

The Grocer

Focus On: Petcare by Ellis Hawthorne (Ellis.Hawthorne@wrbm.com)

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The Story

What price war? As stiffening competition continues to erode prices across grocery, there remains one category where prices are rising and products are getting posher: petcare. Does this mean Britain is a nation of pampered pussies and doted on doggies? Which sectors have driven the market's growth on volumes? Are any parts of the market struggling? Which trends are driving sales? And what's the outlook for the coming year?

Trends:

Wet v dry: There are big discrepancies in the performance of the wet and dry food categories, with wet thriving while dry is struggling, both in cat and dog food. Why is this? Which brands are driving the growth in wet cat and dog food? What are dry brands doing to turn things around? Are any dry brands defying the downturn in dry food?

Health: As it is in human food, health considerations are of growing importance for pet owners when it comes to choosing petcare. Which health considerations are of most importance to pet owners? Which brands and types of food (and treat) are capitalizing on health concerns? How? Are any brands capitalizing on demand for more 'natural' pet foods?

Indulgence: Our research shows that some of the fastest growing petcare brands at present are those that offer animals more indulgent treats and meals. Who are these brands? How do their prices compare to more standard offerings? How are they managing to attract pet owners? And how are they reconciling their indulgent credentials with the health question?

Treats: Sales of pet treats are flying. This feature will pay close attention to the factors, brands and retailers that are driving this growth. What have been the most successful new launches of the past year and what is shaping up to be the most significant movement of the coming year? How much more growth does the market have?

Retailers and own label: This feature will pay close attention to how different retailers are approaching the category, in terms of their own label and branded ranges, merchandising, price, promotions and so on. Own label is booming at present. Why is this? Which retailers are driving the growth in own label? How have their ranges changed in the past year?

Advertising and marketing: This feature will also investigate how the marketing and advertising strategies of the category's biggest players have evolved over the past year and how they will develop in the coming year to sustain growth or return brands to growth.

Innovation: Key to this feature will be a discussion of the latest NPD from the category's brands and own label players, large and small. The feature will explore the market trends that have inspired these innovations and weigh up which new launches are most likely to encourage new trends in the market. We will profile eight of the most interesting new launches in a separate innovation panel.

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?
- We profile four new products or product ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before, including launch date and RSP.