

First Take

Grooming

The grooming category has grown to include product offerings for all type and size of pets. Manufacturers have looked toward consumer and retailer feedback to ensure individual needs are met. Alongside this, the new year has ample opportunities for growth, and category leaders are taking advantage of the several prospects the year has to offer.

"In an increasingly crowded market for pet grooming products, I have decided to add a ground-breaking line extension to our products range," said Mauro Spina, Owner of Spina Organics. "I think it's time for us, as an industry leader, to take pet grooming to the next level—and this is exactly what we intend to do with our new Spa Concept. It will of course reflect our commitment to natural plant extracts and certified organic, vegan ingredients, without the addition of any synthetic ingredients. At the same time, it will be even more sophisticated than our standard line. For example, the Spa Concept will include not only a luxurious dog body wash and a refined fur detangler, but also a detoxifying, soothing mud mask and relaxing bath salts for pets."

Category trends tend to dictate where the growth of the category is generated. According to Spina, education has become a huge factor in the evolution of grooming. Spina has hoped that consumers continue to research labels and ingredients to ensure pets receive the best quality of care and products. "Rather than what I expect to shift, I'll tell you what I hope will shift," said Spina. "Our industry should become more aware of what the labels tell. For example, about the presence of sodium lauryl sulfate or sodium laureth sulfate—two ingredients that can affect a pet's skin in devastating ways. I believe groomers should also realize that what is too good to be true tends indeed to be too good to be true. This applies for example to pet shampoos that can be diluted 50:1. It might look like a great deal, but all you get is just a plain, soapy solution, with no benefits whatsoever for the pets."

Pure and Natural Pet has been expanding its reach with the opening of several distribution centers. The com-

pany is looking forward to seeing how these distribution centers will positively impact retail partners in the coming year. "The new year is looking great for Pure and Natural Pet as we've had steady growth and opened a few new distribution channels that benefit our retailers," said Julie Creed with Pure and Natural Pet.

Alongside this, "Pure and Natural Pet has already had a focus on our new grooming products that we will be unveiling at the Global Pet Expo. As always, we're ingredient focused and are excited to roll out new SKUs with new ingredients that will have a multi-functional approach."

Creed mentioned the company has noticed the growth within the category through the increase in sales of several of its products. "We've seen a lot of growth and an upswing in sales with our 2-in-1 products," Creed said. "Our clientele has busy lives. By introducing time-saving products that have multiple functions, our customers not only save time but also understand that Pure and Natural Pet never sacrifices the quality of our products. Customers are also looking for more eco-friendly options."

While education and reading labels has been a huge part of the growth within the category, Creed acknowledged consumers' demands for sustainable products. "Sustainability and natural products are absolutely trending and becoming more of a requirement to meet customer expectations," she said. "This has been a hallmark of the Pure and Natural Pet brand, and we're always looking for ways to improve products, based on new technology, which has led to more sustainable products and eco-friendly packaging. "Pure and Natural Pet has always been big on education. No matter the platform, we provide plenty of free digital marketing tools that aid education. Yes, as we've expanded into vertical markets and affiliates, there is often not a sales associate, so educational tools are not only beneficial but critical in informing the end customer."

Wahl Clipper expanded on what the new year means and brings for the company. "As the No. 1 brand in pet groom-

ing, we are working on building our core business. We have some great new pet clippers being launched in 2023 including the upgraded Pet Pro + at mass, a new cordless lithium-ion clipper on Amazon and expansion of our nail grinder and shampoo line into new retailers. 2023 is going to be a great year for Wahl pet and we look forward to growing the categories with our retail partners," said Steven Yde with Wahl Clipper.

"As adoption of dogs skyrocketed during the pandemic, the increase in neglected dogs has skyrocketed with the rabid inflation and economic downturn," Yde continued. "Wahl is committed to saving as many dogs as possible in 2023 from 'death' row. Bringing awareness to this tragedy will never be so important as it will be in 2023."

While Bass Brushes has been able to perfect its grooming brushes within the pet industry, Joel Weinstein, VP Sales and Marketing, specified what the company will be focusing on in 2023, as well as what the company predicts the new year has in store for the industry overall. "What we do every year is market our products and raise the bar for the pet industry," Weinstein said. "We are known for over 40 years as a luxury brush maker with an emphasis on natural materials. We are the No. 1 natural brush company in the world at this point. So, we will be focusing on that—that's our broad mission and something we focus on every year. Specifically for 2023, I think what you are seeing is just a further reemergence from the Covid era, that's kind of what I started to see last year and especially toward the end of the year and we anticipated that's going to continue. What does that mean practically? Well, I think that tradeshow are going to get busier. Even with the economy teetering a little bit, I do think we are going to see some more action at the tradeshow. Now, it is a little bit ironic because Covid did change the landscape kind of forever in many ways. I think we are now seeing a little bit of the pendulum swing back the other way—people aren't as concerned about it."