ques-

tions, along with additional insights pulled from the data, starting on p. 28.

One thing to keep in mind: Unlike with our monthly Brain Squad survey, respondents answered this one anonymously. Indies are rarely shy when it comes to expressing their opinion, but this anonymity gave them the freedom to share revenue and other financial details they might not normally discuss in "public."

Finally, as an incentive to take our first-ever Big Survey, we entered all who provided their name (just to us) in a random drawing to win a professional portrait session for their pet, with the best photo to appear on a PETS+ cover in 2023. We are thrilled to announce that Elaina Stanley of Three Happy Hounds in Fernley, NV, won. We can't wait to see the pics!

*Pamela*

pamela@petsplusmag.com

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masters of the trade *survey*

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## AW, THANKS!

+ One of my favorite things in the magazine is information about new products. I haven't been able to attend anything in person for a number of years, so this magazine is a godsend when looking for things to add to our inventory! **Beth Kidd, Dogs By Design, Irwin, PA**

+ We love getting PETS+ and have come to depend on it for fresh ideas and new products. **Gloria Von Zech, The Principled Pet, Collingswood, NJ**

+ Always enjoy "Real Deal," the what would you do in this situation feature. I like to see what others have to say. **Mary Simpson, E & M Pets, Countryside, IL**

+ I always love the up-and-coming products and the articles on how to do business in this new era. **Katie Titterington, Arnie's Pet Foods, Lincoln, NE**

+ I'm so new to this world! I'm very, very thankful that people put so much effort into helping indie pet stores succeed! So, just a giant THANK YOU! **Amber Staton, Smoosh Pets, Knoxville, IA**

+ I love Manager's To-Do List! I shared it with my marketing manager, and we are working on some of the ideas to increase our exposure in our marketplace. **Lisa Kirschner, Sit, Stay, 'N Play, Stroudsburg, PA**

+ I always enjoy reading and seeing photos of how other stores merchandise and what products do well in their location. **Chad Miller, Pet Wants Rehoboth Beach, Rehoboth Beach, DE**

+ Loved the recent reshare of "27 Contrarian Rules of Business That Every Pet Retailer Should Know" [October, 2019]. I often tell my staff, "It is hard to be a salmon." Meaning thinking of and doing things that aren't necessarily



+ The "Run Lean" article was awesome! Great ideas and new ways to look at things.

**Jennifer Moore Baker, Grateful Dog Bakery, North Ridgeville, OH**

mainstream ... swimming against the tide. Many of the 27 rules apply to how we run our business. It serves us well. **Andrea Demmons, The TailGait Market, Asheville, NC**

+ PETS+ and Editor-in-Chief Pamela Mitchell continue to amaze me with how much information they bring to the table. Most recently, I missed SuperZoo but was able to see so many new things because of Pamela's coverage via social media and the articles in the magazine. My staff also follows PETS+ and discusses the different ideas they see. It is an extremely valuable resource for our store. **Jennifer Thomas, Lucky Dog Pet Grocery & Bakery, Lawrence, KS**

+ I'd like to say how amazing the PETS+ Sample Boxes are. I'm such a new store, that I don't have the staff to be able to leave and go to industry trade shows to see new products. The sample box is a great way for me to see and try them. I really appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this. Thank you! **David Price, Fuzzy Buttz, Calera, AL**

## NOW, YOU TAKE A BOW

+ So many of us have really stepped up and weathered some serious storms these past few years — DCM, brand buyouts, Covid and restricted business operations, product scarcity and employee scarcity — that we all really deserve a round of applause for not giving up. **Jamie Schuller, Dog Naturals, Branson, MO**

## Q3 TRADE SHOWS

+ It was great to be back at SuperZoo! So nice to talk with vendors and actually *touch* merchandise! **Loree Shirazi, The Original Paw Pleasers, San Diego, CA**

+ SuperZoo was really nice this year. I hope that next year we see more indie brands coming back, but I think this year was a good return to a little more normal. **Melisa Wynn, Paws & Fins Pet Shop, Bainbridge Island, WA**

+ We had a great first-time trip to SuperZoo and enjoyed meeting all of the vendors. We were able to snag some good deals on products that we already carry and also found some new products we want to bring in. **Janet Huffor, Furry Friends Inc., Colorado Springs, CO**

+ SuperZoo was incredible. It felt great to get back into the swing of things and be a part of all the buzz and excitement in our industry. It was fantastic to meet so many people in person that I have been working with online for so many years. **Becci Scott, Fetching Dog, Scottsdale, AZ**

+ Price increases are starting to really pinch us again. Getting really great deals at the BCI distributor show definitely helped us bring in fresh products with competitive pricing. **Paige Elder, Buzz n' B's Pet Shop, Erie, PA**

+ PFExpo continues to get bigger and better every year! This was

our third year attending. Saw so many great products and had an absolute blast at the afterparty. Can't wait for next year! **Katherine Ostiguy, Crossbones, Providence, RI**

+ We attended the NAN buying show a few days ago. I was happy to see a few new companies and products coming into distribution. **Michele Saharic, Barkley's Marketplace, Flemington, NJ**

## LOOKING AHEAD

+ It would be nice to have a complete timeline with details of the DCM controversy. I think all retailers would like to have a factual document they can post or hand out. **Jennie Dudley, Hairy Winston, Mount Pleasant, SC**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Tall order! Let us see what we can do.*

+ I'd like to see more articles written by retailers. Although "industry professionals" have much to share, what's important is feedback from those who are "in the trenches" on a daily basis. I'm always impressed by the good ideas that are shared when someone posts a question or a problem on the social media feed. Those are real answers! **Pattie Zeller, Animal Connection, Charlottesville, VA**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: You'll find "real answers" from successful retailers and service providers throughout each issue. We pride ourselves on that! In Nov-Dec alone, there are reader tips in Calendar, Manager's To-Do List and Tip Sheet. America's Coolest winners share their successes. Salon owner Lashonda Geffrard offers her take on virtual assistants in Columns. And Nancy Guinn helms Real Deal, which includes more than a dozen responses from retailers and service providers. More pet business owners will be sharing their successes in Columns in 2023. Stay tuned!*



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# Dec-Jan



## DECEMBER

1

To mark **CAT LOVERS MONTH**, ask customers how they say “I love you” to their kitties. According to Jackson Galaxy, many felines get the message when delivered by a slow blink, but we think they’d also feel the love with a new catnip toy or a visit from their favorite sitter. Offer a special on such products and services to those who answer your question on social media, with a prize for the cutest photo or video.

9

Feel like you’ve misplaced your love for the holiday season? On **OFFICIAL LOST AND FOUND DAY**, start the morning with a random act of kindness. “The results, and the smiles, will amaze you,” says sales trainer Jeffrey Gitomer, explaining that buoyed by the good vibes, you’re bound to focus on why things can happen, not why they may not. And all that newfound positivity will likely rub off on your harried staff as well.

11

**FOURTEEN DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS.** Time to up the sales promo-



tions. Just for Paws in St. Charles, IL, holds a “Stocking Stuffer Extravaganza” each year, a day on which each customer gets a free stocking and 25% off anything they can squeeze into it. This also helps to clear out stock before year-end inventory.

19

On **GET TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER DAY**, give your sales associates an allowance to take customers out for premium coffees. Their goal should be to become a little better acquainted with them, learn about their relationship with their pets, what new services they may be looking for, what things they prefer to order online (and how you might compete with that convenience) — but not to sell them anything in the moment.

22

On **KEEP PETS SAFE IN WINTER DAY**, create graphics with

cold-weather tips for your social media, email marketing and website. Pair with winter gear, paw balms and ice melt. Follow the lead of Rebecca Martino of Stately Pet Supply in Clarks Summit, PA, who orders ice melt through a local landscaping company to get the best possible wholesale price.

31

Farewell 2022. **NEW YEAR’S EVE** means resolutions and Scottish traditions. So while you’re singing Auld Lang Syne and waiting for a dark-haired stranger to arrive with a lump of coal for the fireplace, whiskey for additional warmth or other signs of good fortune, think of the new behaviors to put into place in 2023: No more holding onto slow-moving merchandise, buying without the support of data, or skipping the **PETS+ Brain Squad** surveys.

## JANUARY

1

“When you wake up in the morning, Pooh,” said Piglet at last, “what’s the first thing you say to yourself?” “What’s for breakfast?” said Pooh. “What do you say, Piglet?” “I say, I wonder what’s going to happen exciting today?” said Piglet. After all we’ve been through the last three years, make this a great day and 2023 a great year.

14

On **DRESS UP YOUR PET DAY**, invite customers to try on the newest pet fashions and walk a runway in your store. A simple runner rug will do, and be sure to take plenty of pics for social media. For those with multiple pets, you could even create “Who Wore It Best?” posts! Not feeling quite that ambitious? Or have a service-based business? Ask customers to share photos

### MORE EVENTS



#### DECEMBER

**2 Mutts Day.** Host a social mixer to celebrate your mixed-breed customers ... be sure to invite the Doodles. :)



**9 International Day Of Veterinary Medicine.** Shout out to a local vet for their continued partnership.



**13 National Day of the Horse.** They’re workers, soldiers, athletes and soul-mates. Pay tribute.



**26 Thank-You Note Day.** A good day to write to everyone who has helped you over the holidays ... and throughout the year.



#### JANUARY

**8 Bubble Bath Day.** Post pics of sudsed-up pets in your salon and/or self-wash.



**9 Clean Off Your Desk Today Day.** Do it! An orderly desk means an orderly mind.



**15 National Hat Day —** Pass the hat for a favorite rescue.

of their dressed-up pets on your accounts.

19

It’s **NATIONAL POPCORN DAY**. Pick up a countertop popcorn machine so you can treat people and pets alike. Serve up freshly popped, buttery goodness to your human customers, and have on hand the Himalayan-style “popcorn” for the pups.

24

**NATIONAL COMPLIMENT DAY —** Shouldn’t this be every day? Alex Ferguson, the gruff former coach of probably the world’s most famous soccer club, Manchester United, said that all his players wanted to hear were two words, “Well done.” We’d add that if you want to see the behavior repeated, it helps to specify exactly what it was about your employee’s action that prompted your praise.





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# Manager's To-Do List

HERE'S OUR LIST OF BUSINESS-BOOSTING ACTIVITIES FOR YOU IN DEC-JAN

## WEEK 1

NOV. 27-DEC. 3

**MARKETING** If you don't already have a selfie station that changes with the seasons, set one up now to capture holiday shoppers. "Naughty" and "Nice" backdrops at Holistic for Pets in Sarasota, FL, inspired by those at Dog Krazy stores in Virginia, let customers decide which best suits their pet. Oliver the Frenchie (at right) landed on the "Nice" list in 2021! Jennifer Guevin designed the backdrops in Canva and had a local business print them for \$75 each. Her logo appears at the top, but remains neutral enough to let the pet be the star so customers are eager to share on social media.

**PAYROLL** If you hand out holiday bonuses, consider giving them in the first week of December like Sheila Spitz of Wet Nose in Geneva, IL. She says, "This will give your team extra money for their holiday shopping and reduce that stressor, and will make them more motivated throughout the season." Laura Backus of Purrrfect Bark in Columbus, NC, gives bonuses even earlier, before Black Friday so her employees can take advantage of the available deals, too.

## WEEK 2

DEC. 4-10

**SELF-CARE** To stay healthy during the holiday season, Johnna Devereaux of Fetch RI in Richmond, RI, says, "Take immune-stimulating herbs like echinacea to help keep your body strong — and don't forget to sleep!"



Brittany Schlup of Premium Pets in Jefferson City, MO, adds this task: Book a vacay for January or February.



## WEEK 3

DEC. 11-17

**PARTNERSHIPS** Brand reps know not to make sales calls during the busy holiday season, but many are more than happy to stop by and help with customers. Reach out! Kat Forry of A1 Pet Emporium in Oklahoma City, OK, says, "Reps are an untapped resource during the holidays,

and they have always been happy to help us out where they can." Stephanie Wright of Bend Pet Express in Bend, OR, welcomes those who bring coffee or lunch. "Staff always appreciate the gesture!"

**OPERATIONS** If you have a service-based business that sees a slow December, use your time like Katherine Ostiguy of Crossbones training facility in Providence, RI. "We use December to deep-clean our facility so we can put our best paw forward in January!"

## WEEK 4

DEC. 18-24

**LEADERSHIP** Straighten your Santa cap, Hanukkah tie or other holiday attire because peak holiday season has arrived, and staff will take their energy levels

from you. Paige Elder of Buzz n' B's Pet Shop in Erie, PA, stays positive during the month because as she says, "Attitude is contagious, be it good or bad."

**MARKETING** It's the week before Christmas — send an eblast with sure-thing gift ideas for pets. Offer services such as day care or training? Run "Buy Now, Use in January" specials.

## WEEK 5

DEC. 25-31

**INVENTORY** If you don't have them already, Dorothy Vetrovec of Nature's Feed in Spring Grove, IL, recommends getting barcode scanners for year-end inventory. "They run about \$300 each and are so worth it!"

## WEEK 6

JAN. 1-7

**PLANNING** To know where you're going, it helps to have a plan. Whizbang! Retail's Bob Negen suggests you put a half day on your calendar, go to your favorite coffee shop, put on your headphones and get it done. To do this, use his "Down & Dirty, Get It Done Planning Process," as featured in our Jan-Feb 2022 issue, available at [petsplusmag.com/digimag](http://petsplusmag.com/digimag).

**FINANCES** The new year is a good time to refresh your commitment to watching costs like a hawk. Check all recurring expenses from



services. If you haven't used it in the past three months, cancel. You can always rejoin if necessary.

## WEEK 7

JAN. 8-14

**MANAGEMENT** Institute a weekly email to keep employees in the loop about what's happening in your store, as well as up to date on the industry. Sign them up for PETS+ daily bulletin, too, at [petsplusmag.com/bulletins](http://petsplusmag.com/bulletins). It includes useful news and tips to boost productivity.

**FINANCIAL** Take a few moments to plan your 2023 charity budget, which can save you time (and guilt) later. Consider letting your staff vote on how to allocate all or some of it within the community.

## WEEK 8

JAN. 15-21

**LEADERSHIP** If it's too hectic around the holidays to celebrate with staff, follow the lead of Youngblood's Natural Animal Care Center and Massage in Wilkinson, IN. Samantha Youngblood says, "We are doing a Paint Your Pet party at our store for our staff as a thank you ... in January after everything has calmed down."

**FINANCES** Get an early start on your taxes. On average, small-business owners spend more than 40 hours — the equivalent of a full workweek — filing their federal taxes every year. One in four spends at least three full weeks on the annual chore. Start early so it won't be quite so painful.

## WEEK 9

JAN. 22-28

**MANAGEMENT** Do you have guidelines for handling complaints? If not, get busy. As much as possible, empower your team to make decisions without you.

Use it! Cut out or photocopy this and place it on your bulletin board. Then check off items when completed.



SPONSORED CONTENT

# BULLY STICKS REIMAGINED

With their unique “cheek-plus” construction, Natural Farm keeps prices in check with Power Bully Sticks.

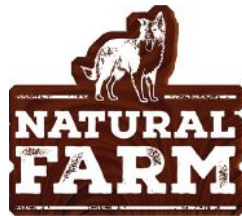


**1.** Dogs prefer the Power Bully Stick's dual texture and long lasting chew. **2.** Natural Farm's Power Bully Sticks are available in 6" and 12" lengths in 5-pack (6") or 3-pack (12") units. The company also offers a convenient counter-top display (not pictured). **3.** No-Odor Power Bully Sticks, 5-count pack of 6" sticks. **MSRP: \$19.99**

It's no bull: Because of sourcing difficulties, the price of bully sticks has increased. As a single-source manufacturer of bully sticks and chews with its own food-grade production facility in Brazil, Natural Farm has created the Power Bully Stick. This odor-free, competitively priced bully stick is made from 100% grass-fed beef. Natural Farm keeps prices in check with the Power Bully's unique construction which features a beef cheek muscle center wrapped in a natural beef pizzle sheath.

Each Power Bully Stick looks and smells the same as a traditional bully stick, but dogs actually prefer its dual texture and long lasting chew. And pet product retailers and their customers will love the affordability and quality of Natural Farm's Power Bully Sticks which offer the same positive outlet for a dog's need to chew.

Natural Farm is a single-source bully stick manufacturer and controls every step of production. Each ingredient that goes into Natural Farm's hormone-free, chemical-free products comes from local suppliers of free-range, grass-fed cattle. The company's product development team is dedicated to bringing useful and exciting new products to market. With environmentally sustainable packaging created from sugar cane and recycled paper, Natural Farm is doing its part to leave the world a better place. The company also donates to non-profit organizations that benefit the environment, animals and children.



For more information on Power Bully Sticks and the complete line of sticks and chews from Natural Farm, visit the company's website: [naturalfarmpet.com/pages/retail](http://naturalfarmpet.com/pages/retail)

[www.naturalfarmpet.com](http://www.naturalfarmpet.com)

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# this issue in Products+

TRENDS  
ROUNDUPS  
NEW RELEASES



## BIRTHDAY BOOST

Frozen, stuffed **WEST PAW** Toppls! We have a few different recipes, and prices vary. The Birthday Toppl costs the least at \$21.99 for small and \$29.99 for large, and includes the Toppl. Clients can keep the toy or bring it back for a credit, \$7 for small and \$10 for large, toward the next stuffed Toppl. We will then inspect the Toppl for any wear, sanitize and reuse it. If a client brings back a "Tired Toppl," we still take it back, but donate it to one of our local rescue groups. Our clients are going nuts for them! From Aug. 26 through Oct. 17, we sold 75 and couldn't keep them in stock. **Sheila Spitz, Wet Nose, Geneva, IL**

built-in bungee cord, and they even float. We made a TikTok of using it, which really helped to promote it. **Kaye Busse-Kleber, Bark On Mulford, Rockford, IL**

**TALL TAILS** Dream Chaser Cuddle beds. The pyramid stacking is appealing to the customer eye. **Paul Lewis The Green K9, Mount Dora, FL**

We did well on promo for **PRI-MAL** and **HIMALAYAN DOG CHEWS**: Buy any complete dog frozen or freeze-dried diet, and get a free single or small three-pack of chews (limit three free

per customer). We moved greater than 25% of the total volume of HDC chews sold this year, which meant happy customers and hopefully new buyers of both HDC and Primal! **Shane Somerville, Paddywack, Mill Creek, WA**

Ultimate Scratching Post by **SMART CAT**. It had been out of stock for months, so when it restocked I ordered a dozen and sold most of them within two weeks, which

is surprising since it's a higher price tag item at \$75. **Angela Velasquez, The Kitty Bodega, Houston, TX**

**UCARI** Intolerance Test Kit at \$74.99. Environmental allergies in the Southeast and food intolerances, in general, are something we help pet parents navigate with food and supplement changes or additions. This kit is a fantastic alternative to full-panel allergy testing costing hundreds or thousands of dollars (been there). The vet testing can come later if needed. **Pamela Modica, Lazy Creek Pet Food Center, Lexington, SC**

**DOGGIE DESIGN** Wrap and Snap harnesses for all of those puppies coming in. They are fully adjustable, reasonably priced and an easy first-time harness. **Dylan Giampaolo, Woof Woof Pet Boutique & Biscuit Bar, Bristol, RI**

**THESE BAGS ARE GREAT** totes continue to be a big seller. \$8. **Susan Nagel-Rees, Winky's Pet Boutique, Chester, NJ**

**VIP PRODUCTS** Mighty Whales at \$19.95 each. Our store is on an island in a whale-watching area. Lots of tourists. **George Beebe, Pawki's, Eastsound, WA**

### SERVICES

We partner with an anesthesia-free dental cleaning company monthly to provide onsite cleanings, and lately we've been filling up all of our available spots a month in advance! \$165 for dogs 50 pounds and less. **Jennifer Guevin, Holistic for Pets, Sarasota, FL**

**DIRECT FROM THE BRAIN SQUAD!** To see all of the Hot Sellers in August and September, join the PETS+ Brain Squad: [petsplusmag.com/brainsquad](https://petsplusmag.com/brainsquad)

The new **ACANA** Freeze Dried dog food line sold very well. It was 20% off on Astro, but we passed on our ISO savings and ran a 30% off promo in-store and online, with Instagram, Facebook, and email campaigns. We sold through our ISO quickly, but kept the promo going all month and absorbed the extra 10% to restock each week. **Robert Gerrity, Petworks, St. Petersburg, FL**

### hot sellers

THE BEST-SELLING PRODUCTS IN AUG-SEP

**RAWZ** canned cat food has been an awesome seller for us. We have lots of customers whose cats need a rabbit-based formula, and it has filled the bill for them. **Keith Henline, Ashville Pet Supply, Ashville, NC**

We had a huge uptick in dog ice cream as we did a couple of "ice cream eating" contests for dogs. We carry **ARRFSCARF**, priced at \$6 each. **Catherine Crews, Canine Crews, Chicago, IL**

**BRAVO!** Dry-roasted duck feet chews were our bestseller in August. We have the bulk 200-count box sitting at check-out for impulse buys and sell individual duck feet for \$1.19. It's always a conversation starter for people who haven't seen them before. They're intrigued and sometimes disgusted by the look of them, so they ask why would you give them to your dog. It's a great way to teach customers about glucosamine and its benefits. **David Price, Fuzzy Buttz, Calera, AL**

We had good luck with a particular toy from **SPUNKY PUP**, the Fly & Fetch. We had all three designs: fish, duck and eagle. It's a launch-type toy with a



# Northwest Naturals



## Freeze Dried Heart Treats

Beef Heart • Chicken Heart • Pork Heart



Available in 3oz and 10oz  
Only One Ingredient

Packed with nutrients that are made with only fresh, single ingredient proteins, providing bioavailable nutrition.



