

2023 Outlook

Grooming

Grooming suppliers have spent years working hard to educate retailers and pet owners on the products and tools at their disposal to help them take better care of their pets. Their innovation has been guided by personal experience and listening to pet owners' experiences with grooming products. Never satisfied with the status quo, these companies persist at finding new and improved methods for pet owners to ensure their pets have healthy skin and coat.

"When we launched there were very few USDA Certified Organic options," said Julie Creed, VP of Sales and Marketing for Pure and Natural Pet. "We have worked very hard to source the best ingredients possible. We are proud that all of our products are Made in the US. We've been consistent in our messaging and have created education pieces on all of our products. We've worked hard for annual certifications and to be a brand that both retailers and consumers trust for their own family pets. This is one of the many reasons we have amassed more than 50 awards for innovative products, corporate leadership, sustainability and philanthropy."

"Pet King Brands' Zymox Dermatology line is a recognized leader in pet healthcare and grooming categories, recommended by veterinarians and groomers and endorsed by The International Cat Association," said Debra Decker, Director of Marketing for Pet King Brands. "The line has earned trust by resolving ear, skin and mouth conditions for more than 25 years with antibiotic-free, enzyme-based products. At the time Zymox was launched, the awareness of antibiotic resistance was just starting to be discussed in the industry as veterinarians, groomers and pet parents were experiencing frustration with medication failure and side effects. Antibiotic resistance has remained a threat and has fueled the demand for products like Zymox that are safe and continuously effective because the prevalence of pets experiencing ear infections and itchy allergy skin continues to be on the rise."

Best Shot Pet Products has kept a watchful eye on how the humanization

of pets continues to impact the grooming category. "Pet humanization is the natural expression of today's 'pets as family' trend," Dave Campanella, Sales and Marketing Director said. "Those who treat their pets like children are more receptive to products like the ones they use for themselves. Pet companionship and their hygiene upkeep have become more valued especially in the post Covid world. The surge in pet ownership has been a key driving force."

Cosmos Corporation has been responding to the relationship between rising costs and pet owners' shopping habits. "The current state of economic challenges, including rising prices and supply chain disruptions, are impacting all areas of consumer spending, and pet care in general and grooming in particular are no exceptions," Corporate Communications Manager Amy Horton said.

One accomplishment Pure and Natural Pet noted this year was the progression of being more sustainable with its products and with updates to its packaging, Creed said. "The new Grooming and Cleansing Wipes are biodegradable and FSC Certified," she said. "FSC ensures that the product and manufacturer have ethical production. The wood pulp from our wipes is harvested from forests that are responsibly managed, socially beneficial, environmentally conscious. Our popular Ear Cleansing Kit has new and improved eco-friendly packaging that's plant-based and features a compostable ALOX coating. We also have added refill cartridges for our flea & tick spray to cut down on packaging waste."

With the good came challenges that Pure and Natural Pet maneuvered through by planning ahead and having straightforward communication with its retailers.

"No matter how flexible and prepared you are, there are always going to be unforeseen circumstances," Creed said. "Starting with the pandemic, we saw severe packaging shortages as well as greatly increased lead times on many of our ingredients. We have always been honest with our customers and very upfront about any issues that we encounter."

The year presented opportunities

within the grooming category that suppliers capitalized on. Pure and Natural Pet seized the chance to expand its product lines and further its efforts on consumer education.

"This year we relaunched top selling SKUs to be more sustainable with innovative eco-friendly packaging," Creed said. "Customers have been asking for more eco-friendly options and we delivered. We also came out with unscented products that were safe for cats and dogs: our 2-In-1 Hypoallergenic Fragrance-Free Tear-Free Shampoo & Conditioner and Unscented Grooming & Cleansing Wipes."

Pet King Brands evaluated the grooming category and identified several areas of need in the space.

"For example, there is a large percentage of the pet population that struggles with itchy skin," Decker said. "To assist those pets, there is the Zymox Shampoo and Zymox Leave-On Conditioner. However, there is a large subset who has additional skin health needs. Zymox has released new formulations of the shampoo and conditioner. The new Zymox Advanced Enzymatic Shampoo and Zymox Advanced Enzymatic Conditioner include the addition of Avena sativa (oat extract) to hydrate and nourish extremely dry, sensitive, or itchy skin. The focus on pet grooming needs is often on dogs; however, there are many other types of animals who have ear and skin health issues. The advanced enzyme technology that is at the base of all Zymox is very beneficial to cats, horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, birds, chickens, and reptiles. Pet King Brands recently launched a line of Zymox for Cats & Kittens, Zymox Equine Defense for horses and has plans to roll out lines for specialty pets in early 2023."

A growing number of retailers were including wellness products into their grooming regiment, a practice Pure and Natural Pet took note of.

"Grooming is no longer just shampoo; its specific maintenance and preventatives for ear care, paw care, dental care, and much more," Creed said.

"Our team is already focusing on 2023 and new products that will be released at the Global Pet Expo," she added.