



## Hitting the Slopes

Aug 01, 2014

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When pet owners hit the slopes with their dogs this winter, they'll be seeking cold-weather items designed to keep their dogs warm. Many products are available for winter weather, like jackets and boots, but two main trends are driving sales in this category: functionality and fashion.

"Cold weather apparel is a key category within apparel and within the whole structure of the pet department," said Denise Tedaldi, vice president of

[PetEdge](#). "Coats and hoodies are very strong. Weather and water are the drivers in buying decisions. Fleece lining, quilting, down and rip stop are all key materials."

Jack Savdie, vice president of sales at [Age Group](#), agreed. He said that their bestselling cold weather items are apparel.

"We have quilted coats with extra fill to keep your four-legged friends warm and comfortable," said Savdie, whose company holds the license for Eddie Bauer, Hello Kitty and more. "Our windbreakers are made with rip-stop nylon to withstand outdoor use. We have raincoats and slickers that fully cover your dog's body, all the way down to the paws. We also have reversible vests, hooded sweatshirts and cable-knit sweaters, which are all top sellers."

He said that these bestselling items include added functionality, like reflective piping, removable hoods, reversible and water-resistant features.

### Keeping Warm

[Canada Pooch's](#) bestselling winter product is the Winter Wilderness Jacket. Nicolette Duncan, sales and marketing coordinator, said that features like a durable waterproof shell, faux-down insulation and a fleece lining make it popular.

"It provides your pooch with the best defense for the cold, so he can still get outside and enjoy the great outdoors," she said.

The brand's Cozy Caribou Hoodie is another popular item that combines an ultra-soft cotton exterior and Sherpa lining with a range of fashion-forward colors.

While the products in winter apparel focus on function, design is becoming increasingly important.

At **Dog Gone Smart Pet Products**, Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator **Jaimee Kelsey** said that their products are designed to keep dogs safe and warm in inclement weather, but are also stylish.

“Our Dog Gone Smart Outerwear is a bestseller and features the best of both worlds—style and function,” said Kelsey.

The brand has three styles, **Aspen Parka**, **Trailblazer Jacket** and **NanoBreaker Raincoat**, all with a waterproof zipper feature allowing for easy clipping to any collar or harness.

Like other pet apparel categories, winter weather gear is feeling the impact of larger trends, like the humanization of pets and the emphasis on incorporating fashion trends into pet apparel.

“All pet parents are now humanizing their dogs,” said Savdie. “If they are wearing the latest trends, they want their dog to match them. Our designers here at Age Group shop all major fast fashion retailers including Zara, J. Crew, Ralph Lauren, H&M and Forever 21 just to name a few, looking for the latest trends to copy into the pet category. Needless to say, our apparel styles perform incredibly well.”

**Kelsey said that the Dog Gone Smart brand takes inspiration from skiers and snowboarders for their designs.**

“With the growing trend of the humanization of pets, we’d like to think that our four-legged friends can fit right in on the winter fashion scene alongside their human counterparts, and they deserve to be just as warm and cozy when out in the elements,” said Kelsey.

Sales of winter items reflect that trend. Additionally, Duncan said that owners expect the same quality of outerwear for their pets as they purchase for themselves. She said that they incorporate high-end elements like functional pockets and hoods that snap back in place away from the dog’s face.

**Paw Protection**

Additional items in this category include paw protection. Brands like **Pawz** and **Hugs** manufacture boots that protect a dog’s paws from salty or icy streets.

The key to making this category successful in a store is placement. Savdie said that, volume-wise, the fastest moving department is the front end or checkout section of the store.

“My suggestion to increase sales in any category would be to place the items as close as possible to the register,” he said. “Ever wonder why many drug store chains and retailers now have a whole aisle that you need to walk through just to reach the register? It is all impulse and extremely profitable.”

**Kelsey said they have noticed a positive merchandizing trend for the winter apparel category.**

“We like that we are seeing a trend with pet retailers in creating more distinction in the merchandising displays between fashionable and functional outerwear,” she said.

This is an expanding category, so retailers have the opportunity to maximize sales by incorporating cold-weather gear that is both fashion-forward and functional. And, stay on top of trends.

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