Made in a USDA Facility • A Sustainable and Family Owned Company

SUSTAINABLY MADE  PORTLAND OREGON

[www.nw-naturals.net](http://www.nw-naturals.net)







\$29.58-\$193.58

**PEAK ORIGINAL AIR-DRIED RECIPES**  
ZIWI

Made with ethically, sustainably sourced ingredients from New Zealand in small batches and hand-packed. Balanced formulas are 96% meat, organs, bone and green-lipped mussel. No GMO or growth-promoting ingredients or antibiotics. Six recipes for dogs, five for cats. [ziwipets.com](http://ziwipets.com), (877) 464-9494



\$24.99-\$28.99

**FREEZE DRIED RECIPES FOR CATS**  
NORTHWEST NATURALS

True carnivore-diet formula with only muscle meat, organ meat and raw ground bone. Sourced in the U.S., free of hormones and antibiotics. Frequent-buyer program: "Buy 12, Get One" free. In Chicken, Duck, Rabbit, Turkey, Whitefish, and Beef & Trout. 11 ounces. [nw-naturals.net](http://nw-naturals.net), (503) 517-9800



\$9/\$26

**SAVAGE CAT FOOD TUBS**  
SAVAGE PET

Frozen raw cat food sourced and made in the U.S. with only meat, bone and organs, mixed with egg yolk and supplements. No fruits, vegetables or fillers added. The pure grind means no chunks. In Duck, Chicken, and Rabbit + Lamb. 12 and 24 ounces. [savagecatfood.com](http://savagecatfood.com), contact distributor



\$10.49-\$85.99

**ARTISAN FREEZE-DRIED RECIPES**  
GRANDMA LUCY'S

Human-grade, grain-free and made with high-quality whole ingredients. Gentle brazing, freeze-drying process makes food lightweight for easy storage, stocking. Monthly Astro updates. In Chicken, Pork, Lamb and Venison for dogs; 1, 3 and 10 pounds. Chicken & Fish for cats; 1 pound. [grandmalucys.com](http://grandmalucys.com), [sales@grandmalucys.com](mailto:sales@grandmalucys.com)



\$9.99-\$99.99

**WOOF & MEOW WILD RANGE**  
THE NEW ZEALAND NATURAL FOOD COMPANY

Complete, balanced raw food. Contains over 90% meat and organs for dogs and more than 97% for cats. No wheat, corn, soy, meals, grain, gluten, artificial preservatives or coloring. In Wild Goat, Wild Venison and Wild Brushtail. 1.76, 9.9 and 35 ounces. [nznaturalpetfood.com](http://nznaturalpetfood.com), [info@nznaturalpetfood.com](mailto:info@nznaturalpetfood.com)

DOG & CAT: RAW, FREEZE-DRIED, DEHYDRATED & AIR-DRIED FOODS

**KEEPING IT 'RAW'**

Indies stand out from the competition by not only being a source for raw dog and cat foods, but also by having the expertise to help pet parents feel confident switching to such a diet. Consider these 15 products to meet customers wherever they are on their raw journey. **BY RACHEL PHELPS**



\$29.99/\$84.99

**HI-BIO**  
EVANGER'S PET FOOD

New packaging of minimally processed, air-dried raw diet alternative for dogs and cats that helps to preserve the nutritional elements and enzymes of the raw food. Fortified with Alltech vitamins and minerals and free of pea, gluten and grain. In Beef and Chicken. 3.2 and 9.9 pounds. [evangersdogfood.com](http://evangersdogfood.com), (847) 537-0102



\$24.99

**GOLD FERN AIR DRIED CAT FOOD**  
CATIT

Complete, balanced and crafted in small batches in New Zealand. Slowly air-dried for high meat inclusion and nutrient preservation. Each recipe includes green-lipped mussel, a natural source of omega-3 fatty acids, plus chondroitin, glucosamine and antioxidants. In Chicken, Beef, and Lamb & Mackerel. 14 ounces. [usa.catit.com](http://usa.catit.com), (800) 724-2436



\$37.99

**AIR DRIED DOG FOOD**  
REDBARN

Every bag starts with 6 pounds of meat prior to the oven-roasted cooking process, to create a crunchy texture. Complete and balanced recipe is 85% fish, beef or chicken with a blend of sunflower oil, Miscanthus grass, coconut flower, flaxseed, vitamins and minerals. 2-pound bag. [redbarn.com](http://redbarn.com), (800) 775-3849



\$35/\$36

**FREEZE-DRIED RAW BITES**  
HEALTHYBUD

Human-grade, non-GMO freeze-dried bites for dogs provide raw food benefits with kibble convenience, using only purposeful, powerful ingredients. Contains 85% meat and organs, plus 15% fruits, vegetables and super foods. Made in the U.S. with two-year shelf-life. In Turkey and Beef. 14 ounces. [healthybud.co](http://healthybud.co), (833) 687-2837



\$19.98-\$59.98

**FREEZE-DRIED RAW PRONTO**  
PRIMAL PET FOODS

New ready-to-serve, freeze-dried raw recipes for dogs. Crafted with responsibly sourced proteins and USDA Organic-certified produce for complete and balanced, whole-food nutrition with no synthetic supplements. In Beef, Chicken, Lamb and Pork recipes for adults and Chicken for puppies. In 7, 16 and 25 ounces. [primalpetfoods.com](http://primalpetfoods.com), contact distributor





~~\$7.99~~-\$24.99

**PUREBITES FREEZE DRIED FOOD**

**PURE TREATS INC.**

100% natural, limited-ingredient food can be fed as a complete and balanced meal or as a topper for an added raw protein boost. High in protein and low in calories with no fillers, sweeteners or artificial colors. 100% money-back satisfaction guarantee. In Chicken, Beef and Lamb recipes for dogs and in Chicken, Salmon and Turkey recipes for cats.

**purebites.com,**  
**(888) 388-7873**



~~\$35.74~~

**FREEZE DRIED RAW BOSS CAT**

Packed with 500 million probiotics per cup to support digestion, with chicken, turkey or pork as the first ingredient. Complete and balanced meal free of grain, soy, corn and gluten. Also can be used as a meal topper. 9 ounces.

**bossdogbrand.com,**  
**info@bossdogbrand.com**



~~Starting at \$14.99~~

**RAW LONGEVITY INSTINCT**

Crafted by pet nutrition scientists and sold exclusively at neighborhood pet stores. Every recipe supports heart, immune, gut, skin and coat health. Guaranteed nutrition with customized recipes for puppy, kitten, adult and adult 7-plus. In a variety of proteins, in bites and patties, and in frozen and freeze-dried formulas.

**instinctpetfood.com,**  
**(888) 519-7387**



~~\$39~~-\$144

**WHITE FISH RECIPE STEVE'S REAL FOOD**

New formula for cats and dogs, made with sustainably sourced ingredients and fortified with raw goat milk. Retailers who complete Raw.U online training qualify for ongoing rewards, including employee feeding. In 20-ounce freeze-dried, 5- and 9.75-pound frozen nuggets and 13.5- and 20-pound frozen patties.

**stevesrealfood.com,**  
**(888) 526-1900**



~~\$149.99~~-\$167.99

**2:1 K.E.T.O. CUBE BONES & CO.**

Formulated with a dog's metabolism in mind. A 2:1 fat-protein ratio promotes deeper state of ketosis, shifting metabolism away from carbs and toward healthy fat. Responsibly sourced protein without antibiotics or added hormones. In Barkin' Beef and Kickin' Chicken recipes. 18-pound box with 8-ounce patties.

**thebonesandco.com,**  
**(512) 761-8729**

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**www.nasc.cc/members**





\$6.49-\$22.99

**BULLY STICKS**  
NATURAL FARM

Odor-free and made from sustainably sourced, grass-fed beef. Available in a wide range of sizes, from bully bites to 12-inch lengths in extra thin to extra thick. Every batch lab-tested. Astro frequent buyer program and 5% to 20% discount based on SKUs ordered. [naturalfarmpet.com](http://naturalfarmpet.com), (404) 434-8973



\$6

**FROG LEGS**  
GIRLS GONE RAW PET HEALTH

Dehydrated, human-grade frog legs are a novel meat snack high in protein, low in fat and calories, and easily split in half. Made in the U.S. by a 100% woman-owned and -operated small business. Other unique products available: quail, rabbit heads, rabbit-hide rolls and ostrich bones. [girlsgonerawpet.com](http://girlsgonerawpet.com), (330) 242-4692



\$19.99-\$22.99

**ESOPHAGUS CHEWS**  
BOW WOW LABS

Made from 100% free-range, grass-fed beef esophagus with no added hormones or antibiotics. High in protein, low in odor, and a natural source of glucosamine and chondroitin for extra support to joints and musculoskeletal system. 6-inch and 12-inch flat and braided chews. [bowwowlabs.com](http://bowwowlabs.com), (415) 634-5606



\$1.49-\$14.99

**CORIUM COLLAGEN STICKS WITH PUMPKIN**  
RAW DOG

100% corium collagen sticks sourced from cold-weather cattle and made in the U.S. Corium supports joint, skin and coat health, while pumpkin aids digestion. Also in puffs, rings and chews. Only available to independent pet specialty, with strict price protection and free shipping. [rawdoggchews.com](http://rawdoggchews.com), (812) 602-3291



\$9.19

**SWEET POTATO STUFFED BONE**  
JONES NATURAL CHEWS

Fall favorite 4-inch natural bare bone stuffed with sweet potato filling offers a mix of textures and flavors dogs love. No artificial ingredients, sourced and made in the U.S. Also available in a holiday two-pack. [jonesnaturalchews.com](http://jonesnaturalchews.com), [info@jonesnaturalchews.com](mailto:info@jonesnaturalchews.com)

CHEWS, BONES & BODY PARTS

# CHEW ON THIS

During the hectic holiday season, more than ever pet parents need ways to occupy their pups. Update and diversify your chew offerings with these new products and familiar favorites.

BY RACHEL PHELPS



\$9.99-\$16.99

**ANTLER CHEW**  
TALL TAILS

Nylon- and cellulose-based chew with shape that dogs can grip and gnaw for long-lasting fun and dental wellness. Steamed-in bacon scent makes antler irresistible. Can add spreadable or soft treats to unique treat troughs. Top-rack dishwasher safe. Three sizes. [talltaildog.com](http://talltaildog.com)/wholesale, (937) 222-2132



\$15.99

**N-BONE ADULT DENTAL RINGS**  
NPIC

Fortified with DHA for skin and coat and with prebiotics and probiotics to support digestive health. Unique shape helps reduce plaque and tartar buildup, and helps freshen breath. No wheat, corn or soy. Strong chewing strength for dogs 1 year old and up. Seven rings per pack. [npicpets.com](http://npicpets.com), (833) 626-0378



\$4.69-\$12.99

**ALL-STAR, ALL-NATURAL DENTAL CHEWS**  
BARKWORTHIES

100% digestible star-shaped collagen chew helps clean hard-to-reach areas of the mouth. Made using beef collagen that promotes healthy coat, joint mobility and smooth digestion. Baked, hand-inspected and packed in the U.S. [barkworthies.com](http://barkworthies.com), (877) 993-4257



\$4.99-\$32.99

**ODORLESS BULLY STICKS**  
CHASING OUR TAILS

High-quality, long-lasting and odorless bully sticks sourced from U.S. grass-fed beef and produced in the company's facilities in Minnesota. Sticks are never stretched, so they stand up to the most vigorous chewers. From 6-inch standard to 12-inch XL. [chasingourtails.com](http://chasingourtails.com), (866) 967-0152



\$14.99-\$28.99

**NOTHIN' TO HIDE ULTRA CHEWS**  
FIELDCREST FIELDS

Designed for heavy chewers with beef-flavored injection molding, chews offer the same collagen formula as the original Nothin' to Hide chews but are now denser. All-natural, low in fat and calories, high in protein, flavor-packed, gluten-free and highly digestible. In a variety of shapes and sizes. [ethicalpet.com](http://ethicalpet.com), contact distributor





## TRENDING IN

Chews, Bones & Body Parts

BY PAMELA MITCHELL

**J**ust as it did in the treats category, the use of functional ingredients has emerged as a trend in chews, bones and body parts. The difference? Many of these products have functional benefits in their natural state, with brands and retailers simply needing to educate customers about them. Certain manufacturers are also moving the category forward by combining multiple functional ingredients in one product, boosting the total benefits. And as always, sourcing and sustainability remain important to brands and retailers alike.

### JUST ONE

**BOW WOW LABS** focuses on sin-

gle-ingredient, natural chews and their positive impact on pets and the planet. Johnna Devereaux, director of nutrition and wellness as well as vice president of marketing, says, "Our Esophagus Flats and Esophagus Braids are a natural source of chondroitin and glucosamine, which helps support joint health." And, "In a world full of excess waste, we find value in being able to offer dogs treats that they would naturally eat in the wild, instead of those ingredients ending up in a landfill." All of the company's chews are sourced from grass-fed, free-range South American cattle with no added hormones.

At **GIRLS GONE RAW PET HEALTH**, founder and owner

Lauren Becks specializes in ethically farmed, species-appropriate chews and treats sourced from generational farmers and processors within her home state of Ohio. "We have created a unique spread of wholesale and retail products that cannot be found anywhere else. These include Rabbit Hide Rolls and Beef Ears, Pasture-Raised Ostrich Bones, Frog Legs, Wholeprey Quail, and other 'weird' things! We love to see dogs and cats go nuts over

these, discovering their natural instincts, sometimes for the first time!" She says about the category itself, "This is a very popular and fast-growing sector, and as pet owners become more accustomed to seeing and buying body parts for their pets, we will be able to introduce more and more nutrition-packed products into the market."

### COMBO CHEWS

**ZIWI** has developed multiple products in this subcategory to meet increasing demand. "Customers want to treat their pets and give them something that will keep them busy while adding value," marketing manager Jessica Krueger says. "Our venison shank bone is wrapped in

beef weasand. Dogs work to pull off the weasand and consume it for immediate satisfaction, then they continue to enjoy the long-lasting venison bone, which can help promote healthy teeth and gums." She adds, "All our bones come from New Zealand, and we only use the highest-quality sourcing from animals that are free-range, grass-fed and grass-finished. The bones are then slowly and gently air-dried in our kitchens in New Zealand."

With Kelpy Chewz, **CLEAR CONSCIENCE** builds on the dental benefits of its U.S.-sourced, grass-fed roasted beef trachea by infusing it with organic kelp. "Kelp is a clinically proven, natural plaque fighter and antimicrobial," company co-founder Anthony Bennie explains. "When chewing the trachea, the kelp will adhere to tooth and gum surfaces, where it will help block the buildup of 'bad bacteria' that lead to plaque and tartar."

**JONES NATURAL CHEWS** has seen its combo products — among them stuffed bones, hooves and trachea — take off. "Two-in-one chews offer a nice variety of flavor and texture, which lend themselves to a great chewing experience," marketing coordinator Britney McKay says, noting that the company gained many new retail partners

during the pandemic thanks to its product availability. "All our ingredients are sourced entirely in America, which keeps our processes moving smoothly." She adds, "These have typically been store owners who are interested in the availability, but who keep coming back for more because they appreciate the quality."

**NEW COLUMN!**

To be featured in an upcoming "Trending In" or "Brand Solutions" column, sign up for the call for product pitches we send out for each issue. Email [editor@petsplumag.com](mailto:editor@petsplumag.com).



# RETAILER WISHLIST

What stores want and need in the **chews, bones and body parts** category

+ I like when brands use two or more body parts. Like a bully wrapped with jerky or a collagen stick wrapped with cheese. It spices up the same old chews.

**Nikki Tongg, Faux Paws Pet Shop, Summit, NJ**

+ Better packaging to avoid bugs from developing.

**Lawrence Seto, Whiskers Holistic Pet Care, New York City, NY**

+ Labels we can print and use in our bulk displays to indicate proper usage and benefits. They better look cute, too!

**Caroline Gunther, Wag! A Unique Pet Boutique, Hendersonville, NC**

+ I'd love to have easier access to finding how they actually bake/dehydrate/cook the product. Some people want to know exactly how everything is made, and I have to go digging for the answer.

**Kirsten Puhr, The NW Dog, Poulsbo, WA**

+ Most stores make their own

displays with bins to hold chews and body parts, but I'd like to see brands providing these. I'd be more likely to buy the whole display and the boxes to fill it. It also gives us a wider selection to have.

**Brittany Schlup, Premium Pets, Jefferson City, MO**

+ Clear sourcing info. We have customers that will only buy parts from certain countries, and a lot of manufacturers list multiple countries of origin.

**Keith Henline, Asheville Pet Supply, Asheville, NC**

+ Consistent size and quality. I know it is a natural item, but you can sort by weight.

**Beth Staley, Happy Dog Barkery, Downers Grove, IL**

+ Lamb and rabbit ears have been hard to source consistently, and my customers love them.

**Kerrie Beck, Cody's Creations, Medway, MA**

+ A truly long lasting consum-

able (over an hour at least) that isn't shaped like a stick, is digestible and affordable for a big dog. I know that's a lot to ask! This is the most frequent request we get.

**Julie Johannes, Happy Hounds Pet Supply, Bigfork, MT**

+ Marketing materials — can't stress that enough. Slides with info I can post on social media.

The more I post there, the more interest we get. Within the info, tell people WHY it's so great for pups to chew/eat the body parts/bones and that it's SAFE. Because vets still tell their clients it isn't.

**Erin Patrick, Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming Summer-ville, Summerville, SC**

+ Supply consistency. A manufacturer will come out with something amazing, then not have it in stock to replenish.

**Elaina Stanley, Three Happy Hounds, Fernley, NV**

+ Consistent size/smell and decent lead times. It would be great to see some non-beef chews!

**Nicole Cummins, 3 Dogs and a Chick, Fort Walton Beach, FL**

+ More bison and buffalo for the "power chewers." Also, communication about sourcing issues is always appreciated. If you're discontinuing a product because

it's difficult to source, let us know; don't just pull it from the website!

**Katherine Ostiguy, Crossbones, Providence, RI**

+ Goose! And more long-lasting items for dogs with missing teeth and/or seniors. We are resorting to a lot of puppy options, and sometimes those work, but dogs get tired of gullets all day, and sometimes puppy items are just too small.

**Annabell Bivens, The Dog Store, Alexandria, VA**

+ PLEASE remove claws/nails! We have customer complaints of the nails gouging the insides of their dogs' mouths and making them bleed.

**Jennifer Marshall, Northwoods Pets, Rhineland-er, WI**

+ Proof the product was sourced humanely and is not from China.

**Katie Titterington, Arnie's Pet Foods, Lincoln, NE**

+ New product for nylon bones. People want ones that are chicken flavor-free for dogs with allergies.

**Karen Komisar, Sea Dog Pet Boutique, Annapolis, MD**

+ Would love to have T-shirts/sweatshirts for employees. What better way to get free advertising?

**Errin Jolley, Purrrz and Paws, St. Helens, OR**

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...the better they can sell pet food, treats and toys.

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\$7.99

**PURRFECT WILD HEMP CAT TOY**  
VEE ENTERPRISES

24-inch black flex wand with natural, durable hemp cord, colorful feathers and colored hemp cord tails that entice cats to chase and catch the toy. Handcrafted and made in the U.S. [veeenterprises.com](http://veeenterprises.com), (323) 938-8304



\$15.99

**CIRCUIT BALL TOY WITH SCRATCH PAD**  
CATIT

3-in-1 activity toy will keep cats entertained for hours and appeals to their natural hunting instincts. Includes a cardboard scratch pad, a circuit ball cat toy and a springing bouncy bee. Catnip included to pique the cat's curiosity. 1.8 by 14.2 by 15.6 inches. [usa.catit.com](http://usa.catit.com), (800) 724-2436



\$21.95

**DANCING DOT LASER CAT TOY**  
PETSAFE

Fun way to keep cats healthy and active with two play mode options and a random moving laser display. One-Time-Play mode turns the toy on for 15 minutes, and Play-All-Day mode turns the toy on for 15-minute intervals every two hours for up to six hours, giving a total of three play sessions. [petsafe.net](http://petsafe.net), (800) 933-5595, ext. 2



\$9.99

**FEATHER N FABRIC TEASER**  
PET KI ENTERPRISES INC.

Great for cats who love to grab and kick their toys. Has long plushy fabric with feathers and soft bell sounds. Compact size for travel and storage. Flexible clear plastic rod is 14 inches, and the polyester fabric length is 22 inches. [rompicatz.com](http://rompicatz.com), (877) 269-0339



\$12.49/\$34.99

**SPOT CAT SCRATCHERS**  
CORRUGATED SCRATCHING  
BOARDS

ETHICAL PRODUCTS, INC.  
100% eco-friendly, recyclable corrugated boards encourage good scratching behavior and help to maintain healthy claws naturally. Four shapes, assorted patterns, includes pouch of silver vine-catnip blend. [ethicalpet.com](http://ethicalpet.com), contact distributor

CAT TOYS & SCRATCHERS

# HAPPY CATS

Indoor kitties need enrichment and activity to live full, healthy lives. These 10 toys and scratchers will keep them hunting and playing and sharpening their claws, all at prices that allow pet parents to regularly shop.

