

Pet Food and Supplies - UK - March 2011

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What is this report about?

Functional health, ease of use, indulgence; these are the main drivers in the dynamic pet food market. Contrary to most grocery sectors in 2010, the pet food arena is quite an exciting one to be operating in as the full impact of the recession is yet to be felt. Pet owners are both receptive to change and willing to trade up when it comes to buying food for their pets – even if they stick within the same brand family. New packaging concepts have brought surprising impetus to the market, and during the long dark period of austerity, being able to indulge pets comes as a light relief.

Surrogate children, pampered pets, soul mates; pets are more accessorised than ever before and although overall proportion of household spend hasn't significantly increased over the last five years, a slight growth in pet ownership of both cats and dogs has boosted the market opportunity.

What have we found out?

- The number of UK households with dogs has overtaken cats for the first time in the last five years; however due to the higher number of cats per household, cats remain the largest population with an estimated total of 8.3 million dogs and 8.6 million cats in 2010 the UK.
- Weight control is becoming as relevant to pets as it is to humans with a third of dogs and a quarter of cats considered to be overweight. The growing awareness of pet obesity has prompted a number of targeted initiatives and also provides further opportunities for specific diet foods for certain breeds and ages.
- Dog owners are typically more price-sensitive than cat owners due to the higher volumes of food that dogs consume and have responded by buying different foods such as more complete dry food. Complete dry dog food has grown significantly to be used by four in five dog users, similar to dry cat food.
- Pet treat brands can continue to add value to the category by refocusing on the less mature and relatively underdeveloped cat treat market at the expense of dog treats.
- Another way in which brands can continue to grow sales is by tapping into the trend towards pet parenting, with 70% of pet owners treating their pets with as much care as they would a child, with products such as greetings cards and other gifts.
- The type of pet owned has an impact on the amount of accessories required; cat owners need relatively few 'belongings' and when it comes to toys, dogs are the clear winners (68% of dog owners buy toys compared to 51% of cat owners). However, households with children under 10 provide the biggest motivation to buy any pet accessories, not just toys.

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