

Thought Leadership in Grooming

The leaders within the grooming category that continue to rise are the companies who tackled unexpected opportunities without hesitation, proving to themselves and retailer partners that when under pressure, these manufacturers can swiftly deliver creative solutions—even going so far as creating products for retailers the company didn't currently offer. The companies who stand out pay attention to what is happening within the grooming category. Whether it's providing a new puppy kit—an arsenal of supplies designed for puppy-related issues like potty-training and chewing—for households with pandemic puppies or supplies that detangle, soothe itchy skin and chapped paw pads or attack odors, manufacturers are aware of the fact there are more pet owners, and these pet parents are attempting to groom their pets at home. Suppliers are addressing two fronts: retailers who need to understand the products to speak knowledgeably and fill shelves and pet owners who have learned they can expect more from the category and are thoughtful about the ingredients they are grooming their pets with.

"We have launched new and innovative product offerings that respond to today's consumer preferences and demands, such as our recent introduction of TropiClean Essentials, a new line of sulfate-free pet shampoos and refreshing sprays in trendy extract blends," said Amy Horton, Corporate Communications Manager. "We also look for opportunities to strengthen our core lines to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, with the growing retail popularity of our TropiClean PerfectFur line of shampoos specifically designed for each dog's unique coat type, groomers were also seeing demand from their clients for these shampoos, so we recently made several of the PerfectFur formulas available in professional sizes. This allows us to serve pet parents when they take their pets to the groomers and when they bathe their pets at home."

"Ingredient disclosure continues to be at the forefront as our company rallies for more transparency among

manufacturers and marketers," said David Campanella, Sales and Marketing Director for Best Shot Pet Products. "Unfortunately, trending sustainability concerns are overshadowed by blatant greenwashing and fear marketing. The concerns appear more as misleading pandering for sales rather than genuine environmental concerns."

Recent product launches and raising awareness these solutions are available to pet parents is one area of the grooming category Pet King Brands is directing attention towards. "Pet King Brands recently announced new remedy products at SuperZoo 2022 which include new formulations of our popular ZYMOX Shampoo and Conditioner extending the line to include solutions with oat extract to help dogs and cats with extremely dry, itchy, irritated or sensitive skin," said Debra Decker, Director of Marketing. "We also shared the good news about new species-specific ZYMOX products for cats and kittens, and a new look and formulation for our line for horses and livestock. In step with the company's more than 25-year history of providing veterinarian-recommended dermatologic topicals that get their effectiveness from enzymes and not antibiotics, the new products will share the same proven advanced technology that has helped countless animals find comfort and relief."

In the coming months, Andis is continuously working to bring new products to the market to help groomers in their day-to-day routine, said Michelle Eskowski, Andis' Manager Global Solutions, Animal Segment. "We are happy to announce the launch of our 8-Piece Adjustable Blade Attachment Comb set," she said. "These combs were designed to work with our adjustable blade (sizes nine to 40) with stainless-steel tines designed to go through the coat easier. Andis is also working on new cordless products with exciting innovation we plan to launch later this year."

At this point in 2022, Pure and Natural Pet is addressing added meetings post-SuperZoo and laying the groundwork for next year. "Our development team is already focusing on products that will launch in 2023 that will round

out some of our current categories," said Julie Creed, VP of Sales and Marketing for Pure and Natural Pet. "We are also reevaluating all SKUs and looking for creative ways to improve sustainability."

One area of the grooming category Pure and Natural Pet Products is homing in on is continually teaching consumers there are resources available to treats cats to ensure a comfortable quality of life. "We're really good about education and created a whole series that dovetails into each SKU," Creed said. "We're finding that there needs to be more education and products for cats that will keep them healthy and happy."

"We are always looking at new technologies and we're looking at continuing to grow in a thoughtful and meaningful way for our brand," said Jenny Gilcrest, Skout's Honor's VP of Marketing. "We've been intentional about does this make sense? Does that make sense? We don't want to go into a product category or a line just because it sounds good or because we think we can make money off of it. We want to make sure it aligns with is it the best in this category with the technology we have at our hands? Can we make something better than what currently exists? If we can't, then it's usually a quick no. We don't want to be another me-too. None of our products are like anything else in our categories they're in. With grooming specifically, there's still some spots we can play in to be able to leverage that probiotic technology because it's so unique and it really does solve a lot of problems and build health and wellness for pets overall. There are some things we're looking at there for expanding the line to really be able to leverage that technology in new ways. We do have a couple of new products coming out towards the end of the year and then early next year. In that category we're also looking at expanding how can we continue to be a leader in grooming by sheer space on the shelf. We're always innovating. There will be new things coming in 2023 that people can get excited about."