BY RACHEL PHELPS



\$1.99/\$4.13

**MINI CRINKLE BALL**  
CANCOR INNOVATIONS INC.

Ball creates crinkle sound cats can't resist, helping to promote health and fitness for kitties of all ages. Measures 1.5 inches in diameter, made in Canada. Comes in a 50-count display container and a two-pack option with a header card. [crinkleball.com](http://crinkleball.com), contact distributor



\$3.99

**WIGGLY BALLS**  
DEZI & ROO

Recommended for cats of all ages, these balls bounce, skitter and wiggle, providing the necessary enrichment indoor cats need. Designed by a veterinarian and handcrafted in the U.S. Flexible packaging options. In assorted bright colors and glow-in-the-dark options. [deziroo.com](http://deziroo.com), (678) 498-4005



\$9.99

**JUMP & JAMB REFILLABLE**  
CATNIP & DOOR JAMB TOYS  
MEOWIJUANA, A SMARTERPAW BRAND

Toy attaches to a door frame with a sturdy hanger and elastic cord. Cord adjusts to fit any size door and cat's height, and has a break-away clip for safety. Includes organic catnip for the toy's refillable catnip pocket. In Squid and Monkey. [meowijuana.com](http://meowijuana.com), (888) 289-6369



\$14.99

**TEASER TOY**  
ZEE.CAT

Designed for self-play with a weighted rubber base that moves the toy back and forth, keeping cats entertained. Removable feathers and bell make the toy even more interesting. In Citrus and Mint. [zeedog.com/wholesale](http://zeedog.com/wholesale), [wholesale@zeedog.com](http://wholesale@zeedog.com)



\$32.99

**PEEK-A-PRIZE TOY BOX**  
PIONEER PET

Durable wood toy box encourages natural predatory behaviors. Drop cat treats and toys into the peek holes for the cat to retrieve, eat and play. Works with virtually any appropriately sized cat toy or catnip. Measures 10 by 10 by 2.5 inches. Each peek hole measures 1.75 inches in diameter. [pioneerpet.com](http://pioneerpet.com), (262) 376-0768



# New & Notable



## STOP THE SCRATCH

Powerful ingredients come together in **SKOUT'S HONOR's** new Probiotic Itch Relief Shampoo. The company's proprietary and patent-pending probiotic blend has been scientifically proven to support skin health and prevent growth of harmful bacteria that cause itch, odor, shedding, hot spots and discomfort. The result: long-lasting itch relief for pets who suffer from chronic skin irritations. [skoutshonor.com](http://skoutshonor.com), [sales@skoutshonor.com](mailto:sales@skoutshonor.com) **\$20.99**

\$49.95



## PETITE PETS GET A WALK!

Because small animals like to get out and about, too ... The **HAPPY HABITATS** Halo allows them to do exactly that. The patent-pending carrier fits securely around the exercise ball and features a carrying handle and magnetic kickout stands, allowing it to be used at home or on the go. [happyhabitats.net/vendor](http://happyhabitats.net/vendor), [ethanhaber@happyhabitats.net](mailto:ethanhaber@happyhabitats.net)



\$11.99

## LIKE BUTTER

A new option in the topper and spreadable product categories: Bone Broth Butter from **NUGGET'S HEALTHY EATS**. The company's Signature Bone Brew simmers for days with organ meat atop the ingredient list, which also includes a proprietary premium blend of organic raw, fermented turmeric with ginger and kefir. In 12-ounce tubs. Exclusive to independent pet specialty and available through Pet Food Experts. [nuggetshomeyeats.com](http://nuggetshomeyeats.com), (919) 622-2657



\$6.99/\$11.99

## GETTIN' JIGGLE WIT IT

Fish Jiggles from **SOLUTIONS PET PRODUCTS** come packed with myriad health benefits for dogs and cats. The sustainably sourced gelatin, thick with natural collagen and elastin, helps heal the digestive tract, connective tissues and organs. It also improves absorption and utilization of proteins as well as enhances skin, coat, joint, nail and gut health, plus much more. Cod liver and herring provide additional omega-3 and vitamins D and E, while the mango serves as a natural source of vitamin C to boost the gelatin's healing benefits. Because Fish Jiggles are low calorie and highly satiating, customers can introduce them into the diet of overweight or sensitive pets without further contributing to metabolic or digestive disorders. In 1-pint and 1-quart cartons. [solutionspetproducts.com](http://solutionspetproducts.com), [eric@solutionspetproducts.com](mailto:eric@solutionspetproducts.com), [contact distributor](#)



**BOOSTED BY KELP**

From **CLEAR CONSCIENCE PET** comes the Kelpy Chewz Beef Trachea. The plaque-fighting power of kelp boosts the existing dental benefits of grass-fed trachea. Artisan hardwood roasted and U.S. sourced. Gluten, grain and GMO-ingredient free. In 6-inch tubes and 2-inch rings. **clearconsciencepet.com, (239) 984-2705**



**\$14.95/\$19.95**

**SO FRESH**

**STELLA & CHEWY'S** introduces FreshMade for dogs, featuring human-grade whole foods gently sous-vide cooked in their own juices for a craveable taste and tender texture. Reviewed by a board-certified veterinary nutritionist and made with 60% nutrient-rich meats and organs paired with healthy fruits, veggies, superfoods, botanicals and bone broth. Beefy-Licious, Chick-a-Lick'n, Gobblin' Good and Meat-a-Palooza in 16-ounce BPA-free pouches. **stellaandchewys.com, reddoor@stellaandchewys.com**



**\$10.99**

**RECOVERY CHEW**

**ANNA MAET**'s popular and long-trusted Glycocharge powdered supplement now comes in a convenient soft-chew version. Formulated with a board-certified veterinary nutritionist and backed by 40 years of experience with elite canine athletes, Recovery Chews are the ideal post-exercise treat for active and working dogs of varying degrees, appealing to a wide group of customers. Made in the U.S., and like all other Annamaet supplements carries the NASC Quality Seal. In 16 and 30 counts. **annamaet.com, info@annamaet.com, (267) 382-0163**



**\$29.99/\$44.99**



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## Walking a Cat is Not Like Walking a Dog

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**sleepypod.com**  
**626.421.6818**



### SUSTAINABLE & SUPPORTIVE

**\$59.99**

With its Sustainable Eco-Friendly Dog Vest, **BONNE ET FILOU** helps the planet as well as war-torn Ukraine. Made in the country from 80% recycled materials, including fishing nets and plastic, the lightweight vest features zip protection to prevent hair from getting stuck, a reflective zip for safe walks, and durable waterproof and windproof material. In red, gray, purple, turquoise and orange, from XS to XL. A portion of each sale goes back to Ukraine to help pets affected by the war. **bonneetfilou.com, (917) 979-5955**



### SAVE THE KELP

**\$13.99-\$17.99**

**WE ARE INDEPENDENT** partners with SeaTrees by Sustainable Surf for its new OCEAN line of single-ingredient, sustainably sourced pet treats. Available in Faroe Islands Blue Whiting, Newfoundland Whole Capeli and Cold Water Pollock Cutlets in FISH and in Nova Scotia Haddock and North Atlantic Cod Skins in SKINS, the company donates money for every bag produced to SeaTrees for the restoration of degraded kelp forests off the coast of Southern California. **independentpet.com, through Pet Food Experts and Packer Mellem**

### CREAMY GOODNESS



**\$9.95**

New **WEST PAW** Creamy Dog Treats make for a delicious treat on the go, topper for meals, and are the perfect fit for the company's treat toys. In fact, you could bundle them with the new XL Toppl and West Paw's "The Toy of Cooking" recipe book! Three flavors: Peanut Butter & Banana; Mixed Nut Butter, Blueberry & Chia; Mixed Nut Butter, Sweet Potato, Chia & Cinnamon. **westpaw.com, (800) 443-5567, orders@westpaw.com**

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**NEW LULUBELLES**     **NEW KITTYBELLES**

**FUR EVER**     **TICKLED PINK Champagne**     **YUM YUM**

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Prebook available 11/1/22-12/15/22. All orders must ship by 12/30/22. Valid on in-stock items only. Cannot be combined with other sales or discounts. Not available on Faire.

Use promo code **VDSP23** to secure your prebook order.

[www.huxleyandkent.com](http://www.huxleyandkent.com)





**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

Add **CLOUD STAR**'s Wag More Bark Less Birthday Bites to your celebrations display. Gently baked with natural peanut butter and honey, then mixed with real fruit, they come in a cute and colorful bag holding 5 ounces of the soft treats. No artificial flavors or colors, baked in the U.S. [cloudstar.com](http://cloudstar.com), **contact local distributor**

**\$8.99**



**\$58.99**

**MAGICAL MUSHROOM**

Kitties will enjoy the trippy play provided by **HAGEN**'s new Catit Senses Mushroom. It features eight openings, from which feathers randomly pop out and stimulate cats to play. The toy can be set to motion-activated Sensor or Continuous mode to better customize by need and activity level. Winner of the Best New-to-Market Pet Product for Cats at SuperZoo this year. [usa.catit.com](http://usa.catit.com), **(800) 353-3444**



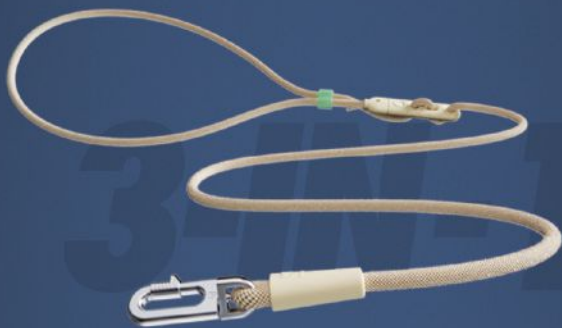
**\$9.99-\$11.99**

**FIGHTING FOOD WASTE**

**HEALTH EXTENSION** takes imperfect-looking, human-grade ingredients that would have been thrown away and upcycles them into ImPawFect. The soft-baked treats for dogs contain more than 40% upcycled ingredients, including fresh, nutrient-dense fruits and veggies. In four functional recipes: Hip & Joint with turmeric to help reduce pain and inflammation; Digestion with fiber-rich pumpkin and digestive-supporting ginger; Immunity with antioxidant-packed blueberries and kale blended with chia, rich in protein omegas and fiber; and Training with tasty cran-apple or bacon flavor for a high reward. The 4-ounce bags are made from recycled materials. [healthextension.com](http://healthextension.com), **contact distributor**

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The world's most versatile leash



**1**  
Across  
your chest



**2**  
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**Join today.**

[petadvocacy.org](http://petadvocacy.org)



## PRODUCTS+ NEW & NOTABLE



\$79-\$199

### SO STYLISH

Interior designer Tracey Butler creates modern pet furniture and accessories using the highest-quality clear lucite. Among the wide range of products in her **HIDDIN** line are single and double feeders in a variety of colors and sizes for dogs and cats. Handcrafted in the U.S. [shophiddin.com](http://shophiddin.com), [info@shophiddin.com](mailto:info@shophiddin.com)



\$29.99

### CALM FOR KITTIES

For cats with situational or long-term stress, **PET RELEAF** introduces its Feline Stress Relief Hemp Oil. With enhanced cat palatability and cat-friendly dosing, ingredients include organic catnip, organic MCT oil, organic ashwagandha, and USDA Organic full-spectrum hemp extract with CBD. Pet Relief supports retailers with digital assets, regular communication, and visits. [petreleaf.com](http://petreleaf.com), [wholesale@petreleaf.com](mailto:wholesale@petreleaf.com), various distributors



\$12.99

### WHO WANTS A TREAT TRAY?

The 3 in 1 Treat Tray from **JOJO MODERN PETS** uses flexible, 100% FDA-approved food-grade silicone. Oven safe up to 446-degrees F, it also goes in the freezer and microwave, and can be used to make everything from treats and cakes to gelatin and candies. Nontoxic and free of BPA and PVC, odor and stain resistant. In paw and bone shapes that nest for easy storage. Perfect for your in-store bakeries and for customers who like to DIY. [jojomodernpets.com](http://jojomodernpets.com), [sales@jojomodernpets.com](mailto:sales@jojomodernpets.com), [Faire](http://Faire) and [wholesalepet.com](http://wholesalepet.com)



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\$5/\$15

### LAST-MINUTE HOLIDAY GIFTS



Looking for a few products to complete your holiday offerings for cat customers? Check out these cute cat coasters and hand towels from **THE TINIEST TIGER: TRIPLE T STUDIOS**. Owner Joanne McGonagle uses her zoology degree when creating cat-inspired designs, and her company supports a number of worthy programs, including the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Lion Guardians in Kenya, The Snow Leopard Trust and Mountain Lion Foundation.

[triplestudios.faire.com](http://triplestudios.faire.com), [sales@triplestudios.com](mailto:sales@triplestudios.com)



\$18.99/\$36.99

### FARM TO BOX

The farmers who partner with **BOXIE** on its new Eco cat litter are local to the company's Midwest facility and practice a sustainable farming method called conservation tillage, which promotes climate and soil health. Made of soft red wheat and perennial rye, Eco forms tight NatureClumps that stop odors completely, keeping the litter box clean and dry throughout use. The biodegradable litter and recyclable packaging complete a life cycle that proves gentler on the planet, making it perfect for customers looking for an eco-conscious, sustainable product that does not compromise on performance. In 6.5 and 16.5 pounds. [boxiecat.com](http://boxiecat.com), (877) 817-0253 ext 2, [sales@boxiecat.com](mailto:sales@boxiecat.com)





**\$7.99 PER BOTTLE**

**CHEERS!**

Because dogs should be able to kick back with a cold one, too, **BEST BUDS BREW** offers slow-cooked broth made from pasture-raised beef-bone marrow. Delicious and nutritious, it has a one-year shelf life unopened and a resealable cap for refrigerating up to 14 days. The countertop display shipper contains four 12-ounce bottles of each flavor — Bacon Porter, Honey Blonde and Nutty Ambers — to encourage impulse buys. **bestbudsbrew.com**, click on “Wholesale Sign Up”



**NOVEL PROTEIN**

And now for a different kind of training treat: **ROAM** Oddy Trainers. Made from pure Western Cape Ostrich that comes from environmentally responsible-sourcing techniques, they help to preserve the planet's resources while giving pets a low-calorie, high-protein, single-ingredient treat. **roampets.com**, contact distributor **\$11.99**

**YOUR CONDOLENCES**

For your bereavement section: **WOLFIE'S WISH** Affirmation Grieving Cards for Pet Parents. Original, Illustrated and Gift sets help to heal hearts after pet loss, and are endorsed by counselors and therapists worldwide. Runner-up in the New Product Showcase Awards at SuperZoo this year. **wolfieswish.com**, **info@wolfieswish.com**, Faire

**\$24.99-\$29.99**



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Surprising a loved one with a puppy this year?

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# THE BIG SURVEY

Welcome to the results of our first-ever, but expected-to-be-annual survey of independent pet retailers and service providers. Owners and top managers of businesses from across the United States and Canada — 520 to be exact — answered questions on a variety of topics, sharing everything from what they look for in new products and where they find them to how indies are responding to current challenges such as supply-chain issues and staffing shortages. A big thank-you to the American Pet Products Association for sponsoring our inaugural survey.

## Mighty Ducks

Way to go, **Oregon**, which provided more surveys proportionally than any other state (closely followed by Missouri and Virginia). As for Alaska, Mississippi, Wyoming ... maybe next time.



## WHAT'S INSIDE



### THE BASICS

Learn about the businesses represented in the survey; where they're located, how long they've been open and the type of pets they serve. **PAGES 28-30**



### BUYING & SELLING

55% of independent pet retailers said a brand being on Chewy, Amazon or other big e-commerce site isn't always a dealbreaker. **PAGE 31**



### PERFORMANCE

Find out which products and services bring in the most revenue — and which brands top the food, treat and toy categories in terms of sales. **PAGE 35**



### CHALLENGES

37% of survey respondents said "Hiring and retaining staff" has been the biggest challenge in 2021-22. Read about their creative responses to the issue. **PAGE 39**



### MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Retailers and service providers said social media reigns as the most effective way to promote their business. DoorDash, not as much. **PAGE 40**



### YOUR TEAM

Employee retention rates, compensation above and beyond pay, plus some pretty wild stories about when staff left their bosses speechless. **PAGE 42**



### YOU, THE PET PRO

Meet the generous indies who took our inaugural survey. They share who they are and what they love most about being a pet pro. **PAGE 44**



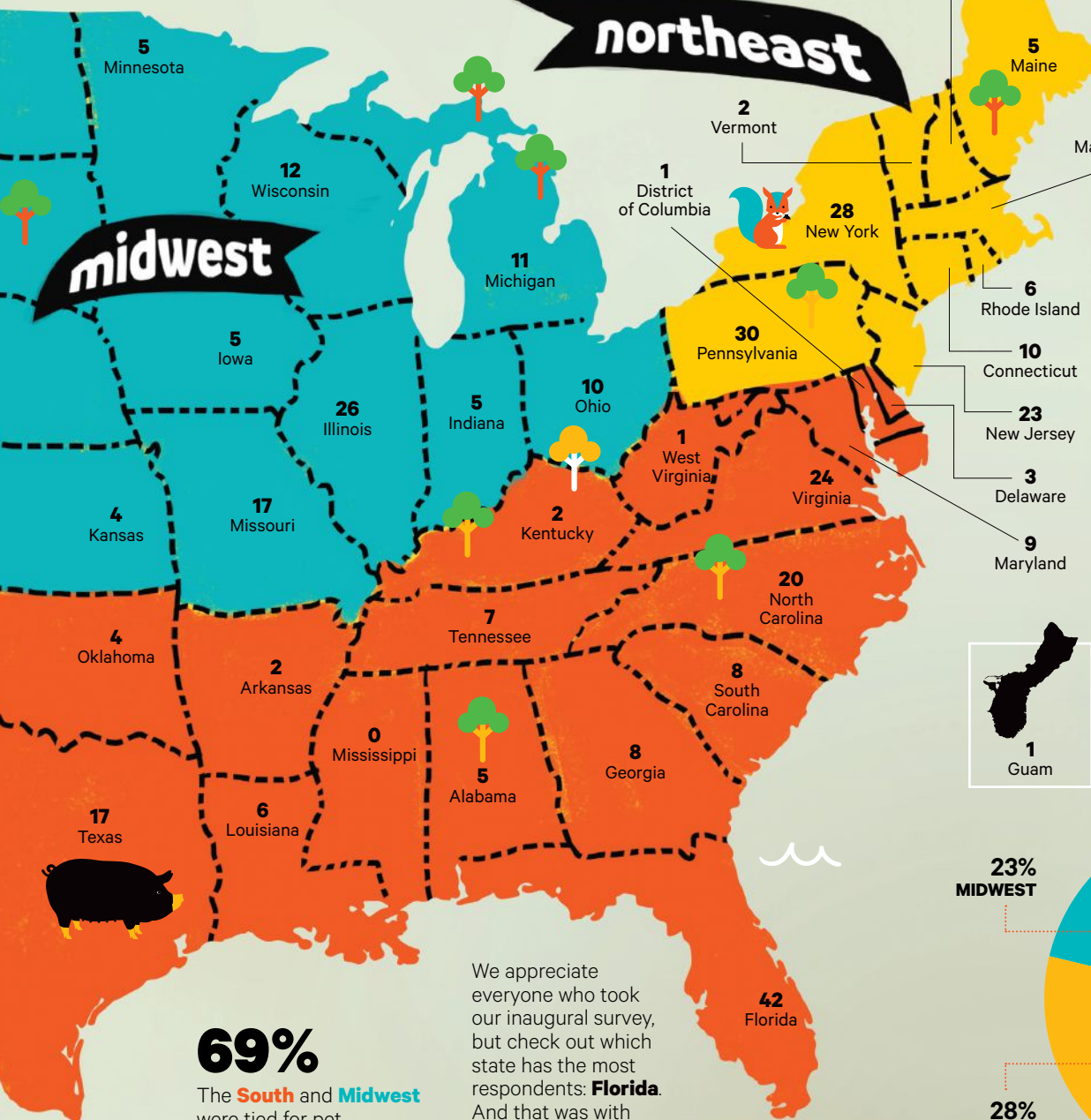


Customers need to watch their manners. **Rudeness** was the No. 1 pet peeve of pet businesses in the Midwest. In the West, it was **those who ask for advice then buy from big e-commerce**. Also rude.



**32%**

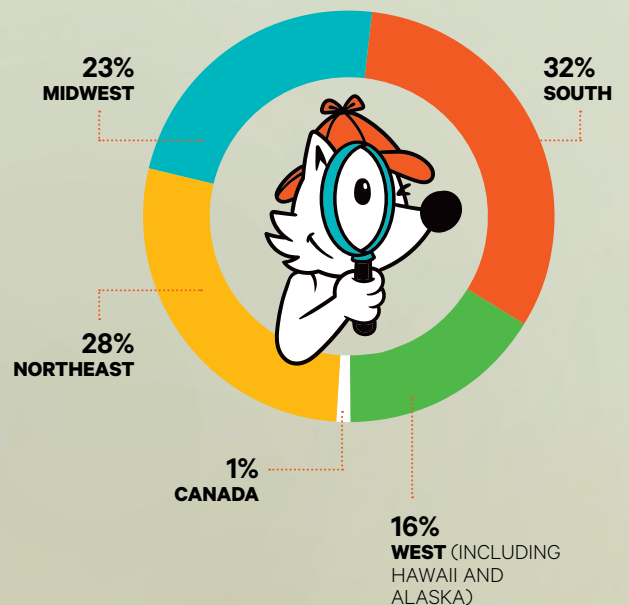
One in three businesses surveyed (32%) in the West do at least \$1 million in revenue a year. Pet businesses in the Northeast tend to be more modest — 71% do less than seven figures.



## THE BASICS

520 self-qualified North American pet pros (all owners or top managers) took the 2022 PETS+ Big Survey! It ran from mid-August through October online, and responses were anonymous. On these pages, we start with the fundamental findings!

### 2. Where is your business located by region, based on the U.S. Census Bureau map?



**69%**

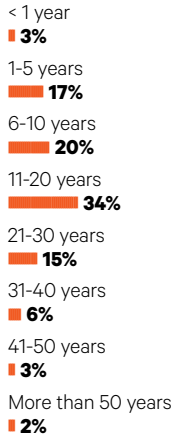
The **South** and **Midwest** were tied for pet businesses expecting to see sales growth in 2022 at 69%, with almost one-quarter of the heartland pet pros forecasting big gains of 20% or more.

