

The Future of Grooming

Grooming suppliers are confident the grooming industry will bounce back as people return to pre-pandemic practices. Amidst inflationary pressure, some grooming manufacturers are certain the past is a predictor of the future and believe pet owners won't scrimp on spending on their pet when they are tightening their belts. Through education and creativity, suppliers have elevated the category and pet owners are demanding organic, non-toxic and eco-friendly products and have expanded the grooming discussion to include how to best address and care for pets' teeth, ears, eyes and paws.

"We anticipate the grooming industry to continue to grow as the world continues to open and return to work," said Michelle Eskowski, Andis Company, Manager Global Solutions - Animal Segment. "Despite some of the inflationary pressures that consumers are feeling now, we know that pet parents typically don't reduce spending when it comes to their pets—we should continue to see growth in the new year. Andis is working hard developing new products and looks forward to a great 2023."

"Due to uncertainty in the world at large and the uncertainty with supply lines, it is extremely difficult to predict anything anywhere," said Mauro Spina, Spina Organics Founder. "We are all hoping that these problems will resolve over the next six to 12 months, which will allow the business overall to bring in new investment, new technologies, and new prosperity."

Pure and Natural Pet expects grooming products to continue to be multi-functional and pet owners will still prioritize ease of use from grooming products. Staying ahead of these trends, "Pure and Natural Pet offers a wide variety of USDA-certified organic products, that address all grooming needs, from tip to tail," said Julie Creed, VP of Sales and Marketing. "The pet grooming market is expected to show significant growth in 2023 and beyond," Creed said. "Retailers are supporting customers with more natural and organic options in grooming for happier and healthier pets. Pet owners have become far more aware of ingredient

panels and are opting to use non-toxic, eco-friendly, USA-made grooming products with improved sustainability."

A considerable focus in grooming during the next couple of years will be a holistic approach to preventative maintenance, said Tommy Shankland, Director of PR for Skout's Honor. "There are a lot of people who look to groomers and the grooming aisle for solutions to everyday pet skin conditions and we are fortunate to have technologies, like Skout's Honor Topical Probiotics, available that can really help make life better for the pets and their parents," Shankland said. "When used regularly, topical probiotics can play a big role in breaking the cycle of treat and repeat we see with a lot of the medicated solutions on the market."

While there are a lot of things to look forward to in the near future, suppliers like earthbath are pragmatic about preparing for the coming months. "Supply chain issues will continue to nag the category for the next 12 to 18 months," said Paul Armstrong with earthbath. "This will continue the seesaw effect one sees on retail shelves with periodic out-of-stocks and brands swapping shelf space in and out."

"Supply chain issues are rampant in the grooming category with challenges at all levels," Armstrong continued. "Raw materials for wipes are also used in PPE (masks, surgical gowns, etc.) so there are issues there, plastics prices have gone through the roof and supplies of bottles and caps can be difficult."

"We are seeing established brands, and newer brands bringing innovative products to the category to answer the demand for more needs-based grooming solutions," said Amy Johnson, Sales and Marketing Associate, earthbath. "The trending 'humanization' of pets is driving this demand as more pet parents become aware of proper grooming routines and overall skin and coat health. We're also seeing more brands making natural claims on formerly conventional products as they're realizing that more and more consumers are interested in natural products. As a pioneer in the natural pet industry, we're committed to constantly improving our

formulations, so they are as natural and effective as possible."

Andis currently sees an increase in demand for grooming products despite an atypical cooler spring season which has delayed the start of the shedding and grooming season, Eskowski said.

"Families bond with their pets at home in between grooming appointments by caring for their coats at home," she said. "As people return to work, and seasons shift, groomers are seeing an increase in appointments and are searching for the right tools for the increased workload."

"I feel like the groomers and the public at large needs more education to understand what products they are purchasing and what they should look for in a quality product and a quality brand," Spina said. "There are many erroneous claims across many brands, due to lack of regulation for marketing claims, which often leads to the client, the salesperson, or the groomer not achieving the desired results. Bottom line is that additional independent education is needed across the board."

Pure and Natural Pets pointed out end users' feeling of the grooming category has evolved from simply shampoo and conditioner to a well-rounded approach to include addressing pets' teeth, ears, eyes and paws. Product education and manufacturers providing resources and choices that address pain points—whether it's pets' symptoms or bathing uncooperative pets at home—have led to more pets regularly receiving the attention and care they need.

"The pet grooming category has grown tremendously in the past few years and the growth is projected to continue," Creed said. "Pet owners are spending more on the health and well-being of their pets as they consider them part of the family. Grooming, once thought of as only shampoo and conditioner, has expanded to teeth, ears, eyes and paws. Wipes and options in waterless grooming have also exploded due to ease of use and the ability to extend bath time freshness. Many of our products are USDA Certified Organic which has seen a heightened interest over the past few years."