"We never rest, we have a few inno-

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vative pet-friendly options on the drawing board, so stay tuned,” said Jane DeMeulemester, VP of Finance for Banixx. “We also think there are several areas that could use extra attention and education. Two immediately come to mind. One is Ringworm. There are so many treatments out there, some not very pet friendly at all but none seems to address the importance of treating the pet environment along with treating the pet. We stress this on our Ringworm page and even put it on our Pet bottle label. Second and this is a big one too. Pets with itchy, dry skin problems. There can be many causes and sometimes the source is due to multiple factors. Too often, the treatment is applied but the origin of the issue is never addressed. Admittedly, determining the root cause can be quite difficult, but generally there is a list of ‘culprits’ that can be eliminated leading to some reduction to this pesky problem. It does take time and patience and we address the ‘culprits’ on our Itchy Skin Yeast Infection Dog page.”

Suppliers in the grooming space uncovered unexpected opportunities through listening to what retailers and pet owners needed and paying attention to what was missing on store shelves. They stepped up with creative out of the box answers to issues that affected pets and filled gaps within the category with new products.”

“Supply chain hurt a lot of our competitors,” Campanella said. “By leveraging our company’s 30 years of experience, history, and purchasing power, Best Shot successfully secured long-term supply agreements that guaranteed our ongoing commitments to our customers. There were some notable brand mergers and acquisitions within the grooming category the past two years that unfortunately left some of their distributors feeling vulnerable and/or dismissed. Furthermore, many end-users became suspicious of now sourcing through a much larger business entity and/or complained of losing the personalized service and relationships of a smaller company. That spells opportunity.”

“The last few years have been difficult for everyone,” Creed said. “Anyone still

in business is a survivor. Most companies are learning to do more with less to streamline, and we have followed suit.”

Pure and Natural Pets has discovered noteworthy opportunities within. “Affiliate programs have provided some interesting growth opportunities with retailers outside of the traditional pet arena that we might not have reached using traditional avenues,” she added.

“Obviously during supply chain issues, being a younger company than other brands in our categories, we were able to move very quickly and be agile in terms of filling shelves for our customers when they weren’t able to get supplies from other vendors,” Gilcrest said. “We manufacture everything in the United States, so we didn’t have to deal with a lot of those supply chain issues that a lot of people did. We’re also very agile in terms of our ability to source, create and build new products as needed. That was something that came out of the pandemic where one of our huge retail customers came to us and they were virtually out of one of their top selling items that we didn’t even make in that category. They asked us if we were able to make it. We were able to come up with something within about eight weeks and turn it around and now it’s our top selling SKU. That was a huge opportunity in the face of a challenge for our customers that we were able to follow through on and it turned out really well for us. Now it’s our No. 1 SKU. It’s Super Sour. Anti-Chew Spray that we focused heavily on at SuperZoo. It’s something we weren’t planning on making, but we saw an opportunity and we were able to solve a problem for our retailers who needed it when they couldn’t get it. We made something better, and we were able to fill that spot and it paid off for everybody.”

Category leaders have identified being available to their retailer partners as a top priority in their efforts to continue propelling the grooming space forward.

“At Cosmos Corporation, which manufactures TropiClean and other brands, we manufacture 96 percent of our items at our headquarters in the greater St. Louis area,” Horton said. “Being centrally located and under one roof helps us manage supply chain costs and minimize freight haul distances. We’ve also

dual-sourced major components and ingredients to manage supply availability. We’re investing in equipment and automation and addressing other continuous improvement initiatives to help increase efficiency and manage costs. Maintaining clear communication and being positioned to respond to emerging customer needs has also been key to developing long-term, mutually beneficial industry relationships.”

“Ongoing innovation is how we stay relevant,” Campanella said. “Working together is what propels the category forward. However, integrity is why our customers continue to believe and support us.”

“We are very accessible to our retailers,” Creed said. “We participate in the major tradeshow and have constant communication from our sales and marketing team. We’ve propelled the category forward by launching new products in our key categories and by making enhancements that benefit our cherished family pets.”

“That’s something that we have really leaned into this year,” Gilcrest said of being available to Skout’s Honor’s retailer partners. “Our grooming product line is just now hitting that wave where we have a more dominant presence on pet specialty shelves nationwide in Canada and some of the international markets, we play in. We’re now at that place where we do have that placement and that is a challenge and that has been an important thing to us. We want to make sure we’re maintaining that direct relationship as much as possible because our product does have a unique technology aspect to it where it requires that education or even anecdotal information about these products. Our tagline is that we make life-changing pet essentials so at this point we have so many testimonials and stories and just little tidbits that help at the retail level to be able to help associates differentiate why our products are so special.”

“Banixx remains a lower priced but premium quality supplier of animal health care products. Moreover, Banixx exceeds with its retail and distributor partners by offering products that treat a variety of ailments as opposed to offering a different SKU for each ailment,” said DeMeulemester.