We appreciate everyone who took our inaugural survey, but check out which state has the most respondents: **Florida**. And that was with Category 4 hurricane Ian making landfall during the survey period!

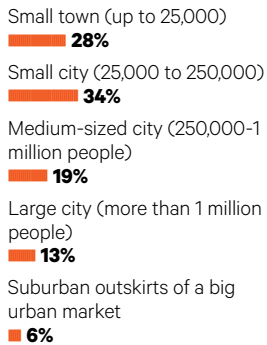




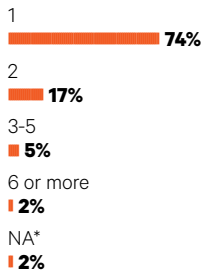
**3. How long has your business been in operation?**



**4. Where is your business located by market size?**



**5. How many locations do you have?**



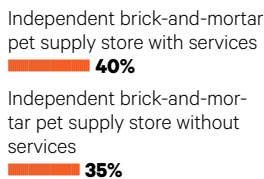
\*Businesses operating at client homes or elsewhere  
 Single stores represent! At 74%, those of you with one store made up the largest respondent group.



**7. Are you a franchise owner?**



**8. Which best describes your business by top revenue category?**

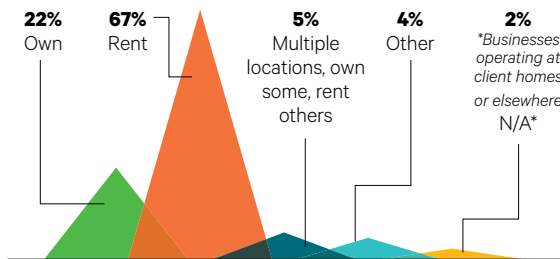


- Independent grooming salon, brick-and-mortar location or mobile, that sells pet supplies **6%**
- Independent grooming salon, brick-and-mortar location or mobile, that does not sell pet supplies **1%**
- Independent boarding facility/ day care that sells pet supplies **3%**
- Independent boarding facility/ day care that does not sell pet supplies **0.4%**
- Independent dog trainer, brick-and-mortar location or

- mobile, that sells pet supplies **2%**
- Independent dog trainer, brick-and-mortar location or mobile, that does not sell pet supplies **0.4%**
- Independent pet sitting and dog walking business, that sells pet supplies **0.2%**
- Independent pet sitting and dog walking business, that does not sell pet supplies **2%**
- Independent veterinary clinic or hospital, that sells pet supplies **1%**
- Other **9%**

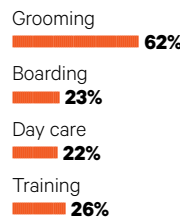


**9. Do you own or rent the building your business is in?**



Tucked into the "Other" results were more than a few who rent space for your business from a company that owns the building — and you own that company. We see what you did there. Very smart!

**10. If you own a brick-and-mortar pet supply store with services, please check the services you offer:**



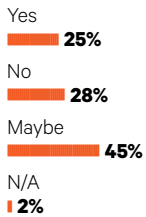
- Dog walking and/or pet sitting **9%**
  - Veterinary care **4%**
  - Self-wash services **19%**
  - Other **19%**
- Among the "Other" answers:
- Doggie workouts
  - Nutrition counselling
  - Aquarium and pond maintenance
  - Groomer training
  - Veterinary services
  - Massage and chiropractic services
  - Agility events and dock diving
  - Pet photography

# BUYING & SELLING

Buy, sell, repeat. Sounds simple, yes? Not so fast, you say. There are nuances within product categories and with the manufacturers themselves that influence what you bring into your store — and continue to carry. In addition to operational info and product criteria, here you talk about relationships with manufacturers as well as with distributors and your customers. Plus, you look ahead to the next big breakout category in pet products and services.



## 12. If a product is sold in big-box and/or grocery stores, is that a dealbreaker for you?



The majority of indies surveyed don't see product availability on Chewy and Amazon as a black-and-white issue when evaluating brands. Instead, 55% of you look at a variety of factors.

+ It would depend on the retail, my cost and the company. Do they enforce MAP, and do they support indies in another way like with Astro or frequent-buyer programs not available on those sites? Basically, it comes down to whether we can compete.

+ If it sells better in a demo-type situation, I will bring it in.

+ Depends on the item and how much traffic it drives to our store. If it drives a ton of traffic, we're OK with it being on Chewy as long as the

prices are comparable to our desired margin.

+ We are in a small town, and often people come in and ask about products sold online. I don't want to send customers away, so I stock some things you can get online.

Some respondents — 28% of you — said they don't see brands being on big e-commerce sites as a dealbreaker at all.

+ I don't consider the sites to be competitors. Their advertising, in fact, helps me sell products because then they're recognizable. I can't match their price point, but we make up for it in other ways.

+ If I didn't carry a good product in my store because it was on other e-commerce, I wouldn't have many things to sell.

But 15% of you give a hard pass to such products.

+ It can often cheapen the perceived value

because low cost is often associated with low quality, and many people think of Amazon and Chewy as low-price leaders.

+ If I am deciding between two similar products, and one is on Amazon or Chewy and the other isn't, I will definitely choose the one that isn't.

As for availability in big-box and grocery stores being a dealbreaker, "Maybe" still led the results with 45%, but more respondents — 25% — answered "Yes" than to the same question about big e-commerce.

+ If I see a product that I carry in Home Goods, Marshalls, TJ Maxx stores, I won't carry that brand.

Finally, many said they also won't necessarily kick to the curb a brand that starts in independent pet retailers and then expands.

+ If a brand is sticking to their MSRP/MAP on Chewy, we can stay friends.

+ If the manufacturer continues to actively support and promote the indie/neighborhood pet channel, we won't discontinue a product unless the sales tank.



## 13. Rank how you discover new products:

- 1 Brand and distributor reps
- 2 Pet industry trade shows (Global Pet Expo, SuperZoo)
- 3 Pet industry trade magazines
- 4 Social media pages and groups (such as the PETS+ Facebook Community)
- 5 Pet industry distributor shows
- 6 Customer requests
- 7 Non-pet gift shows



## 14. Rank these qualities by importance for consumable products:

- 1 Ingredients
- 2 Made and/or sourced in the U.S.
- 3 Price/value
- 4 Available through a distributor
- 5 Sustainability
- 6 Manufacturer guarantee
- 7 Third-party certifications

## 15. Rank these qualities by importance for non-consumable products:

- 1 Price/value
- 2 Materials
- 3 Durability
- 4 Made and/or sourced in the U.S.
- 5 Available through a distributor
- 6 Sustainability
- 7 Manufacturer guarantee
- 8 Third-party certifications



## 16. Tell us about when a vendor or distributor has gone above and beyond for you.

+ I was getting lots of kittens in because our animal shelter director decided she didn't need to take in any more. My **WORLD'S BEST CAT LITTER** rep authorized giving a free bag to anyone who adopted a kitten.

+ From day one, **Marilyn Hervela** at **NATURVET** has been the sweetest, most helpful, and the one I can rely on to get back to me when we have the annual Paws In The Park event for rescue dogs. I try to save up throughout the year anything we can give away as a freebie to gain more foot traffic. Marilyn is on the ball. She gets us samples, and they're always a hit!

+ One day, **Rob Downey**, the owner of **ANNAMAET**, came to see us about bringing his food into the store. He was riding with our delivery driver. He said, "I want to talk to you about my food, but let me help the driver get your stuff unloaded." Which he did, and we brought his food in essentially because of his character.

+ **SODAPUP** went over the top to get us enough product for our subscription box, with little notice and as a substitute for a vendor who did not deliver.

+ **DOGGIE DESIGN**. Always good sales, wonderful customer service. They support returns, give the sales promotion if you submit an order a day or two before they release it. No one else does this!

+ **Stephanie Real**, my rep from **PRIMAL PET FOODS**, has always gone above and beyond for me. She heard I had a feral cat colony and was nursing orphaned baby kittens with Primal goat milk. She sent me a case. Stephanie



thinks outside the box and also cares about what is going on with her customers.

+ When Pet Food Experts shut down, **Joe Israel** from **EARTH BORN** called within the hour and asked if he could pull strings to get me accounts with other distributors immediately so I could have food on my shelves for customers.

+ **WEST PAW** always has 100% fulfillment, and calls or emails with ways to save us money.

+ **Ashley Lynn** from **SMALLBATCH** was great at working with me to understand their product line and had a bunch of stuff sent that I could break into samples to generate interest and gauge what customers would respond to or want most. She also sent sample-making supplies. And she always tells me if I decide to sample something, just let her know and she will have it replaced. She even sent a customer a T-shirt because they liked it so much.

+ **VITAL ESSENTIALS** got us ready for a big competition we were vending at! Made sure we had new displays for bulk and bagged treats!

+ When a special order was left off our delivery, our **UNITED PACIFIC PET** rep drove all over the county to find a replacement. When she

couldn't find the right size, she gave our client a much bigger bag and refunded his original payment. Great customer service!

+ **GENERAL PET SUPPLY** has stuck with me through thick and thin. Even in times of financial crisis, they have worked with me so that I could continue to place orders.

+ **Pete Grenot** from **BRADLEY CALDWELL** once delivered product to us that



## 17. What is your biggest pet peeve when dealing with vendors and distributors?

Out-of-stocks  
25%

Poor communication  
22%

High minimums  
16%

Partial and/or missing orders  
10%

Cold calling  
10%

High shipping costs  
6%

Other  
11%

missed the truck for a second time. He drove two hours one way.

+ Taking add-ons after order, pickups after closing, always on-time. We love our local distributor **MIDDLE WEST**. We aren't just a number to them.

+ We recently moved our store, which was a huge undertaking, and my excellent driver from **ADMC** loaned us two large rolling coolers to move our product. Couldn't have done it without them.

+ My **NEMA** rep remerchandises my departments. They look better than I could have done myself, and it doesn't cost me anything.

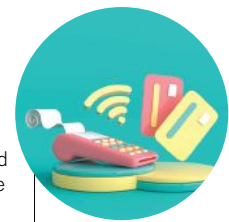
+ My **BCI** rep frequently brings items for me to donate to local rescues from the business. She even sent me \$100 so I could "shop" in the store and fill my donation bins.

+ **PET FOOD EXPERTS** is wonderful! Their communication is always right on, their ordering platform is easy to use and accessible, their deliveries are always on time, and if an item is missing from our order, they are always efficient in giving credit and reshipping.

+ Our order was missed on a truck from **ZEIGLER'S DISTRIBUTORS**. The owner personally drove it out.

+ **FRONTIER** is awesome! Last year for our grand reopening after moving, they came through with great freebies even though our rep was off work for a family emergency and it was very last minute.

+ Half of our vendors cancelled last minute for an event. When **Enzo Vinet** at **GENERATION PET** rang to see how things were going and heard that, he asked, "What time do I need to be there?" He showed up, *same day* for a major event and manned a booth. It was a *lifesaver* and the event was a huge success!



## 18. What POS system do you use?

Lightspeed

19%

Square

18%

QuickBooks

12%

Shopify

5%

Clover

4%

DaySmart/DaySmart Pets

3%

NCR Counterpoint

3%

Pinogy

3%

eTailPet

2%

Gingr

2%

Heartland Retail

2%

PetShop360

2%

Other

21%

None/NA

4%

## 19. What loyalty programs do you offer?

In-store

18%

Third-party

18%

Both

44%

None

20%

## 20. Rank the following forms of payment, from most frequently used to least used:

1 Credit cards

2 Debit cards

3 Cash

4 Apple Pay or other phone-based app

5 Personal check



## 21. What do you think will be the next big breakout category in pet products or services?

**Gently cooked foods** came in as the top answer to this open-ended question, with many of you noting that the category had already broken out and you are happy to see it growing.

**Alternative proteins such as plants and insects** followed, with indies split on how you feel about them. One respondent even said in their non-answer, "Who the heck knows?! When they started pushing bugs as a protein, I thought I'd seen it all, but I'm sure something else will show up."

**Enrichment** as a category came in next in products. Toys and lick mats got many mentions, as did more high-tech offerings. One respondent predicted, "I think cameras and other tech products will grow in the pet care industry. Pet parents can observe their actions and interact through cameras

and apps." And we love this answer and really hope this product happens: "Pet translators that turn barks and meows into English."

The **enrichment** category also topped answers for next big breakout service. The owner of a training facility explained that the industry will see more of "early puppy socialization and training as a concept. This applies not only to dog trainers but also to groomers doing short 'starter puppy' visits to get puppies off on the right foot. Pet owners are starting to realize what a profound effect the pandemic had on dogs. Those who jumped through hoops to socialize their puppies despite lockdowns are reaping the benefits, while those who stayed shut in for months call their fearful, anti-social dogs "COVID puppies" and swear to do better next time.



## 22. What is your biggest pet peeve when dealing with customers and clients?

- Rudeness ■ **23%**
- Window shopping before buying online ■ **20%**
- Complaints about pricing ■ **17%**
- Repeat return offenders ■ **10%**
- Inaccurate online reviews ■ **9%**
- Other ■ **21%**

These "Other" answers were mentioned multiple times:

- Comments like, "But Google said..."
- Shoplifting
- Last-minute service requests
- Regular grooming clients who never buy products

Those are annoying!

## 23. Tell us about the oddest/weirdest experience you've ever had with a customer or client?

+ We had a customer convinced her hamster was high on pot for six months because she thought she knew who the breeder was (she didn't) and that person was a pot smoker.

+ Someone brought in their cat for a nail trim in a grocery bag.

+ Customer calls saying she bought tadpoles and nobody told her they turned into frogs, and they ate her prize fish. Shows up at the store later that day with frogs to return, says we need to have signs up that tadpoles turn into frogs.

+ A client brought in her dog's vomit and the remnants of a bully stick to us. She was upset because she thought it made her dog sick. However, the vomit contained a whole sock that the dog had ingested, as well as some toy stuffing ... it was gross.

+ A guy came in wanting studded leather dog collars for himself. He stood there trying them all on and asking his girlfriend how they looked.

+ I had a client offer to contact my cat, who had just passed. And then she did. And you know what? She was pretty accurate about everything. Certainly helped take away some of my grief.

+ I once sold a dog treat to a man because he was hungry. I was very clear that it was chicken-liver flavored, and I even asked if his dog was with him on vacation. After he paid, he realized he was in a "barkery," not a bakery. I had to refund his money. He was so hungry, just looking for a snack!

+ A lady who accused us of cutting her dog's nostrils (inside), then came back to apologize for being a "turd," because upon vet inspection, the dog had a tumor in his nose and that's what was bleeding.

+ I'm pretty sure a customer ate the holiday cookies we left for her dog. She thanked us for leaving them, but wanted to let me know they were a little bland.

+ A customer came in and wanted to return a strobe ball. She said the strobe stopped working so she lost the ball. She



didn't have the product with her, as she lost it, but she wanted to get her money back from us.

+ I rang up a customer and gave her the total, and she said that she does not use standard currency but would pay me with good wishes and thoughts. I told her that unfortunately the state of Massachusetts does not have a line item for good wishes and thoughts on my taxes, so I am limited to standard currency at this time.

+ There are SO many! Lactating woman rescues puppy, puppy wants to nurse off her, she calls to ask if that's OK. Customer wants to return hamster because it poops too much. Customer didn't realize she'd have to feed a rabbit every day. Customers buy rabbit chew thinking it's actually for a rabbit.

+ I had a customer come into the store asking for something to help his dog's stomach. Something that could help dissolve the rocks that he ate.

+ A customer showing pictures of his ferret on his phone swiped one too many times and showed pornographic images. He and my employee carried on as though nothing had happened, and he still shops with us. She got an A+++++ for her professionalism that day.

+ When her cat died at 20-plus years old, our customer kept her in the freezer and would bring her out at night and sleep with the dead cat on a block of ice. I kid you not! She just couldn't let her go.

+ A customer bought our handmade dog treats for a fancy rat that moved in under their porch.

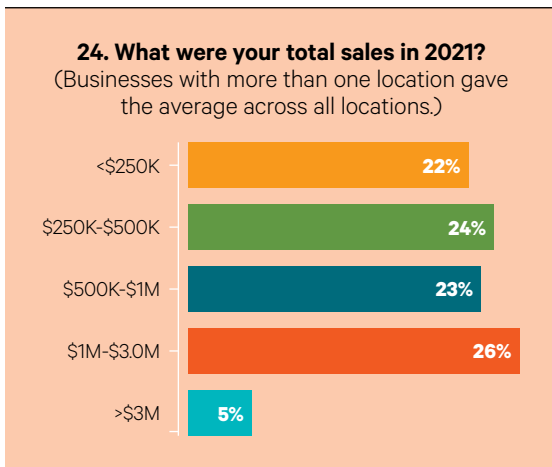
+ A Tibetan Mastiff client has us save all the fur brushed or trimmed from his dog so he can sell it. He mails it to Russia.





# PERFORMANCE

Bottom line: Sales matter. For your business to succeed, you must find the mix of products and/or services that pet parents in your area want to buy. Survey respondents share here not only what categories, brands and services sell well for them, but also their totals and breakdowns for 2021 as well as their forecast for 2022.



Way to go! A combined 65% of you expect to see growth. We're rooting for the 15% of you who are down. Long live the indie!



### 26. Rank your product mix, from biggest generator of revenue to smallest:

- 1 Food
- 2 Treats
- 3 Chews (including dental)
- 4 Toys
- 5 Toppers, broths and other bowl boosters
- 6 Collars, harnesses, leashes, and other gear
- 7 Grooming (including dental)
- 8 Supplements (non CBD)
- 9 CBD
- 10 Litter, poop bags and other waste management, cleaning and odor control
- 11 Flea, tick and other pest control
- 12 Beds and blankets
- 13 Bowls and other housewares
- 14 Crates and carriers
- 15 Pet parent products
- 16 Apparel
- 17 Cleaning and odor control

### 27. What was your average retail sale per transaction in 2021?

- <\$20: 6%
- \$20-\$30: 13%
- \$31-\$40: 19%
- \$41-\$50: 28%
- >\$50: 30%
- N/A: 4%

### 28. What was your average retail items per transaction in 2021?

- 1-2: 21%
- 3-4: 52%
- 5-6: 18%
- 7-8: 2%
- >9: 1%
- N/A: 6%

Nice! At 52%, three to four items per transaction means many of your teams excel at add-ons.

### 29. Rank your food product mix, from biggest generator of revenue to smallest:

- 1 Kibble
- 2 Raw frozen
- 3 Wet
- 4 Freeze-dried, dehydrated and air-dried
- 5 Refrigerated

Based on "Gently Cooked Foods" being your top answer for next breakout product category (p. 33), expect to see #5 increase its rank in our 2023 survey results.

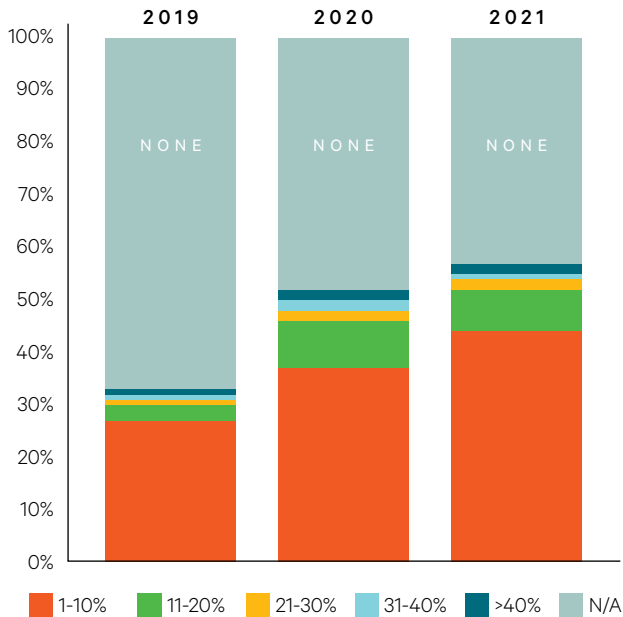


### 30. Rank your services mix, from biggest generator of revenue to smallest:

- 1 Grooming
- 2 Boarding
- 3 Day care
- 4 Training
- 5 Veterinary care
- 6 Dog walking and/or pet sitting

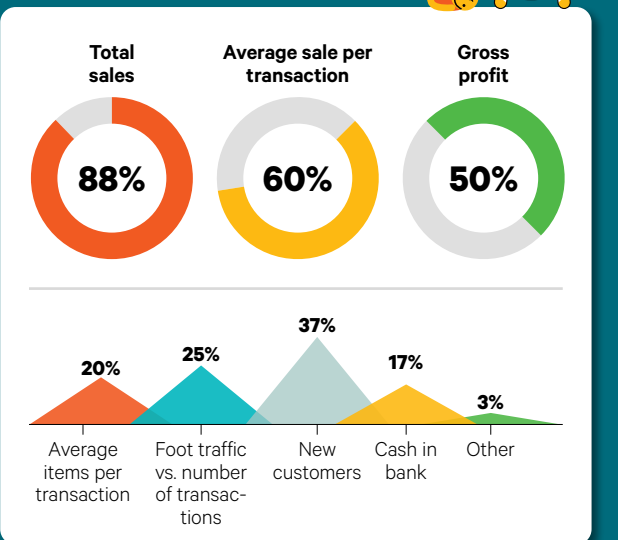
### 31. What % of your overall retail revenue was from e-commerce?

2020 was the first year that more than half of pet businesses surveyed offered e-commerce



While e-commerce doesn't make up a large portion of your overall revenue, these numbers show that it continues to grow at a healthy rate thanks to changes you made to meet customer needs during the pandemic.

