

# First Take: Health & Wellness

## VIEWPOINTS

**“Pet healthcare is a huge opportunity for retailers who take time to understand how to address the category.”**

**- Steven Rosenfeld,  
Sturtevant Company**

Health-conscious pet owners are evaluating the extension of health and wellness developments for their pets. This demand for organic and effective solutions calls on probiotics and botanicals, which have gained popularity in the human health industry.

Steven Rosenfeld of Sturtevant Company is optimistic about the influence probiotics will have. He even predicts that by 2021 probiotics will replace antibiotics. “We are targeting the introduction of our first topical probiotic products for small animals in 2018 and plan to add a feline antiseptic formula to our product line,” Rosenfeld said.

Susan Weiss of Ark Naturals sees the company’s brushless toothpaste continuing to drive sales. “Gentle Digest, one of our original products from 1996 that includes prebiotics and probiotics, will see growth,” Weiss said.

Julie Creed of Pura Naturals Pet said their USDA-certified organic health and wellness line has gained popularity and awards for innovation and eco-friendliness. “From nose to tail—we have you covered,” said Creed, referring to their Nose Rescue and Ear Cleansing System, Healing Balm and Paw Rescue and Wipes.

Though Pura Naturals Pet watches industry and category trends, they rely on feedback to stay attuned to pet owners’ demands and offer cutting-edge products. “It’s valuable to incorporate retailer requests as they have a pulse on customers,” she said. Another area the company is excited about is their significant growth in terms of their foot-

print. “Pura Naturals Pet is now in Canada, Mexico, Chile and Korea,” she said. “We have new points of distribution in the works so, it’s an exciting time at the company and our retailers see it, too.”

This year Ark Naturals’ aims to support retailers with effective MAP pricing. Weiss added, “The senior category will continue to grow and retailers should set up senior sets in stores and virtual senior sets on websites.”

Having focused on independent specialty retailers since their inception Rosenfeld said, “There are no plans to alter what has worked so successfully.” He urges retailers to take the category seriously. “A retailer should engage in due diligence before bringing in a Health and Wellness product line,” Rosenfeld, who feels there are too many products today with little or no efficacy and may even harm pets, said, “My word of advice is: Know your source.”

Creed looks at how people start New Year’s Resolutions to get healthier every January and suggests it extend to pets. “Create end caps or boutique tables to highlight the variety of natural wellness products: dental, eye care, ear cleansing, coat & skin and natural treats to promote healthy weight,” she said. “If you have a loyalty program, pre-sell through it. Create in-store events you could tie to fundraisers and leverage social media.”

Retailer education is key for Pura. It has an education series for retailers going into the science and technology of their top SKUs. “Each product has an eco-story beyond what’s on our website,” Creed added. “We focus on why organic is important, what USDA certification means and how to read labels to understand ingredients you are putting on your pets,” she said.

Creed stresses safety as pets are extended family. “What we put on our pets touches many parts of the home. In 2018, we’re looking to create informational videos to educate retailers,” she said. On what retailers must prioritize for success, Creed said, “Organic! Your customers are looking for it. Not just ‘natural’ but certified organic.”

“It’s important that retailers ensure health and wellness products they offer are safe and effective,” Rosenfeld said. “There is a level of trust customers place in stores, and it is the responsibility of retailers to ensure they offer products with results and value,” he said.

“Many retailers spend more time thinking about collars and leashes and glance over health and wellness treatments with little interest,” Rosenfeld added. “The reality is pet healthcare offers a huge opportunity for retailers who take time to understand how to address this important category,” he said.

“I’d love to educate retailers on how to read labels,” said Weiss. “We know ingredient information is written from most to the least but it doesn’t tell the story,” she said pointing out ingredient information only has to equal 100 percent. “It’s easy to play with those percentages when you want an ingredient to have a better position,” she said.

Weiss feels retailers need to take time to educate themselves and their employees. “With so many offerings, consumers are challenged by what is best for their four-legged family,” she said. In 2018, Weiss believes it’s about having the best products in terms of ingredients, practicalities and human understanding. “Ark Naturals does not believe in clogging retailers’ shelves,” Weiss added.

In 2018, Pura will work on a variety of new organic products. “We’re excited about our Flea & Tick Shampoo, a customer request,” Creed said. They will also launch a 2-In-1 Organic Avocado, Olive & Hemp Seed Oil Shampoo & Conditioner and a Fragrance-Free Hypo-Allergenic Shampoo. “We also have a new product for National Dog Dental Month in February, that’s sure to have all smiling,” she added.

Rosenfeld said the industry can expect several new offerings from Sturtevant Company in 2018. “We are anticipating our first topical probiotic products for small animals during the second half of 2018. We will also have a feline antiseptic powder and a canine ear powder soon.”