### 32. If you were to select three items for a dashboard to review at the end of the day, what would they be?



### 33. What was your top-selling food brand in 2021?

- 1 Fromm
- 2 NutriSource
- 3 Stella & Chewy's
- 4 Taste of the Wild
- 5TIE Farmina
- 5TIE Acana
- 6 PureVita
- 7TIE Steve's Real Food
- 7TIE Primal
- 8 smallbatch
- 9TIE Diamond Naturals
- 9TIE Health Extension
- 10TIE Zignature
- 10TIE Dr. Gary's Best Breed
- 10TIE Open Farm
- 10TIE Nulo
- 10TIE OC Raw
- 10TIE Northwest Naturals



### 34. What was your top-selling treat brand in 2021?

- 1 Store brand
- 2 Bocce's Bakery
- 3 Stella & Chewy's
- 4 Redbarn
- 5TIE Earth Animal
- 5TIE Fromm
- 6TIE Chip's Naturals
- 6TIE Cloud Star
- 7 The Natural Dog Company
- 8 Vital Essentials
- 9TIE Wild Meadow Farms
- 9TIE Nutrisource
- 10TIE Barkworthies
- 10TIE Polka Dog

"Store brand" coming in at #1 doesn't surprise us, as indies excel at creating bulk biscuit bars that keep customers coming in week after week, sometimes daily!

### 35. What was your top-selling toy brand in 2021?

- 1 Kong
- 2 Fluff & Tuff
- 3 VIP Products/Tuffy
- 4 Tall Tails
- 5 West Paw
- 6 P.L.A.Y.
- 7 HuggleHounds
- 8 ZippyPaws
- 9 Multipet
- 10 PetShop by Fringe







### 36. What did you earn (salary + share of profit) in 2021?

Earnings were negative

■ **6%**

\$0 to less than \$30,000

■ **22%**

\$30,000-\$39,999

■ **7%**

\$40,000-\$59,999

■ **17%**

\$60,000-\$74,999

■ **14%**

\$75,000-\$99,999

■ **10%**

\$100,000-\$149,999

■ **11%**

\$150,000-\$249,999

■ **6%**

\$250,000-\$500,000

■ **6%**

>\$500,000

■ **1%**

Only 3% of survey respondents said “the money” was what you love most about being a pet pro (p. 44), which is probably a good thing considering that the returns on all of your hard work and long hours aren’t, let’s say, overwhelming for most. The mid-point for earnings in our survey was \$60,000 a year.

That’s not to say some pet pros aren’t doing quite well financially. About a quarter of you reported earning more than \$100,000 a year. How do these pet pros do it?

The six-figure business owners and top managers were more likely to operate pet supply stores without

services, accounting for 42% of the 100K+ earners. Pet supply store operators with services accounted for 35% of the 100K+ group. Boarding facility operators who sold pet supplies were also well represented, accounting for 10% of 100k+ earners. Grooming salon operators represented 5-6% of the 100k+ group.

Also, the bigger earners tended to cater to a wider range of animals rather than just cats and dogs, possibly implying they are bigger businesses, and also generate a higher average ticket — three-quarters of the 100k+ earners reported an average retail sale of above \$40, compared to about 60% for those earning less.

#### Some other interesting findings:

+ Despite pet care being a predominantly female occupation, the gender pay gap still exists. While men accounted for only 16% of our survey respondents, they made up 25% of those in the 100k+ club.

+ There is more racial diversity at the lower end. Whites accounted for 91% of the survey-takers, but 88% of those earning less than 30K and 93% of those earning six figures.

+ Economic uncertainty and downturns tend to favor the strong: 79% of those earning more than \$100,000 expected to see sales growth this year, versus 55% for those earning less than \$40,000.

## 37. Tell us about the single best day you’ve ever had in terms of sales:

### BIG SPENDERS

+ More than \$110,000. I sold a trailer of dog food to one customer.

+ Back when we still had boutique items, we had several really expensive beds that I’d inherited from the original owner. Customer came in and bought them all to the tune of nearly \$20,000! I almost fainted.

+ Our biggest days are always when we have a “Marnie” day. This customer purchases over \$1,500 on average in just one transaction.

+ A customer came in and bought 17 pallets of shavings. \$20,000+ day.

### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

+ \$23,000 during a Halloween costume party.

+ We had a \$10,000+ day because of a Black Friday sale on day-care passes. At the time, our average day was about \$2,000.

+ Pet Pictures with Santa. Nearly \$8,000 on a Saturday.

+ Small Business Saturday, 2019. We hit our goal by 11 a.m. I still remember one of our managers calling us at 7:05 p.m. to tell us the daily total. We were at a local restaurant having dinner and broke down crying. The waitress called the restaurant’s owner and said something must be wrong because we were both in tears. The owner told her to bring us the biggest bottle of champagne and charge us for it because she saw the line wrapped around our block that morning. We made more that day than in the entire first year that we were open.



+ In 2021, it was two Saturdays before Christmas. We have a yearly “Stuff your Sack” sale, and for a \$5 donation that we give to a local shelter, we give them a reusable tote and they can fill it and get 10% off everything in it. We had a record sales day of \$13,058!

+ Christmas Eve — every year — approximately \$3,000 in five hours. God’s Spirit is strong. Everyone is happy!

### CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES

+ Our 30th anniversary event day — both stores combined, we had sales that exceeded \$30,500. Our previous high was \$23,000 at one store.

+ On Customer Appreciation Day, we sold \$38,000 before discounts.

+ Our second-location grand opening this year: \$24,733!

+ We celebrate our anniversary in December with a Customer Appreciation Sale. We have the radio station broadcast live from the store, cook hot dogs in the parking lot, and have lots of giveaways. We put everything in the store on sale that day and have a great turnout. We had almost 400 people through the store and did about five times a normal day’s business.

+ It was a sale day for the store’s anniversary. We did over \$22,000, which was about seven times our average day at that time. It was organized chaos for eight hours.

### THAT’S A LOT!

+ We groomed almost 30 cats in one day. \$3,500 in revenue.

+ Cage Sale — distributor came in with a truckload, and we were packed. One-time deal as company went out of business.

+ Ran an end-of-year promo on day-care packages; brought in \$30,000 in one day!

### SHUTDOWNS & STORMS

+ The day after everything shut down due to Covid. Panic buying was crazy! We did \$17,000 that day. Normal day sales for us are \$6,000.

+ We will always remember stimulus Wednesday. We didn’t know stimulus checks had been deposited, and we were utterly confused as to why all of these people were in the store. It took a couple of hours for us to figure it out.

+ Our best day(s) recently were before a hurricane. We did a week’s worth of sales in three days.





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## CHALLENGES

Online-only pet retailers and lingering effects from the pandemic — product cost, supply-chain issues and staffing — continue to challenge your ability to operate a profitable pet business. And many of you overcome by tapping into your indie spirit, which allows you to pivot quickly and think creatively.

### 38. What has been your biggest cost increase in 2021-22?

Inventory (including shipping)	<b>53%</b>
Payroll	<b>31%</b>
Rent/location	<b>6%</b>
Other	<b>5%</b>
Supplies	<b>3%</b>
Equipment	<b>1%</b>
Insurance	<b>1%</b>
Advertising and marketing	<b>0%</b>
Utilities, transportation costs and taxes were top answers for "Other." We feel ya!	

### 39. Have you adapted in a creative way? Other than by simply raising your prices?

- + Purchase products locally and through Amazon. It can be cheaper than through distributors!
- + Since we also own a doggie day care and boarding kennel in separate locations, we give a discount to people who fre-

quent all three businesses. It's all about loyalty!

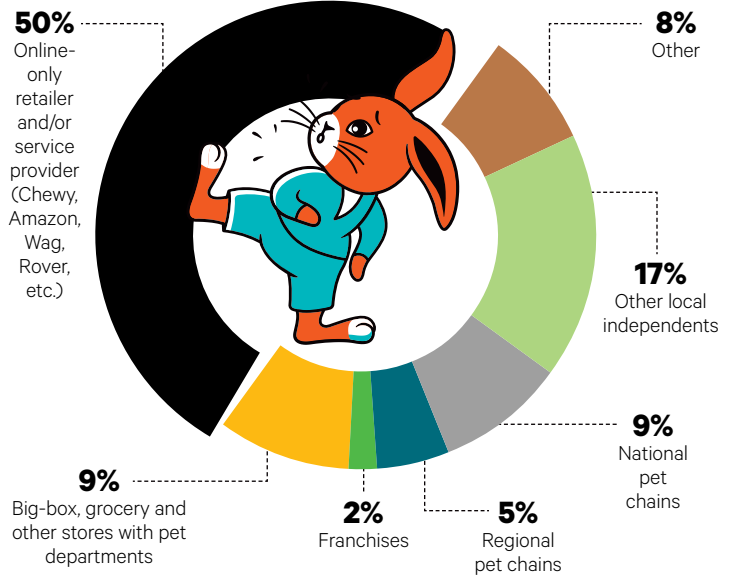
+ We have gone *big* with new pets. If you have a new pet and come into one of our stores, you walk out with tons of goodies and new friends. We want customers to feel like they cheated on us if they shop somewhere else — in a nice way.

+ Instead of raising prices on toys, we have started importing toys in bulk directly from China. By cutting out the distributors here in the U.S., we have been able to keep prices stable and raise profit margins.

+ One of the biggest challenges for customers today is finding the products that they need/want. We are running a marketing campaign that lets customers know that if they want it and we have it, we'll hold it for them. Although this is something we have always provided, given today's supply-chain constraints, it is something that resonates with the customer.

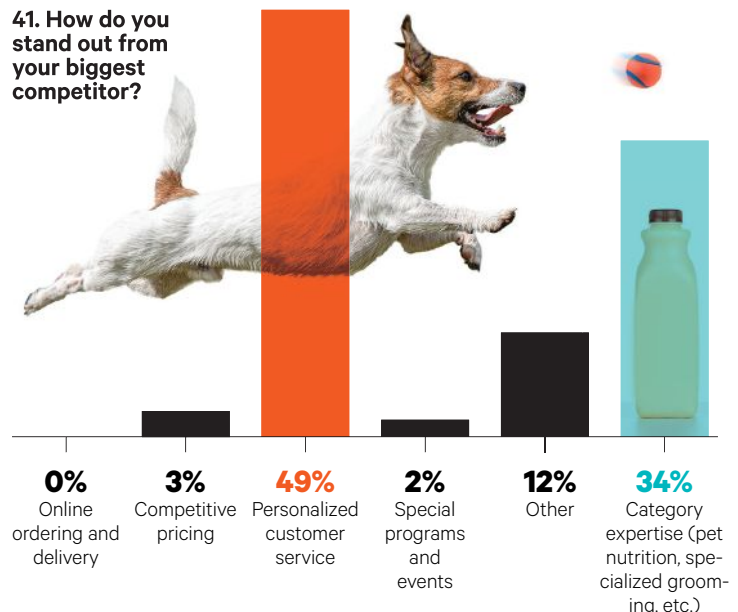
+ We added a "Raw"esome room" and have been selling way more fresh food ever since. The room looks so fancy that it intrigues shoppers who previously ignored the entire department.

### 40. Who is your biggest competitor?



And the award for Most Positive "Other" Answer in this survey goes to those who said you only compete with yourself. "While I pay attention to others offering my products and services, I really stay focused on my own productivity and how I can continue improving/growing."

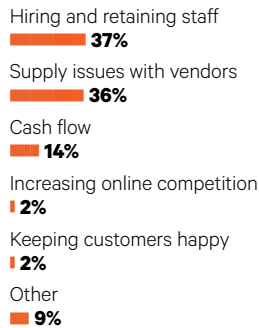
### 41. How do you stand out from your biggest competitor?



Products and services most often mentioned as "Other" answers aim to target your main competition, online-only retailers and service providers. Among the responses are custom treats and cakes, dock diving, a curated selection of locally made products, and services for unaltered pets. And while this falls under "Customer Service," we love this answer. "We make ourselves extremely available in terms of store hours and what we will do for our customers. You can't outwork us!"



**42. What has been your biggest overall challenge in 2021-22?**



**43. Have you met the challenge in a creative way?**

Around 37% of you still struggle with hiring and retaining staff. Among the creative ways you said you overcome are:

- + Continuing to be a satellite location for the grooming school so we can train our own groomers.
- + Taking advantage of a state worker training grant to increase the continuing education stipend for all employees, which my full-time dog trainers love.
- + One of our nicest, best customers wanted to start helping people, so we put her on the payroll. If she is gonna be here all the time, she might as well get paid.
- + Taking my staff on continu-

ing education retreats so they know they're valued.

- + Not expecting the same work ethic as 10 years ago. Allowing par performance and understanding that things that used to take one to three months now take six to nine months. Overall, lowering the bar has reduced manager stress.
- + Pulling in workers from different industries, who have strong work ethic but want more money. We hired an auto mechanic. He loves grooming cats.

**Stressing the importance of brand and protein rotation**

has helped many of you overcome supply-chain issues — 36% of you say that has been your biggest challenge — and several of you work with brands and distributors to go beyond simply switching.

+ We have learned how to “buy sideways.” We go straight to the brand and tell them our issue (and usually we are big accounts for the brands), and they find product for us from stores that aren't selling it.

+ We still order items from our distributor even if it shows zero availability, rather than waiting for the item to show as available. This lets them know that their fill-rate isn't as high as they think!

“We switched from traditional interviews to an open house hiring format, and it's proven to be very successful!”

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# MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Long gone are the days when local businesses relied on newspaper ads and TV commercials to bring in customers. Social media has changed how you advertise and market, for the better in many cases, especially when it comes to cost. Here you share what works best and what doesn't, with some of you even finding viral success.

## 44. Rank the effectiveness of these marketing and advertising methods by your ROI, with time included as an investment.

- 1 Free social media posts
- 2 Events and community participation
- 3 Paid (boosted) social media posts
- 4 Free editorial placement in local media (print, digital, radio)
- 5 Paid advertising in local media (print, digital, radio)
- 6 Encouraged online reviews (Yelp, Google, etc.)
- 7 Referral program
- 8 Paid search engine ads
- 9 Direct-mail
- 10 Paid app partnerships (Door Dash, UberEats, etc.)

## 45. Rank the effectiveness of these social media platforms by your ROI, with time included as an investment.

- 1 Facebook
- 2 Instagram
- 3 TikTok
- 4 Yelp
- 5 NextDoor
- 6 Twitter



## 46. Tell us about your most successful campaign.

Many of you say that word-of-mouth driven by outstanding customer service brings in the most business, but these one-off and ongoing campaigns have provided additional boosts:

+ I've been advertising on a veterinarian's radio show for about 15 years. It falls immediately after the organic gardening show, so I get the benefits of that and of the vet talking about me, as I'm first up. We get new customers nearly daily who heard about us on the show.

+ "Curbside Pickup Karaoke" during the pandemic years was outrageous.

+ Pets adopted through our local shelter get a coupon to the store for 20% off an entire first purchase, plus a free ID tag and a free dog wash.

+ Google's See-What's-in-Store (SWIS) process. Hands-down winner on generating clicks and store visits. I was scared of SWIS with pricing displayed because I didn't want to be perceived as high-priced. Turns out that a lot of the time, we are the lowest price and most of the time competitive.

+ A "Raw-gust" campaign we ran in-store, and on Instagram and Facebook with some boosted ads paid for by vendors. Crazy sales!

+ We were coming out with a new flavor of our handcrafted treats and ran a model contest for the packaging. We got a lot of people entering and becoming customers who didn't know we existed.

+ Annual Blessing of the Animals at the park across the street. We partner with a pastor from a very well-known and well-attended church. They do a lot of advertising for us, and we get a lot of people and pets that show up.

We have coffee donated by the local coffee shop, and I give all participants a St. Francis prayer card. They love it! People talk about it all the time.

+ "Do you have a dog?" We did a huge ad in the newspaper

with those words in bold on a solid black background. Then we added, "Treat them well" with our logo. We had a lot of people remember the ad, and it wasn't too costly.

+ We started getting involved with classes with a local trainer, including providing swag bags for all "Puppy 1" participants. It has been a phenomenal way to build brand awareness and sell products.

+ We partner with a local Instagram giveaway account. We pay a fee and put together the prize. We always have the best turnout doing this. More followers and more web sales.

+ Being on the T-shirts of the local high school teams: band, football, cheerleading, etc. We support them all.



## 47. Has one of your social media posts ever gone viral? Tell us about it.

+ Right after the DCM debate took off, I did a post about it and told folks that I would be posting a series of Dr. Ryan Yamka articles debunking much of it. I got "noticed" by those on the other side and was slammed by them in the comments. My post went viral when others (including Dr. Yamka) jumped in to shoot them down. We did get a lot of new followers and likes to the page from locals who ended up becoming customers, so it turned out well despite the conflicts.

+ Several videos of cats/kittens we have available for adoption have gone viral. Our most successful video wasn't even very good quality and was less than seven seconds. People love cats!



+ Kale Chips, our store dog who lost 50 pounds, was on national and local TV.

+ We have had several pet videos go viral, one with over 20 million views. Our biggest videos have been a turtle hatching from egg, bird preening, etc.

+ A video of a storm that came through and toppled trees near the rear entrance to our shop. Over 350K views.

+ We did a TikTok on not storing kibble in plastic that hit 4.5 million views.

+ A "Baby Mutt" Reel of a baby Doodle.

+ I did an Instagram Reel about how much I love Dog Mocs, and it went viral (over 20,000 views in a week).

+ I did a post early in the pandemic explaining how poop bags can be a great substitute for gloves (LOL).

+ Warning the community about coyote traps in the area on trails. It created a political firestorm.

+ A video we compiled about the community Dog Fest was hysterical. We're still getting feedback on it, and that was three years ago, pre-pandemic 2019. It was campy and funny, and reached over 250,000 viewers in one day.

**48. Has a marketing or advertising effort ever backfired on you?**

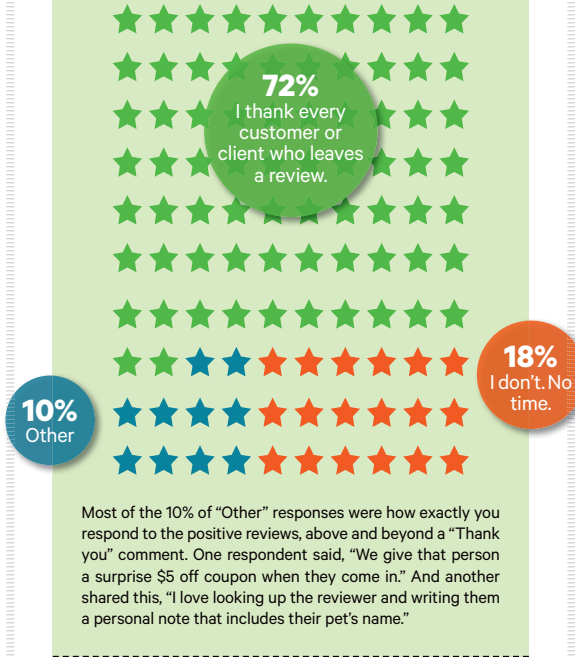
- + Anything that involves using color when grooming dogs. I have to watch them very carefully.
- + I shared a funny "Dear Abby" column about people complaining about hosts who let their dogs run around the house during a party. Dear Abby told them to suck it up. I asked people to post a funny response that they would give, to win a bag of treats. Instead, people started attacking. I deleted the post.
- + Every time we send out an email newsletter, inevitably one person who had a minor issue with us years ago decides to send a bitchy reply rather than just hit the "Unsubscribe" button. I try to pro-actively remove dissatisfied customers, but what kind of person sends a page-long rant instead of just deleting the email and moving on?
- + We have gotten too much traffic to events and have had to have cars park hundreds of yards along the side of the road to get to us. Parking capacity for our store is approximately 75 parking spots.
- + Yes! Always put an expiration date on coupons and "One per customer"!
- + Ads on the supermarket register tape only ever got the same person to come in for

the free treat offered.

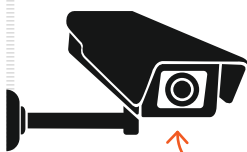
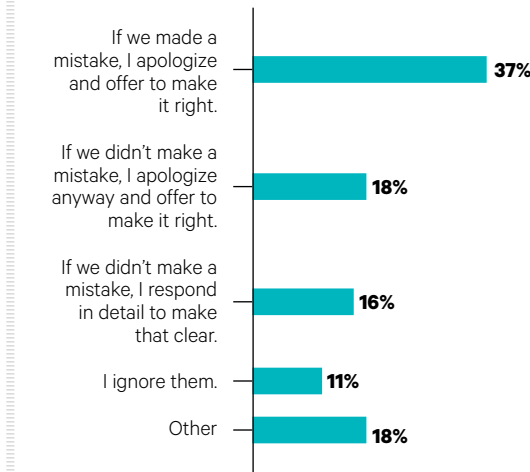
- + We once partnered with a "shop local" group that was promoting "jingle mobs" during the holidays at different small businesses around town. They offered to host one at our store. We prepared, hoping for a high influx of holiday shoppers — got cookies and hot chocolate, offered holiday discounts and hoped for the best. I believe we had five people attend ... wasn't much of a mob at all!
- + Yes, with our bounce-back coupons. We had people coming back and making second accounts to use another coupon.
- + I posted and boosted a video of blue death-feigning beetles eating a thawed pinkie rat. A couple of people called me names and got really mad.
- + Direct mail through USPS. Schedule delay meant mailers went out the same week as the last presidential election, along with 762 gazillion political mailers. 🤔
- + We tried to show people the extent to which we go to keep dogs happy/ safe during grooming. We had a dog in a hammock for a nail trim. Someone went to corporate and complained (person had never stepped foot in our store and doesn't live in the same state). We almost had to delete our TikTok over it.
- + We tried an April Fool's joke that a customer did not get, and they went ballistic.



**49. How do you respond to positive online reviews?**



**50. How do you respond to negative online reviews?**



Again, the "Other" answers to this question expanded upon an answer:

- + I have cameras and audio. I review everything that happened and respond with what the cameras showed, and ask them to come in so that we

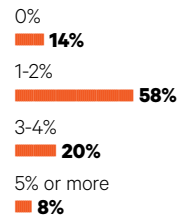
can review it together.

- + If we are wrong, I state that. Typically, the review is very skewed, so I state what really happened and offer to post the security footage of the interaction. That almost always gets the negative review removed.
- + It greatly depends. We always apologize that they did not leave with a great experience. But sometimes we use it as an educational platform (i.e. they are complaining about their Doodle getting shaved due to matting, and they signed a matted pet release and were sent home with our customer awareness information about how dangerous mats can be and why we do not demat heavily matted pets). I have had customers read our educational responses, and even though they were responding to a negative review, come to us because they could see how much we cared about the animal!

- + We pay a third-party company to respond to every post, and we approve the responses before they are posted. They are great with words to make things right.

- + Your response to a negative review is 200% more important than the negative review itself. It's not the circumstances, but how you as the owner/manager respond to the circumstances that count with potential customers.

**51. What percentage of your revenue do you spend on marketing and advertising?**



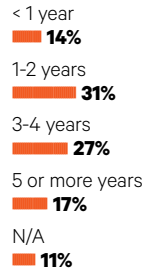


# YOUR TEAM

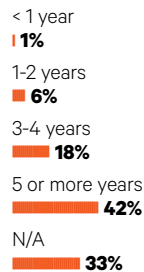
While 11% of you work solo or just with another owner, the other 89% of you share here what your staff looks like and how you compensate and reward them. Heads up! Some of the answers to “Tell us about when an employee left you speechless” will drop your jaw.



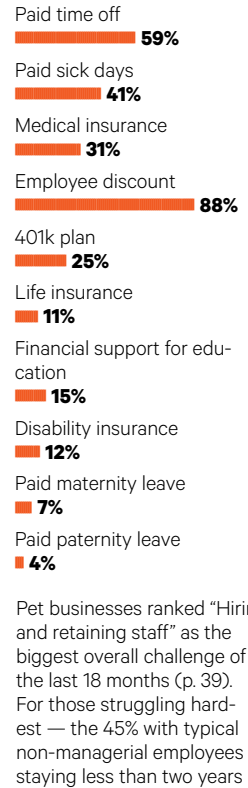
**53. What is your average retention rate in years for your non-managerial employees?**



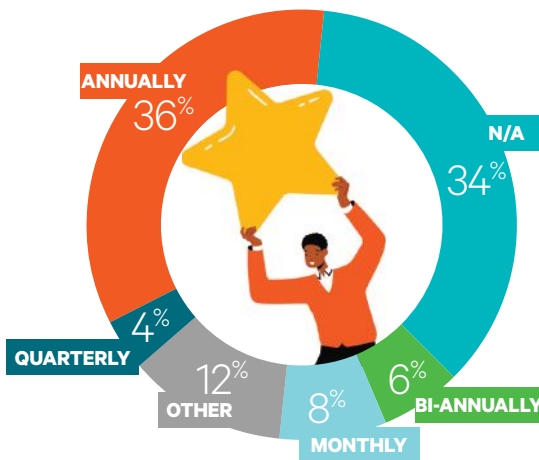
**54. What is your average retention rate in years for your managerial employees?**



**55. Check the benefits you provide:**



**56. How often do you offer performance bonuses?**



Under “Other,” many of you said you award bonuses when employees meet set education or other goals. Said one respondent, “I don’t believe in doing bonuses on a time schedule; it’s always based on merit.”

**57. Are the majority of your employees:**



**58. If you are a service provider, do you have:**



Results exclude those who answered “N/A.”



— the issue was also having a significant impact on their costs. Almost half, or 43%, said payroll was the expense that saw the biggest increase. (Rising minimum wage also impacts this cost for many.) The implication: Businesses with high turnover rates are raising their pay, but not improving retention.

Bonuses help — only 45% of businesses with a less than one-year retention rate paid bonuses, compared to the 64% with employees who hung around for three to four years. The impact of benefits was even more profound. Those with the highest turnover (retention of less than one year), offered only half the benefits of businesses that convinced their employees to stay for one to two years. When it comes to labor, the conclusion is clear: It's an employee's market right now.

**59. What is the biggest challenge in managing your team?**



Within the "Other" answers, more than a few of you shared this sentiment about your employees: "They are really amazing. They work hard and are hilarious. I have no complaints."

**60. Tell us about when an employee left you speechless. In a good, bad or weird way!**

**STEPPING UP**

+ My manager had to take over running the store when I was out with a fractured leg. I told him I'd give him weekly bonus pay for the duration. He 1) called me to ask if I could give his bonus to another employee who'd just lost her grandmother and needed extra money, then 2) told me he realized that his overtime was eating into payroll costs, and he trained both employees to close so he could take some time off and lessen the cost for me. I literally cried both times.

+ When we first opened and didn't have managers yet, a twentysomething employee making \$12 an hour surprised me with an entire handbook for front desk operations. She wrote it in her spare time without telling me. I was beyond impressed. She has since moved on to becoming a groomer.

+ Recently, I sat down with two of our receptionists to review incidents that occurred with one of our managers. One told me that the days she gets to work with me are some of her best. The second quickly agreed. While we give reviews every three to six months to our employees, it's rare that I ever get any feedback for myself as a business owner. This was absolutely wonderful to hear, and possibly made my entire year.

+ Caught an employee with booze in his cup. Confronted him, and he said he had no idea how it got there. Let him go. Was a great employee otherwise, and I told him if he ever got his act together and got help, I would happily hire him back. He came back six months sober and had turned his life around! Hired him on the spot.

**SMH**

+ Delivery driver that took a 12-foot truck under a 10-foot bridge ... clearly marked with all kinds of warnings, but he thought he could make it.

+ During day care, policies are very clear that hands should be free and ready to pet dogs or pull them apart. A staff member decided to read a



book, in a room of 50 dogs. She was reprimanded. Said it didn't specifically say, "No reading of books" in our manual. So we changed the manual. She then brought in knitting needles and began knitting in day care. She said, "It doesn't say I can't in the rule book. And oh by the way, I wasn't knitting; I was doing needlepoint." As if small, sharp needles aren't even more dangerous to pets! She was terminated, and then sent her mommy to our location to fight for her job back.

+ Had two leave, no notice — then ask why we took away their discount.

+ When they couldn't figure out how to work a mop. Claimed to never have used one. Never saw one being used. Never apparently watched a movie or even a cartoon with one in it. Held it outstretched, dry and pulled it between their legs. *Speechless.*

+ A newer employee was not scanning all of the items being purchased. I corrected him to get through the sale. Later he said, "But they were all the same thing."

**WAIT, WHAT?**

+ A female Asian employee filed a claim that we were racist against female Asian employees. When the Department of Labor called, I took the call and made sure that the first words out of my mouth were that I was the female Filipino owner of the business and the person we fired was let go because of endless mistakes

with cash. The call lasted two minutes. We were found not guilty.

+ An employee who wasn't performing told me she didn't need me to tell her how to do her job.

+ Had a model employee — bright, great smile, eager to help, customers loved him. One morning, he was arrested for pulling armed robberies on his way to work.

+ Hired a new employee. Everything went great in the interview. Her first day I told her our standing rule was to greet the dog before the person. She wasn't doing what I had showed her. I asked her to practice on the next customer, and she said, "I would, but I don't like dogs." Guess I forgot to ask that question during her interview.

+ Employee took us to small claims court over small personal items (fork, spoon, toothbrush) they supposedly left when terminated.

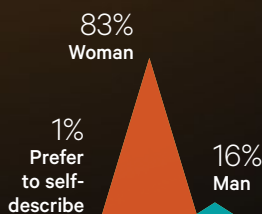
+ I had a groomer walk away from a man who was telling her that his wife had died. Literally walked away mid-sentence. After I listened to him finish his story, I asked if she realized she walked away and her reply was, "Yes. I don't want to hear that shit, I'm just here to groom his dog!"

+ I recently had an employee tell me that my business partners (my family) shouldn't be partners if they didn't plan on stepping up more.

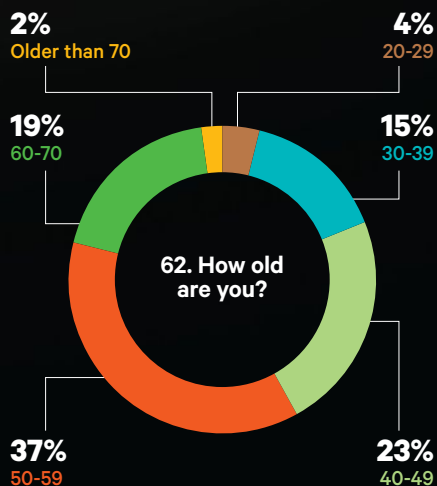


# YOU, THE PET PRO

Let's learn more about the amazing, generous indies who took the time to take our first-ever Big Survey!

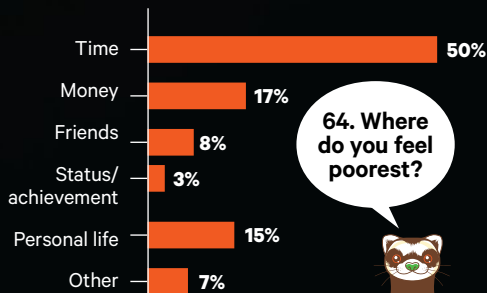


61. Gender: How do you identify?



62. How old are you?

## 63. Race or ethnicity: How do you identify?



64. Where do you feel poorest?



We should have included "I don't feel poor at all" as an option! This respondent put it perfectly: "Actually, I feel pretty damn lucky and well-supported by staff and customers."



## 65. What do you love most about being a pet pro?

- Sense of accomplishment from helping pets and people **57%**
- Continuous learning to better serve customers

- and clients **15%**
- Interacting with customers and clients **17%**
- Earning good money **2%**
- Other **9%**

"All of the above" was the top "Other" answer to this question, with a few of you including the caveat that you don't earn as much as you'd like. "Seeing pets transform from sick to healthy!" represents another common response. And many of you also love being a leader. "Mentoring my staff and keeping them happy is my greatest joy as a business owner."

## 66. What was the most important business lesson someone gave you? Who?

+ Bob Negen talks about the lifetime value of a customer. It changed our mindset on most aspects of our business. It changed our return policy, how we handle issues, and how we deal with difficult customers.

+ Documentation is power! That was actually told to me many, many years ago by my high school journalism teacher, and I have never forgotten it. It has come in handy on numerous occasions when dealing with difficult employees and in other situations.

+ We bought our business. The previous owner stocked a brand that we didn't think so highly of. We were thinking of dropping this brand. We went to our first trade show and talked to an older gentleman who had been in the pet business for many years. He asked if this product line brought in customers. It did. He said, "Then why get rid of it? Build a relationship with these people, and you may be able to switch them to something better." Best advice ever. We still carry this brand, and it still draws people in for us to start a conversation.

+ My first boss, in a sales job, told me to be someone folks would want to have a beer with after work. I always remember that — to be friendly, interesting and a person others want to be around.



+ To realize our worth and value, to never give up and to keep pushing forward. B.C. Henschen is an amazing friend and mentor and is always there when I feel like throwing in the towel. He has motivated me and kept me going, as has his wife, Kat. I am forever thankful to have them in my life.

+ My dad! He's given me a lot of sayings throughout my journey as a businesswoman, but one I always come back to is, "If you don't have money problems, then you've got customer problems. If you don't have customer problems, then you've got employee problems. If you don't have employee problems, then you've got money problems." There's always going to be something when running a business, so remembering this saying just reminds me of how I've gotten through all of these issues before and come out OK in the end.

+ I'm a huge fan of Walt Disney. "If you can dream it, you can do it." I repeat this phrase from him to staff very often. "Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do." I worked at Disney World for a bit and learned some important business lessons!

+ My mom says to do what you love and the money will follow, and to stop looking at the greener grass on the other side, just water your own.

+ Years ago, a fishing lure rep told me they make lures to catch fishermen because fish don't have wallets. All of our products should capture the attention of the customer first.

+ Dog Gurus told us that if there's a task we can pay someone else to do and make more in the amount of time it would take us to do that, to hire the help and use our time wisely. That has stuck with me



and proven to be very helpful.

+ Gary Vaynerchuk says to audit your circle. Don't follow or engage with anything that drains you. Ruthlessly hide, unfollow, leave groups, etc. Not just on social media, but in real life, too!

+ A previous boss of mine said that there is no hierarchy in business. No one role is better or more important than another. The order in which you should see importance in each thing you deal with should be client first, business second and self last. Take all emotion out of every decision and stick to the facts!

+ Sports analogy: No matter what you just did, great or bad, don't spend too long celebrating or kicking yourself over it. Your business, staff and customers need your head in the game for the next play.

+ Never judge someone's finances by the way they look (clothing, hygiene, etc.). A previous employer.

+ Not every customer is your customer. It's OK to fire a customer. From a friend.

+ Keep consistent hours for your customers. Don't close early or open late. That was from the restaurant owner at a place I worked in college.

+ At the end of the day, it is only dog food. Don't let it ruin your day. Previous owner.

“Give yourself as much time as you give your business. You can't pour from an empty cup.”

+ Don't be afraid to raise your prices or charge based on perceived value. Candace D'Agnolo.

+ If a customer is being rude to you, get them to spend more money. High school boss.

+ Enjoy life — work/life balance. A former supervisor told me to take a vacation. When I said I couldn't, too much to do, he explained that if I died tomorrow the company would go right on without me. That it could all wait, and things wouldn't crumble without me there. It was sobering, but it helped me realize it was true. I was replaceable, and I should live my life before it was gone. Not care more about the company than my own life and sanity. Taking vacations helped me realize I was a better leader when I wasn't so stressed and tired. After that, I always have had the next vacation on the books so I had something to look forward to. That alone has helped.

+ Your biggest competition is yourself. Boss in the late '80s.

+ We learned from our last place of employment that we would never run a business that the success of requires us to rely on underpaid, overworked employees. Nor would we use the "But here, we're family" fiction to make employees feel bound to something they have no real stake in.

+ Former boss: Delegation is critical for small business success. Trust employees who are ready and able to complete everyday small tasks, so you can put your energy toward larger, more important tasks, like growing the business.

+ Not sure who gave the advice, but when you're a small fish in a big ocean, you need to keep your eyes open and beware of big fish that might try to eat you. But know your strengths and make them be your focus. You can't outdo the big fish in what they do, but you can be the best small fish you can be.

+ No amount of money ever bought a second of time. Tony Stark aka Iron Man.



67. What will be your one-word theme for 2023?







The Cranberry Township location's eight-door walk-in freezer draws customers to its raw products.



HEALTHY PET PRODUCTS / PITTSBURGH, PA

## RAW FUEL

By embracing raw foods and pet nutrition, **Toni Shelaske** has helped countless dogs and cats live long, healthy lives — and grown her business from one store to four.

BY JODI ZISKIN

In 2002, Toni Shelaske was seeking a groomer for her newly adopted dog, Meg. She entered a salon in her home city of Pittsburgh, PA, and saw the owner feeding her own pup a raw chicken leg.

“Thus began my fascination with raw diets for dogs,” Shelaske recalls. “I started reading everything I could find.”

The groomer loved her thirst for knowledge and recommended Dr. Ian Billinghurst’s *Give Your Dog a Bone*, often cited as the book that began the raw pet food revolution.

“It inspired me to find a store that not only carried raw foods, but one owned by people who could help me grow my knowledge.”

Shelaske discovered the perfect place in Healthy Pet Products, became a loyal customer and eventually purchased it.

“On Oct. 10, 2008, the day the stock market crashed, I closed on the business,” she says.

The economy didn’t deter her, though. Shelaske was on a mission to help dogs and cats through raw feeding, which came with its own set of challenges — the biggest being the lack of customer awareness.

“They looked at me like I had three heads. Fortunately or unfortunately, many customers became more receptive due to having a sick dog and were at a point of trying anything.”

As these pets began to regain their health, the word began to





**QUICK FACTS**

- OWNER**  
Toni Shelaske
- PURCHASED**  
2008
- LOCATIONS**  
4
- EMPLOYEES**  
16 full-time, 25 part-time
- WEBSITE**  
healthypetproducts.net
- FACEBOOK**  
healthypetproducts
- INSTAGRAM**  
healthypetproducts
- TIKTOK**  
healthypetproducts
- TWITTER**  
healthypetpgh
- TOP BRANDS**  
Stella & Chewy's, Primal, Answers, Bixbi, Open Farm

spread about the Pittsburgh store and the owner's expertise in nutrition, raw in particular.

**RAW-FUELED GROWTH**

Thanks to her knowledge, support and product selection, Shelaske was able to move Healthy Pet Products in 2010 to a space double the size. In 2011, she opened a second location in nearby McMurray, and in 2019 a third in Cranberry Township.

"Raw food has definitely been a major contributor to our financial success, as

well as getting customers into the store," Shelaske says of the diets that continue to give independent pet retailers a competitive advantage over online-only stores.

The 8,800-square-foot Cranberry Township location,



Owner Toni Shelaske with her dogs, Bo and Desoto.

in particular, has a significant footprint in the category, with raw sales there making up 14% of its total food sales.

"We added a huge walk-in freezer to hold our raw products. It has a presence and is wrapped and displayed well," she notes of the eight-door unit that holds, among others, her top-selling frozen brands, Stella & Chewy's, Primal and Answers. "When people notice the volume and variety of products, it helps them realize a lot of people are feeding raw, even if many veterinarians are not onboard."

Having a focus on nutrition and assisting customers with healing their pets naturally, no matter the type of food or supplement, has been key to the success of Healthy Pet Products.

"We are known and respected for this — our reputation consistently brings new customers through our doors."

The business continues to grow. In early 2022, a fourth location opened in Port Charlotte, FL.

**EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Just as for herself, Shelaske makes education a top priority for the entire Healthy Pet Products team. Members come from a variety of backgrounds, among them veterinary medicine, nutrition, boarding and animal rescue.

"We utilize each employee's previous experience and polish it with the help of our development coordinator, Emily Claire, who provides monthly training to keep everyone up to date on the latest and greatest foods, treats, chews, supplements, and best practices in caring for pets," she says.

Staff also take part in education programs provided by manufacturers. Webinars about new offerings and collateral featuring the whole product line help enhance



knowledge.

"We truly appreciate online programs, like Raw University by Instinct. This program not only educates retailers on the brand and its products, it is also a raw food 101 course," Shelaske explains.

She believes in giving customers the opportunity to learn straight from the manufacturers, as well. That's why the chain holds its annual Healthy Pet Day at the three Pittsburgh-area locations.

"This is a huge event where our top representatives are invited to provide educational demonstrations. Nearly all manufacturers support us with a discount. They also provide samples and freebies in abundance," Shelaske says. Stella & Chewy's, Champion, Weruva, Nature's Logic and Nutrisource were among the 2022 participants.

Local animal rescues also are on site with pets looking for their forever homes.

"We are very proud of this event, which attracts nearly 1,000 attendees," Shelaske says. "Our customers look forward to it — and we find that passersby notice the large crowds and usually stop in, too!"

## PRODUCT SELECTION & SUPPORT

To maintain its reputation for nutritional excellence and raw

expertise, Shelaske sets high standards for what Healthy Pet Products will carry.

"There are more and more brands available, all vying for shelf space in my stores. We can't include them all, and it can be difficult to weed through," she says.

With that in mind, manufacturers must meet five criteria:

1. Food and treats free of wheat, corn, soy, chemical preservatives, food coloring, and sugars of any kind

2. Product guarantees; Shelaske needs to know the store will get support should a customer return a product for any reason

3. Reps visits, once a year at the absolute minimum

4. Excellent ongoing communication

5. Latest educational materials to share with staff and customers

"If these conditions are not met, well then, that brand is on the proverbial chopping block," Shelaske says.

## THE ROYAL TREATMENT

Pets who visit the store get an enthusiastic welcome complete with a treat, but in the spirit of its healthy mission not before staff asks about any allergies or intolerances. Regulars stand ready to show off their good manners or new tricks they've learned. Customers, employees and, of course, the pets delight in the tradition.

"We love creating personal relationships with customers and watching their pets grow and get healthier," Shelaske says. "Helping Pets Thrive' is more than a slogan. It's what we are committed to every day."

And that commitment will help Healthy Pet Products continue to grow as a business as well.



The Toni Unleashed line celebrates Pittsburgh with iconic toy designs.

### FIVE MORE COOL THINGS ABOUT

## HEALTHY PET PRODUCTS

### 1 HEALTHY & HAPPY:

Shelaske chose colors for her brand that reflect its mission: green, orange and yellow pulled from nature. The colors pop within the stores, complemented by light wood fixtures and playful exterior and interior signage.

### 2 MORE THAN JUST DOGS:

While canine visitors to Healthy Pet Products outnumber other species, customers bring in cats, reptiles and even the occasional tarantula. The Cranberry Township location sees the most of the last two, as it carries a large selection of small animal, bird, reptile and fish products. It also offers grooming and self-wash for dogs.

### 3 NEW PODCAST:

Shelaske recently launched a podcast to share her knowledge and best practices. "It's all things pet, but with most of the focus on nutrition and raw/biologically appropriate feeding," she says. "There are even episodes on training and about rescues, however, all the topics end up circling

back to nutrition."

### 4 TONI UNLEASHED:

Shelaske created a toy line to honor the store's home city. Among the products for dogs and cats are the Pittsburgh Pierogi, a food staple in the city; Pittsburgh Bridge, representing its 446 bridges; and 412 Pittsburgh, a shout-out to the area code. A collar featuring the Pittsburgh skyline also is available.

### 5 PETS IN NEED:

When Hurricane Isaac devastated Villalobos Pit Bull Rescue in New Orleans, Healthy Pets Products requested donations from customers and matched the total, donating more than \$6,000 to relief efforts. More recently, it spearheaded a campaign to help shelters in Ukraine. And each year, Shelaske and two of her managers volunteer at the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, UT. "This is my favorite way of giving back," she says. "It's truly magical and my favorite place on the planet, so far!" The store also holds an annual fundraiser for the sanctuary.







CONGRATULATIONS **HEALTHY PET PRODUCTS**! WE'RE PROUD TO BE ONE OF YOUR TOP-SELLING BRANDS!



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# BOOST YOUR BOWL

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Laurie Edwards  
Wilson

**L**aurie Edwards Wilson never imagined that one day she would own a pet business in Santa Fe, NM. Not while growing up in Minnesota, nor when she and her husband, Hersch, moved to New Mexico in the '80s to evolve his family's conference center by adding team-building programs for Fortune 500 companies. It was only after Wilson earned her business degree at age 52 and attended culinary school that the couple sold the center and began looking for their next opportunities. She learned a Santa Fe pet store called Teca Tu was for sale and bought it in 2005.

"It was a totally new adventure for me because I had never done retail before," says Wilson, who with her husband has had many dogs over the years. "But it turned out to be the right decision. People are really happy in the store because they're either with their pets or talking about their pets. It's just a happy place."

Contributing to the joyous atmosphere at Teca Tu — A Pawsworthy Emporium are familiar faces of longtime team members, plus a New Mexico-infused aesthetic and product lineup that appeals to locals and tourists alike.

### SHOP LOCAL

Located in DeVargas Center shopping mall, customers can't help but feel drawn to the store's exte-



TECA TU — A PAWSWORTHY PET  
EMPORIUM / SANTA FE, NM

# MADE IN NEW MEXICO

With her distinctly Santa Fe store,  
**Laurie Edwards Wilson** finds success  
with locals and tourists alike.

BY ROBYN A. FRIEDMAN





At left, the store's trademark Pendleton coats and vests have their own armoire; store dog Mowgli models a custom size. Above, manager Joanne Buchanan checks out a customer.

rior. Native grasses and flowers fill large planters, with signage and awning in a traditional Santa Fe color palette. A complementary umbrella offers shade for a small patio furniture set. Inside, Wilson uses warm woods throughout against a white background.

"I try for the emporium/country store ambience with lots of pine accents in the displays," she explains. "We want the customer and their pets to feel comfortable and welcomed.

Teca Tu carries healthy foods, treats and other products from well-known national brands, but local lines help set it apart. One in particular dates back to 1995.

"Diane Buchard began the store by designing and making vests and coats for dogs out of Pendleton trade blankets," Wilson says of the Native American-inspired material sourced from the Oregon company. "The business grew from there, and now the vests and coats are our signature item."

The apparel, which ranges in price from \$64 to \$89 for a dog

vest to \$69 to \$199 for a coat, are hand-cut by her and then sewn by Martha Black, a local seamstress who adds hook-and-loop fasteners and silver-tone concha adornments. Customers also can place special orders if their dogs don't fit into standard sizes.

Because the Pendleton vests and coats are made in New Mexico and exclusive to the store, they are popular with visitors seeking local products to serve as mementos.

Among the many other locally made items available are dehydrated organ treats from Red

Mesa Meats and gear in Native American-inspired designs from Sandia Pet Products. Pets can even take home a T-shirt or bandana featuring the New Mexico state flag.

### TOURIST & RESIDENT ATTRACTIONS

The locally made lines feature prominently in a savvy marketing effort for Teca Tu: display windows at prominent Santa Fe hotels La Fonda on the Plaza and the Eldorado Hotel & Spa.

"We put our New Mexico products in them — the Pendleton coats, our chili pepper toys and cookies, things that would catch the eye of a tourist," Wilson says. "We get a lot of people in the store from seeing those windows."

A cat habitat with a window opening into the mall also attracts customers. Operated by Felines & Friends New Mexico, it has helped hundreds of cats find good homes. Volunteers from the organization come in twice a day to feed and play with the cats, which has also proved to be good for business.

"It's a win-win," she says. "A lot of people see the cats, so they are adopted, but it also brings people



Paw prints lead shoppers to the interior entrance of the store.





into our store, which is always a good thing. Plus, if they adopt a cat, they usually buy some items from us.”

### KEYS TO CONTINUED SUCCESS

Drawing from her vast and varied business background, Wilson pushed Teca Tu past the \$1 million annual gross sales mark in 2020, with that number continuing to climb by 10% yearly despite the challenges of operating during a pandemic. She attributes much of the success to her team.

Senior manager Mira Lopez and manager Joanne Buchanan have been with the store for more than 25 years — “That is unique in itself,” Wilson says — and their familiar faces contribute to customer loyalty and repeat visits, as does their knowledge of pet nutrition, health and behavior.

To maintain such employee retention in a high-turnover industry and a tough employment market, Wilson says she treats her staff like family. Also on board are part-timers Elaine Anton, Mikaela Crazyhorse-Rodriguez and Canace Montiel. Salaried

team members receive generous monthly bonuses when the store meets year-over-year goals, and all gather for monthly dinners at fun restaurants.

Also contributing to Teca Tu’s growth during the pandemic was its status as an essential business, curbside pickup and delivery. For the latter, Wilson again turned to a New Mexico-based provider: “We partner with a local delivery company called Fetch to enable our customers to get anything from our store delivered in a timely fashion.”

All of the above helps the store compete with big-box and online-online retailers, and Wilson has ready a message to those who price shop with her.

“I tell people we can’t compete with Amazon pricing,” she says. “But you’re not going to get the customer service from Amazon that you do here. You can come in, try on the coats, have your dog play with the toys, and get our expertise on food and nutrition. You won’t get that on the internet.”

And customers, whether from near or far, certainly won’t feel as if they’re shopping at a true New Mexico small business.

Dogs deserve a touristy souvenir, too!

#### QUICK FACTS

**OWNER**  
Laurie Edwards Wilson

**FOUNDED**  
1995

**LOCATIONS**  
1

**AREA**  
3,200 square feet

**EMPLOYEES**  
2 full-time, 3 part-time

**WEBSITE**  
tecatu.com

**INSTAGRAM**  
tecatasantafe

**TOP BRANDS**  
Tiki Cat  
Red Barn  
Petcurean  
Orijen  
Taste of the Wild  
Koda Pet  
Ruffwear  
RC  
Gold Paw Series  
Sandia Pet Products  
Bowsers Pet Products  
Positively Gourmet  
Fluff & Tuff  
Treponi  
Woof Wear

#### FIVE MORE COOL THINGS ABOUT

## TECA TU

**1 WHY TECA TU:** The store’s name is a play on words. Original owner Diane Buchard found a little white dog on the side of the road in a town called Tecolote, which means “owl” in Spanish. When Wilson bought the store, she felt the name was good karma and decided to keep it.

**2 HAPPY HOUR:** Once a month during the summer and fall, Teca Tu hosts Pawsitively Pub Hour and invites customers to enjoy cocktails — doggie beer for the pups — and gourmet treats. Attendees can get a discount on select products and spin-the-wheel for freebies.

**3 IN SESSION:** Assistance Dogs of the West team members regularly bring service dogs in training to the store for real-life lessons.

**4 COMMUNITY SERVICE:** Teca Tu provides ongoing support to Street Homeless Animal Project, an organization that helps keep homeless human and animal family members together. Wilson says, “We have a large box outside our store where customers can donate food, clothing and/or toys. We also donate food to this endeavor.”

**5 MANI-PEDIS:** The store hosts a quarterly nail trim clinic — free for its customers. Of course, they shop while in the store and contribute to sales boosts on those days.







CONGRATULATIONS **TECA TU** — A PAWSWORTHY PET EMPORIUM! WE'RE PROUD TO BE ONE OF YOUR TOP-SELLING BRANDS!

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— now available in —  
*pâté*

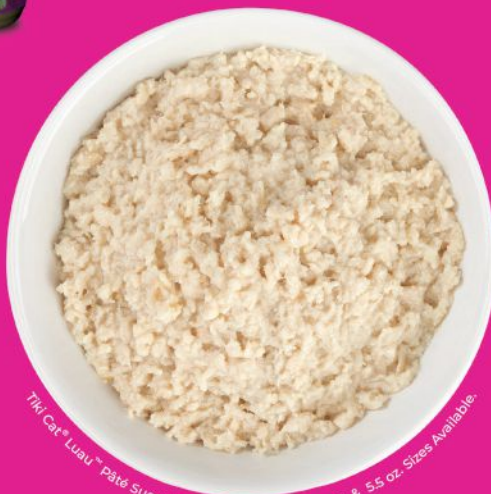


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# this issue in Business +



SELL MORE  
MANAGE WISELY  
SPEND LESS

## MARKETING

### CREATE BETTER HOLIDAY SEASON EMAILS AND POSTS

The human brain can process images at amazing speeds, with recent research measuring it at about 1/20 of a second. What does that mean for you? Images are a great way to get your message across quickly in your December and January email bulletins. The blog team at Constant Contact compiled this handy list of tools and resources for holiday images [constantcontact.com/blog/holiday-images-tools/](https://constantcontact.com/blog/holiday-images-tools/) (tapping a range of sources from Canva to Adobe) to help you quickly create more engaging holiday emails and social media posts.



## MANAGEMENT

### STAY CALM AND KEEP RINGING

Just about everyone is in a rush during those last weeks of the year. Customers, staff, the UPS driver ... but it shouldn't be you. "People who are in a hurry shouldn't make you feel like you need to rush through ringing; that's how errors happen. Just try to stay cool and be thorough," advises Shane Somerville of Pad-ywack in Mill Creek, WA.

## MARKETING

### PARTNER WITH MICRO INFLUENCERS

If your holiday season marketing needs a late boost, consider a local micro-influencer (1,000 to 10,000 followers) to help get the word out in your market. According



to a recent article in *Forbes*, they work fast (posting almost as soon as they get your product in their hands), can target a niche audience, and are "often considered more reliable by their followers as well."

## MANAGEMENT

### FREE LUNCHES

Buying lunch for staff during the holiday season is a smart move. As our Brain Squad members noted in a recent survey, not only does it keep them fueled during a draining time, but it keeps them in the store when it's full of customers and it's a nice reward for their

hard work. Some owners spring the free meals randomly to add a nice surprise to a day. Others create a schedule — say, every Saturday in November through December. Krista Schmidt, owner of St PetersBARK! in St Petersburg, FL, does it the entire week before Christmas, supporting the message: This is peak peak time.

## INVENTORY

### PARTY LIKES IT'S NEW YEAR'S DAY

"Physical inventory" and "party" are two words that don't always go together. But they do at Purrfect Bark in Columbus, NC, to nice ef-

fect. Explains owner Laura Backus: "We do physical inventory on Jan. 1 with lots of food and drinks, music and laughs. Everyone participates, and we get it knocked out in a day."

## MARKETING

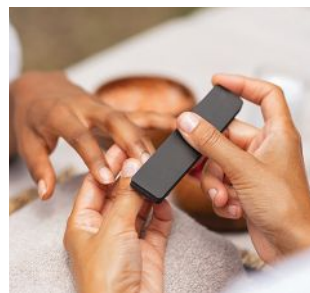
### LEAVE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

You'll probably never have as many people in the store as those final weeks before Christmas. Be sure to leave a good impression on these new faces. Jennie Dudley at Hairy Winston in Mount Pleasant, SC, does that by slipping samples into *new* customers' bags. It's a neat way to expose them to your product lineup and get them back in the store in the new year.

## PLANNING

### LOOKING BEYOND THE SEASON

The holiday season can be all-consuming, but keep one eye on the months beyond. "It's important to have a plan in place for what the store will look like in January, when the holidays are over. Having a fresh look going into January really helps," notes Jeff Jensen of Four Muddy Paws in St. Louis, MO. Nikki Tongg of Faux Paws Pet Shop in Summit, NJ, says the same applies to your inventory. "We always try to find new toys to refresh our January stock. People are sick of seeing holiday stuff by January so we like to bring in something new."



## MANAGEMENT

### SPA TIME

Dinner out is a tried-and-true way to improve team bonding when you need staff to come together for a demanding period like the holidays. But there are options, especially if you have a team that will appreciate pampering of feet and hands that are getting more of a workout than usual. "Last year, I did a 'spa night' with my team versus dinner and drinks. It was a huge hit!" says Jill Hall, owner of Grateful Paws in Leadville, CO.

LASHONDA GEFFRARD ON STAFFING

# GO VIRTUAL

Hiring an assistant who works remotely can change your life and pet business for the better.

**W**e all know that having the right team is essential to business success. As a solo entrepreneur for seven years, I recently learned an important lesson in working smarter, not harder: Outsource! I stopped doing everything on my own by hiring a virtual assistant. She has been a life vest, helping me keep my head above water and swim in the right direction. I am now able to stay on task and better delegate at my grooming salon.

Now virtual assistants aren't just for small-business owners with A.D.D. like myself; those with strong organizational skills also find tremendous value in having one. A virtual assistant can document operational processes and guidelines, create content for and manage social media accounts, and do just about everything in between. The benefits are endless, and by going the virtual route you save money by using the assistant only as needed and you save space by not devoting precious square footage and other resources at your business to their desk.

Before you begin the search for a virtual assistant of your own, set such a relationship up for success by asking yourself these two questions:

## 1. "WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW?"

Every pet business is different, and we may be at different stages in our entrepreneurial journey and have different immediate and long-term goals. Identify the tasks of most importance to you, those that need to be done first. For me, it was creating an employee handbook. Hey, I'm a busy lady — I also founded and run the nonprofit Black Pet Business Network — and have always felt documenting processes was too big of a task to actually complete while also grooming and managing my staff. I really had no time! But I knew I needed to get them out of my head and on paper. I hired my assistant with this in mind and was ready to assign her this to-do.

## 2. "WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS DO I WANT TO IMPROVE?"

Take a long, hard look at every aspect of your business. Do staff respond to messages and emails and take calls in the best possible way? Is your marketing and social media good enough for now or does it truly reflect how you want to be represented? Are you networking in your community in a way that will grow your business? Think about the bigger picture ahead of time so you are ready to have your virtual assistant help execute your visions. And on that note, look for that quality in candidates: The ability to execute your vision without inserting their own.

Once you have the answers to these questions, incorporate them into your interview process. Ask candidates if they have done this kind of work for another small business and what were the results. The best will have examples to show and references to give that will qualify them for the role with you.

Be sure to take your time making this hire, as your virtual assistant will reflect on you and your business, just like your in-person employees do. There are seemingly endless options through online services, with Time etc., VaVa Virtual and Belay among those highly rated. I used Instagram to find my assistant, Kylie, so also consider social networks for recruitment. Shop around and don't be led by just your budget; be open to hiring for the specific skill set and experience your business needs.

As entrepreneurs wearing all the hats, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Our many responsibilities can be crippling if not managed properly. A virtual assistant will change your life and your business for the better. Mine certainly has.



**LASHONDA GEFFRARD** co-owns The Paw Shop in Ocoee, FL. She also founded the Black Pet Business Network, a non-profit organization committed to growing Black-owned businesses and leaders in the pet care industry. You can reach her at [blackpetbusinessnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:blackpetbusinessnetwork@gmail.com).

## ask the **pets+** facebook community

The hardest part about being in this business and loving your pupstomers and customers is when the pets pass. Do you do anything special beyond a card and/or condolences? **Johnna Devereaux, Fetch RI, Richmond, RI**

+ We send an angel wings keychain made of pewter with a picture of their pet, along with a condolence card from our team. **Frank Frattini, The Hungry Puppy, Farmingdale, NJ**

+ We have custom-made cards from a local artist. We also have the same artist do small framed portraits for super-special longtime clients. We have clients who have been with us from birth to death. We take it very hard, too! **Karen Conell, The Bark Market, Delavan, WI**

+ We have a local artist who does 5-by-7 watercolors at a good price. **Kelley White, Bluegrass Barkery, Lexington, KY**

+ That is for sure the best and worst part of being here 24-plus years. I've seen many new puppies (the best) and many old, dying puppies (the worst). We send cards, and when the owners come in and tell us, we cry with them because we have lost our pup also. **Paula Gorman, Pet Supplies 'N'**

**More, Muskego, WI**

+ For our long-time clients, we make a donation in their pet's memory to a local organization that provides veterinary services for those having financial difficulty. It's called the Shamrock Animal Fund. They send the client a letter telling them about our donation, along with the story and photo of a pet they have helped. Our clients really appreciate it, and often send us notes about how much the stories touch them. **Amy Schiek, Lucky Dogs, Skaneateles, NY**

+ We send a card with a paper heart you can plant and wildflowers will grow. **Kaitlin McGrath, Belmont Pet Shop, Belmont, MA**

+ We send flowers to really good customers and a memory candle to all others. **Comora Tolliver, Barkers Anonymous, Hendersonville, NC**

Not yet a member of the PETS+ Facebook Community? Join us at [facebook.com/groups/petsplumagcommunity](https://facebook.com/groups/petsplumagcommunity)



LYN M. FALK ON STORE DESIGN

# CATCH THE EYES

Using focal points strategically in your store leads customers to exactly where you want them.

In the Sep-Oct issue of PETS+, I shared how customers use their left brain to interpret the interior/layout of a store and their right brain to respond to emotionally engaging displays. It's also important to note this again: Research has shown that over 85% of our purchase decisions are made with our right brain!

An emotionally engaging display is often considered a "focal point." What makes up a focal point? It's a well-defined visual statement that stands out from its surroundings and attracts attention. It stops the eyes, and then moves the feet.

Strategically placing focal points will lure and lead customers effortlessly throughout your store. They should be placed every 15 to 20 feet, either along the right side to create a circle around the perimeter or on a zig-zag course. You'll

quickly discover how the feet do indeed follow the eyes.

When putting your focal point displays together, it's important to keep those in front at a lower level so you don't block views into the store. Nesting tables showcasing seasonal merchandise or pedestal displays with current promotional items would be good choices. Farther in, focal points should be a bit taller so they can be seen from where someone is standing at the first focal point. Examples would be an elevated platform with a display vignette or taller pedestals. Even farther in, focal points could be decorated columns or countertop displays.

The top one-third of walls around the store can also be used as focal points with lifestyle photos, shelf displays, flat-screen monitors and/or department signage. Just be sure to separate focal points with



**LYN M. FALK** is owner/president of Retailworks, Inc., an award-winning design, branding and display firm. She is an international speaker, registered interior designer and consumer behavior specialist. You can reach her at [lfalk@retailworksinc.com](mailto:lfalk@retailworksinc.com).

some negative space so the eye can focus on each. Focal points toward the back should be at the highest elevation so they can be seen from the entrance or middle of the store. This could be something suspended from the ceiling or hanging off the upper part of the back wall. These elevated displays will surely lure customers to that area.

All the focal point displays should be visually engaging displays of merchandise, oversized props, branded décor and/or fun messaging. And all of them should be illuminated three times brighter than their surroundings. To achieve this level of brightness, use a powerful bulb in overhead track lighting that delivers at least 1000 lumens.

Finally, be sure to change out less permanent displays at least seasonally, and displays that are up front and along traffic aisles more frequently. It's important to keep your store looking current and relevant. Since these are to be emotionally engaging displays, they need to keep engaging your regular customers over and over, which means designs and merchandise need to remain fresh.

Have fun assembling these focal points and watch the feet follow the eyes!



This whimsical sign above the self-wash at Mighty Pet in Menominee, MI, draws customers to its location.



Flat-screen monitors need not be plain TVs! Check out this fire hydrant display at Mighty Pet that serves as a focal point that informs.

## FOCAL POINTS SERVE TO:

- + inform or tell a story
- + break up large areas of merchandise
- + inspire the customer
- + define a department
- + celebrate a product line
- + engage the customer

## EXAMPLES OF KEY FOCAL POINTS:

- + table displays
- + pedestal displays
- + elevated display vignettes
- + unique architectural elements (ie: water fountains, fireplaces, decorated columns)
- + pieces of art (2D or 3D)
- + mannequins
- + signage
- + brightly illuminated objects
- + rotating (moving) displays

**PETE SCOTT ON INDUSTRY RELATIONS**

# UNITED WE THRIVE

Bringing together all voices within the pet care community will take our industry to even greater heights.

**T**he pet industry is unlike any other. Members of the industry typically like to refer to ourselves as the pet care community because we are just that: a community with an eagerness to embrace different opinions, develop strong relationships and partnerships, team up on likeminded ventures, and put advancing the lives of pets and those who love and care for them first.

This collaborative spirit can be seen throughout the year at trade shows, leadership summits and advocacy events that are all well attended by industry members and stakeholders. Whether it is showcasing and shopping for the latest and greatest pet products or delivering the message to elected officials that pets have a positive impact on human health and quality of life, the pet care community gathers frequently to harness our collective knowledge and expertise to advance our industry.

Even with these events and collegial relationships driving us forward, we can still take our work a step further, making a concerted effort to make life easier and more enjoyable for our ultimate target audience: pets and their owners. By coming together and uniting the voices of the pet care community, from pet product manufacturers to retailers, groomers and boarders, veterinarians and more, we can achieve this goal.

There are so many great stories to tell within the pet care community, but many of these efforts are siloed, divided between the different niche offerings within our industry. For example, a compelling story in the vet space should be celebrated by those in the pet products and services arena and vice versa, and the research conducted by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI)



that speaks to the power of relationships between pets and their owners has relevance to the entire pet care community. These shared synergies even extend beyond the pet care space. The industry should be asking itself how we can work with specialty gift buyers, outdoor enthusiasts, sports advocates and hospitality leaders to expand into industries where people and pets already intersect.

Finding a way to unite the pet care community will push our industry — which already reached a record \$123.6 billion in sales last year — toward even greater heights. Through elevated collaboration, we can amplify our successes and scale our efforts to reach expanded and new audiences. Shining a light on all the good that is being done will ultimately drive toward our shared goal of providing the products, services and information pet parents need to provide the animals in their life the best.

Let's get started!



**PETE SCOTT** is a seasoned association executive who has developed a reputation for leading transformational change, driving product innovation, and building strong cultures of empowerment and accountability that consistently exceed expectations. As CEO

of the American Pet Products Association (APPA), Scott helps lead the association toward its mission of advancing the pet industry by elevating the global pet care community and promoting responsible pet ownership.



## NO MONKEY BUSINESS

**We get phone calls** a couple of times a month from people looking for tiny monkeys or baby monkeys. It has happened for several years now. I finally Googled "Where to buy a monkey in OKC" because I was curious, and we were the top listing. We don't sell monkeys. **Kat Forry, A1 Pet Emporium, Oklahoma City, OK**

## pet peeves

ANONYMOUS VENTINGS FROM PET BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS



## CLASS IS NOT YET IN SESSION

The client who arrives early for class and expects the trainer to fully engage with them. Like 20 minutes before class. They are in a group class and expect 20 minutes of private time for free.





**NANCY GUINN** is founder and president of Dog Krazy, an award-winning pet supply store in Virginia with six locations. Also a clinical pet nutritionist, she consults with veterinarians and pet parents alike. Nancy shares her life with business partner and husband Chris, and their pets Sushi, Pork Wonton, Stirfry Fatguy, Tala, Jimmy Dean and Max.

# Real Deal

INSPIRED BY REAL LIFE SCENARIOS\*



the case of the

## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

When all of her employees ask to take off Small Business Saturday and the days leading up to Christmas, Cindy must decide who must work — including herself!

**B**lack Friday was less than a month away, Cindy realized as she signed the last of that week's paychecks. The 2022 holiday season was going to be phenomenal. Cindy had taken advantage of some great deals on holiday merchandise earlier in the year, so she knew sales were going to blow 2021 numbers out of the water! It was time to start working on the staffing schedule for the next four weeks.

Black Friday, Small Business

Saturday and the two weeks leading up to Christmas were her store's busiest times. In previous years, Cindy had set blackout dates on those days. Now fully staffed, she had decided to allow employees to put in time-off requests in advance of the holidays. Cindy thought she would be able to approve certain days when she knew her employees would want to spend time with their families.

Cindy pulled up the time-off requests for November and saw

that all three of her employees had requested off Small Business Saturday as well as the three days leading up to Christmas. Porsche requested off as it's her first Thanksgiving and Christmas with her new husband's family, Kendra requested off as it's her first Thanksgiving and Christmas with her new baby girl, and Betty requested off because her family bought her tickets to visit them for both holidays.

I can't work all those days alone, she thought, and there's no way I can quickly hire someone so close to the holidays and train them to learn all the ins and outs of not only the store but grooming appointment scheduling. To make matters worse, Cindy noticed that all three of her employees put in for paid time off as they all had saved up their hours to cover holiday vacation time. So not only were they all asking for the same days off, per her employee manual they had to use their PTO before year-end!

She put her head in her hands, remembering the promise she made to her own family that they would finally have a Christmas together. Cindy had worked every holiday week for the last seven years, and this was the first year she had enough staff to even consider being able to spend more time at home baking cookies, wrapping gifts, and cooking a holiday feast for her family.

Cindy could get by with one less person on those days, but how does she choose who gets to have the time off without possibly losing some of the best employees she's ever had? She didn't want to have to close the store completely.

\* This fictional scenario should not be confused with actual pet businesses and/or people.

### + the big questions

- + Should Cindy hire temporary help and speed train? A warm body is better than closing the store.
- + Should she make her employees decide who gets the days off?
- + Should Cindy schedule them all, and she take the days off as her own family comes first.
- + How can she avoid these conflicts in the future?

#### Heidi Durand-Lenz

BOW CHIKA WOW TOWN  
WARWICK, RI

+ This situation stresses the importance of having an employee handbook that outlines how time-off requests are handled and if there are blackout dates where time off will not be granted. In the absence of the handbook, I would grant one time-off request per date based on seniority.

#### Ramie Gulyas

FOLLOW YOUR NOSE PETS  
EVANSTON, IL

+ We provide services on holidays, which means everyone works including my husband and me. It's only fair. When staff are hired, they are told the expectation to work holidays and weekends; no exceptions. Store staff get the same policy, except the store is closed on major holidays.

**ONLINE EXTRA!** Responses have been edited for clarity and length. See more responses at [petsplusmag.com/realdeal](https://petsplusmag.com/realdeal)



Staff can request the time of day they prefer to work on the holiday, and we have had no issues with that. We are happy to give time off for everyone immediately after Christmas or in January or February. Spring Break (March-April), summer vacations (July-August) and all other holidays are blacked out. We host the holidays at our home. We take our own vacations in off-peak times, January or February. It's the business we are in so we have to work with it.

### Diane Baum

YOU PET'CHA  
MORRIS, MN

+ Cindy should have added this to her schedule in October. Staff members with the most longevity can have just one of the two holidays off, and staff needed to have been told back in June that they had to use their PTO before the holidays. She should remind them of the importance holidays have on business. Another alternative is to have a part-time employee trained and ready to go so that if staffing becomes an issue, she has another person who could step in. Work is a fact of life, and people need to realize this and make their own holiday plans accordingly.

### Paul Lewis

THE GREEN K9  
MOUNT DORA, FL

+ Our new-hire handbook states, "We have vacation-request blackout dates for the following holidays: ..." We are a four-in-one shop: boarding, day care, grooming and retail. We never officially close as a 24-7-365 facility. We have one person in the facility at all times. What we will do is allow the staff to work out a holiday time-off schedule that is fair for all. Some will want to work Thanksgiving and want Christmas off or vice versa. Black Friday and Small Business Saturday would have to be worked out between staff to provide coverage. The

owner should be there on those days. If they are that busy, Cindy should set them as blackout dates.

### Brett Foreman

EUPAWRIA HOLISTIC PET CENTER  
OWEGO, NY

+ Cindy should hire at least one person to run the register, freeing herself up to work the floor. She can decide later if the new employee will replace one of her current or stay on as a floater. Change can be good, and that amazing employee (best she ever had) maybe isn't as good as she thinks. As far as taking time off for herself, if she can't convince at least one current employee to stick around, that option is off the table. Sometimes we're owner, manager and chief bottle washer all in one, and we have to sacrifice our own wants for our business. If she doesn't have a policy in place, she ought to consider "first-come, first-served" regarding requested time off. This way, she can give that day to the first requester, but not the others. Then that person goes to the back of the request rotation.

### Shane Somerville

PADDYWACK  
MILL CREEK, WA

+ Cindy needs to remember that a request doesn't guarantee time off. She needs to look at who put in requests first and also consider who has had time off most recently, and who her MVP staff member is. Those factors may all influence how she chooses to move forward. If I were Cindy, I would let each team member know they can each get one day off for Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, and each should pick which one they want the most, with time-and-a-half pay on the other two days. I suggest seeing if she can try to hire someone at least temporarily for stocking and greeting, and she might find a great new permanent person, too! To avoid this in the

future, go back to the old blackout rules and expect to work all those days too. This is retail ownership — it's part of the job. Don't ask your staff to do anything you wouldn't do yourself!

### Sylvia Glee Thacker

VERY IMPORTANT PETS  
ADAMSVILLE, TN

+ I used to think it was necessary to oblige customers for the holiday rush. After all, people are spending and the revenue is the boom before the bust that follows in January. It seemed like celebrating a day or two early or later would not be such a sacrifice to ask of employees. Most do so only when it benefits themselves, certainly not for their employer's benefit. I have come to the conclusion that it is better to inform customers well in advance that we will be closed to allow staff time to enjoy themselves as well. That way, they will not be expecting last-minute services or goods. We have boarders who require the same care no matter what day it is. Schedules require forethought to be sure their needs are met and employees are not abused.

### Rachael Creech

ADVENTURE PETS  
MANDEVILLE, LA

+ This is a tough spot, made worse because it shouldn't have been allowed to happen. But since it has, I would tell everybody that only one person at a time can have off, so work together to see who gets which days off. If they can't decide, then I would make an executive decision. I would also allow the PTO to be carried over this time. Personally, I would never schedule myself off over my employees unless there was a special reason. It's my business, and that's part of owning a business. Our policy is no PTO during December unless you are a student living at home and must travel with your family. We are generally

pretty flexible other times. It has worked well for 21-plus years.

### Paula Gorman

PET SUPPLIES 'N' MORE  
MUSKEGO, WI

+ I think there really isn't anything Cindy can do except hire a temp to cashier so she can be the floor person. If she insists that any of them work, they could just quit and not have a problem getting another job after the holidays. Change the policy for next year.

### Danielle Wilson

BATH & BISCUITS  
GRANVILLE, OH

+ We have a policy in place that states no time off from Thanksgiving week through Christmas. New employees are made aware of the policy from day one — we're extremely flexible with time-off requests the rest of the year. We also close Christmas Eve to give our employees at least two days off. Cindy should let the most senior employee have Black Friday/Small Business Saturday off, with the other two working a split shift with Cindy on those days. As for the Christmas requests, Cindy could approve one day off for each of them, leaving her with two employees on the three days before.

### Annabell Bivens

THE DOG STORE  
ALEXANDRIA, VA

+ We require time-off requests to be submitted at least one month in advance for anything "personal or fun." Anything that comes in later is usually just dismissed. We also offer switching shifts; if you can get someone to cover your time, take it off, but they better show up! I would see who submitted their requests earliest. And taking into consideration plans that cannot to be moved. As for accumulated PTO, Cindy will just have to pay it out. Ours rolls over for three months after the end of the year to avoid this exact issue.



**1. NORTHWEST NATURALS**

New Raw Rewards Freeze Dried Pork Hearts are packed with nutrients and made with only fresh, whole single ingredient proteins that provide bioavailable nutrition. Available in 3oz and 10oz sizes.

**MSRP:** \$12.99 (3oz)  
\$39.99 (10oz)  
**E:** info@nw-naturals.net  
**P:** (503) 517-9800  
**W:** nw-naturals.net

**3. GRANDMA LUCY'S**

Human-grade, grain-free Artisan Freeze-Dried Recipes are made with high-quality whole ingredients and quickly reconstitute with water. Available in chicken, pork, lamb and venison recipes for dogs and chicken & fish for cats in 1, 3 and 10lb bags.

**MSRP:** \$10.49 - \$118.99  
**P:** (800) 906-LUCY  
**W:** grandmalucys.com

**5. SWEDENCARE USA**

Holistic Soft Bites for Dogs and Cats are made with the proven PlaqueOff System™ and offer a tasty way to help reduce the buildup of plaque. Available in 3oz (for cats) and 6oz (for dogs) sizes.

**MSRP:** \$10.99 - \$12.99  
**E:** info@swedencareusa.com  
**P:** (832) 622-7339  
**W:** swedencareusa.com

**7. GUARDIAN PET FOOD**

NOBL Yogurt Melts are all natural, probiotic treats for dogs available in three flavors: pumpkin, blueberry and pineapple.

**MSRPS:** \$8.99 (1.7oz)  
**E:** customerservice@noblfoods.com  
**P:** (781) 343-1553  
**W:** noblfoods.com

**2. TIKI CAT**

Baby Thrive Wet Cat Food for Kittens is a high-protein, high-calorie and fat supplement to help kittens thrive. It promotes energy, weight gain and growth. Available in chicken and chicken liver.

**MSRP:** \$9.99 (0.28oz sachets, 20 pack)  
**E:** mail@tikipets.com  
**P:** (866) 821-8562  
**W:** tikipets.com

**4. CREATIVE SCIENCE**

Breathalyser Drinking Water Additive eliminates bad breath for dogs and cats by reducing sources of harmful bacteria. Also reduces plaque and tartar build-up.

**MSRP:** \$10.20 (250ml)  
\$16.84 (500ml)  
**E:** info@creativesciencellc.com  
**P:** (888) 506-3039  
**W:** creativesciencellc.com

**6. BONNE ET FILOU**

Bonne et Filou's Illustrated Advent Calendar features 24 dog treats including macarons, bone treats and truffles for a tasty countdown to Christmas.

**MSRPS:** \$69.99  
**E:** contact@bonneetfilou.com  
**P:** (917) 979-5955  
**W:** bonneetfilou.com

**8. PONDASHIANS**

"Oh Poop" Waste Disposal Bag Holder prepares for those "Oh Poop" moments with style. Available in black or white neoprene with a pull-through rubber dispenser to help separate and tear off one bag at a time. Clips easily to leash or tote bag.

**MSRP:** \$12  
**E:** pomdashians@gmail.com  
**P:** (949) 636-4999  
**W:** thepomdashians.com

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**ANDIS COMPANY**  
STURTEVANT, WI  
TEL: (800) 558-9441  
EMAIL: info@andisco.com  
URL: andis.com  
**BACK COVER**

**CHAMPION PETFOODS**  
EDMONTON, AB CANADA  
TEL: (877) 939-0006  
EMAIL: customercare@championpetfoods.com  
URL: acana.com  
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**CHESAPEAKE BAY DOG LLC**  
STEVENSVILLE, MD  
TEL: (443) 808-8664  
EMAIL: info@baydog.com  
URL: baydog.com  
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**DOGGYRADE**  
SAINT JOSEPH, MO  
TEL: (816) 749-4318  
EMAIL: info@doggyrade.com  
URL: doggyrade.com  
**INSIDE FRONT COVER**

**GLOBAL PET EXPO**  
HEADQUARTERS  
STAMFORD, CT  
TEL: (203) 532-0000 Ext. 521  
FAX: (203) 532-0551  
EMAIL: globalpetexpo@americanpetproducts.org  
URL: globalpetexpo.org  
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**HUXLEY & KENT LLC**  
WASHINGTON, DC  
TEL: (888) 489-5368  
EMAIL: info@huxleyandkent.com  
URL: huxleyandkent.com  
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**NATIONAL ANIMAL SUPPLEMENT**  
COUNCIL  
SUN CITY WEST, AZ  
TEL: (760) 751-3360  
EMAIL: info@nasc.cc  
URL: nasc.cc  
**PAGE 15**

**NATURAL FARM**  
ATLANTA, GA  
TEL: (678) 759-9966  
EMAIL: sales@naturalfarmpet.com  
URL: naturalfarmpet.com  
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**NORTHWEST NATURALS**  
PORTLAND, OR  
TEL: (503) 517-9800  
EMAIL: info@nw-naturals.net  
URL: nw-naturals.net  
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**NPIC**  
PLANO, TX  
TEL: (877) 238-6742  
FAX: (972) 509-0058  
EMAIL: sales@NPICpet.com  
URL: NPICpet.com  
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**PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY**  
COUNCIL  
ALEXANDRIA, VA  
TEL: (202) 452-1525  
EMAIL: info@pijac.org  
URL: pijac.org  
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**PIDA/PET STORE PRO**  
ABINGDON, MD  
TEL: (443) 640-1060  
EMAIL: info@petstorepro.com  
URL: petstorepro.com  
**PAGE 18**

**PURE BITES - PURE TREATS INC.**  
VAUDREUIL-DORION, QC CANADA  
TEL: (888) 388-7873  
EMAIL: customerservice@purebites.com  
URL: purebites.com  
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**SLEEPYPOD**  
PASADENA, CA  
EMAIL: sales@sleepypod.com  
URL: sleepypod.com  
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**STELLA & CHEWY'S, LLC**  
OAK CREEK, WI  
TEL: (888) 477-8977 ext. 100  
EMAIL: info@stellaandchewys.com  
URL: stellaandchewys.com  
**PAGE 49**

**TIKI CAT**  
ST. LOUIS, MO  
TEL: (866) 821-8562  
EMAIL: mail@tikipets.com  
URL: tikipets.com  
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**TRIXSYN**  
LEXINGTON, KY  
TEL: (888) 521-8867  
EMAIL: customersupport@cogentsolutionsgroup.com  
URL: Trixsyn.com  
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**YEOWWW! CATNIP**  
ROSEVILLE, MN  
TEL: (612) 623-3825  
EMAIL: info@duckyworld.com  
URL: yeowww.com  
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**ZEE.DOG**  
NEW YORK, NY  
EMAIL: wholesale@zeedog.com  
URL: zeedog.com/wholesale  
**PAGE 23**

**ZIWI USA, INC.**  
OVERLAND PARK, KS  
TEL: (877) 464-9494  
EMAIL: info@ziwipets.com  
URL: ziwipets.com  
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**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**  
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**Publisher: Desiree Lynch, 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**  
**Editor: Pamela Mitchell, 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**  
**Managing Editor: Chris Burslem, 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**
  - 10) Owner: **Retail Management Publishing, Inc. 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**  
**Dan Kisch - c/o Retail Management Publishing, Inc; 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**  
**Fred Mouawad - c/o Retail Management Publishing, Inc; 28 Valley Road, Suite 1, Montclair, NJ 07042**
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(a) Total Number of Copies (Net press run): **28,203**  
(b) Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution  
(1) Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions: **20,812**  
(2) In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions: **0**  
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®: **0**  
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes: **0**  
(c) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: **20,812**  
(d) Non requested Distribution  
(1) Outside County Nonrequested Copies: **6,321**  
(2) In-County Nonrequested Copies: **0**  
(3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail: **0**  
(4) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail: **855**  
(e) Total Nonrequested Distribution: **7,176**  
(f) Total Distribution: **27,988**  
(g) Copies not Distributed: **215**  
(h) Total: **28,203**  
(i) Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100): **74.4%**
  - No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date:**  
(a) Total Number of Copies (Net press run): **27,049**  
(b) Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution  
(1) Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions: **20,495**  
(2) In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions: **0**  
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®: **0**  
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes: **0**  
(c) Total Paid and/or Requested Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3) and (4)) **20,495**  
(d) Non requested Distribution  
(1) Outside County Nonrequested Copies: **6,438**  
(2) In-County Nonrequested Copies: **0**  
(3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail: **0**  
(4) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail: **22**  
(e) Total Nonrequested Distribution: **6,460**  
(f) Total Distribution: **26,955**  
(g) Copies not Distributed: **94**  
(h) Total: **27,049**  
(i) Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100): **76.0%**
  - 16) Electronic Copy Circulation  
**Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months:**  
(a) Paid Electronic Copies: **0**  
(b) Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies: **20,812**  
(c) Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies: **27,988**  
(d) Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies): **74.4%**
  - No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date:**  
(a) Paid Electronic Copies: **0**  
(b) Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies: **20,495**  
(c) Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies: **26,955**  
(d) Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies): **76.0%**
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  - 18) Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

*Christine Baloqa, VP*

MARKETING OPERATIONS & CUSTOMER ACQUISITION  
10/1/2022

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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# Sanity Files

How pet business owners stay sane in a crazy world



## JOHNNA DEVEREAUX

FETCH RI, RICHMOND, RI

Clinical pet nutritionist and herbalist Johnna Devereaux not only owns a holistic pet store, but she also serves as director of nutrition and wellness as well as vice president of marketing for Bow Wow Labs. While this gives Devereaux a broader view of the pet industry, it does keep her super busy! She practices self-care with friends and family, the latter including pets Lola and Henry, who both miss family member Diego, who passed last year.



I get to try out products I wouldn't necessarily be able to find with my distributors, and I have brought in several new lines because of this program!

Dorothy Stewart,  
Dorothy's Pet Shop



This is a really fantastic experience. It's a great way to learn about new brands and products without sifting through pages of catalogs.

Zachary Dewitt, Skilos,  
A Family Pet Store

# THE PETS+ SAMPLE BOX IS A HIT!

It's a wonderful surprise to see what's inside and learn about new brands or other items from established manufacturers.

Heather Miller,  
Just For Pets

GENIUS IDEA!

We loved the variety and plan on bringing in several of the items!

Nancy Guinn, Dog Krazy

Launched in 2021, the PETS+ Sample Box has become a must-have for both retailers and advertisers. More than 700 stores have signed up for the program, and space in each box has sold out! In 2023, we will be sending eight boxes filled with new — or new to them — products to an alternating recipient list of 200 verified U.S. retailers. Participating brands said they saw a surge in orders and gained valuable feedback, all thanks to the box.

Love the program! It's one of the most helpful things we've seen in the industry in our now 40 years in business.

Cory Giles, The General Store

Love love love the sample boxes. I have brought in quite a few products because of them.

Rachael Creech, Adventure Pets

SCAN ME!



**RETAILERS!** Get your hands on the next PETS+ Sample Box by applying at [petsplusmag.com/samplebox](https://petsplusmag.com/samplebox) or via this QR code.

**BRANDS!** Get your products in the PETS+ Sample Box by emailing [desiree@smartworkmedia.com](mailto:desiree@smartworkmedia.com).



AN **ANDIS**  
CREATOR SERIES ORIGINAL



WATCH VIDEO

# ANDIS® CELEBRATES LIFE-CHANGING WORK OF THE GROOMING PROJECT

Our Andis Creator Series highlights partnerships with creators that use Andis tools as a vehicle to drive, inspire and create new opportunities for a more purposeful tomorrow.

The new Series profile spotlights the Kansas City-based non-profit, The Grooming Project, now known as Pawsperity. This innovative organization harnesses the art of pet grooming to help break the cycle of poverty for struggling parents with nowhere to turn. Watch the video to learn more.

Find out more about The Grooming Project and Pawsperity at [www.pawsperity.org](http://www.pawsperity.org)

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