

According to the *Pet Population Report*, commissioned by the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA), the UK has a pet population of 51 million, with 45% of households having a furry (or scaly) friend. By far the most popular pets are dogs (nine million) followed by cats (eight million). And with a recent UK survey from natural pet food producer Freshpet finding that a third of respondents actually prefer their pets to their partners, this is a category definitely worth putting some thought into.

Mintel says that the 'humanization' of pets has paved the way for premiumization in the pet food sector, with many consumers treating their pets as family members: "Trends in the human market can be clearly seen in pet food, with a focus on naturalness, free-from diets and high quality ingredients coming to the fore. With obesity rates amongst UK pets at an all-time high, diet-friendly products can tap into pet owners' desire to spoil pets while addressing health concerns."

The research company found that over half of pet owners place importance on scrutinizing the ingredients in the pet food they buy, checking that there are no hidden 'nasties'.

Crossover trends

"The natural pet food sector is performing very well," says Deborah Burrows, owner of Healthy Pet Store in Totten. "Commercial food manufacturers are either improving their ingredients by removing grains due to customer demand, and/or increasing meat content, or trying to reposition their current range as more natural

Cool for cats (and dogs)



Image: Courtesy of Seagreens Trust

Are you making the most of the pooch pound? Do you even have a pet section? If not, you probably should. Animal-loving Brits are increasingly concerned about what goes into their pets' food – especially in light of a rising obesity problem – and they are seeking out natural options. **Jane Wolfe** reports

through the use of images on packaging.

"Customers are astute and keen to read the ingredients listing. People are interested in feeding their animals in a more natural, species-appropriate way. Of course, natural feeding has

been present for many years before commercial food was invented, but now with the interest in low-carb, high-protein diets for humans, similar diets for dogs and cats are becoming popular."

Henrietta Morrison, founder and CEO of Lily's

Kitchen, agrees that people are starting to ask the right questions about their pet food and investigating what they're serving their pets. "Quite right!," she says. "We are always encouraged to see a growing demand for pet food that genuinely

makes a difference to the health of cats and dogs. Growth is being driven by education. Consumers have already made huge strides in the human food sector, and now we're making the same changes in our attitudes towards what we feed our furry friends."

Lily's products are produced using fresh, natural ingredients, with no meat meal, animal derivatives or rendered meat, and the brand gives a nod to the humanization of pets with mealtime-specific products such as its Great British Breakfast and Sunday Lunch for Dogs.

In the raw

Opinions differ markedly as to what constitutes 'natural feeding'. One area of contention is raw feeding – a diet made up of raw meat, offal and raw bone, together with fruit and veg, oils, nuts and seeds. These diets can be DIY but there are an increasing number of commercially prepared options.

"We offer a range of foods to make up a good raw food diet for cats and dogs," explains Burrows. "These include a large range of our own ready-to-use minces with the correct bone and offal content, chunks of meat and bones, and 'whole prey' such as rabbit, quail etc, which we collectively call DIY raw. This is by far our most popular range."

"The raw food diet is here to stay, and was never a fad as some wanted us to believe. The PFMA has had to recognize raw feeding, and indeed one brand has

SILVER SOLUTION

With the increasing growth in popularity for human natural and organic healthcare and skincare solutions, more people are seeking efficacious solutions for their pets, produced using safe and natural ingredients.

"For people who appreciate the benefits of natural products themselves it makes perfect sense that they should want to use natural quality products that work on their pets and

avoid using synthetic chemicals whenever possible," says Clive Walker, sales & marketing manager at Nature's Greatest Secret, which offers a range of natural products for pets based on colloidal silver, including drops to help with ear infections, a common problem in dogs. "We are seeing more and

more people choosing natural remedies over pharmaceuticals for their pets, resulting in strong growth in the market for naturals."

The brand's consultant, conventionally and homeopathically trained vet Tim Couzens, explains the benefits of colloidal silver. "It's good in general for any bacterial, viral or fungal

infection, as well as for first aid to treat wounds and other minor injuries such as cuts and abrasions. It's great for some ear infections that fail to respond to conventional medicine and also for some eye problems like conjunctivitis. It also seems to help dental disease, particularly gingivitis. Personally I have found the shampoo great for chronic skin conditions as part of a holistic approach."



excelled at marketing itself towards the veterinary sector as well, which has been – and still is, unfortunately – rather ‘anti-raw’. There is a plethora of commercial raw food manufacturers now.”

And now for something completely different...

The polar opposite of raw feeding (only in the case of pets, however, not humans!) is vegan, a controversial choice as its critics say it goes against dogs’ and cats’ ‘natural’ diets. However, demand appears to be growing, and it is a good fit for health stores on a number of levels.

“Since 2005, when we started making dog and cat food, we have seen attitudes change dramatically as veganism has become far more mainstream,” says Darrell de Vries, director, Benevo Vegan Pet Foods. “Initially, we found people struggled to take the idea of vegan pet food seriously, but we have seen demand grow quite rapidly in the last 18 months in particular, with our products added to more natural food wholesalers. Most recently we’ve listed with Queenswood, following earlier success with Suma and Essential.

“It feels as though the concept has hit a kind of critical mass where enough people understand why we do it and how it works. This year we won a Queen’s Award for Enterprise for our growth in exports, and that was a moment where we felt the concept of vegan pet food had come of age.”

Jeroen Schweitz from Yarrah Organic Petfood says that the UK is one of the strongest markets for its vegan range. “This is partly due to the fast-growing vegan trend in human food, which is making it more and more acceptable for owners to also feed their pets vegan food (when needed). Secondly, the organic market is seeing strong growth. Yarrah is the only certified organic vegan food, so dog owners know they are not feeding their dog GMOs, nor is their pet food laced with chemicals, colourings or preservatives.”

“Consumers have already made huge strides in the human food sector, and now we’re making the same changes in our attitudes towards what we feed our furry friends”

“We only stock foods for cats and dogs, and since they are both carnivorous (although dogs can thrive for some time on a non-meat based diet with the addition of supplements), a vegan/vegetarian diet is not species appropriate,” argues Burrows. “Cats are obligate carnivores, meaning they must eat meat to survive, and have absolutely no dietary requirement for carbohydrate or vegetables/fruit. Dogs also have no dietary requirement for carbohydrates and also have a body designed to eat meat, and so in my personal opinion, vegetarian/vegan cat and dog foods should not even exist. They are so heavily supplemented anyway, one has to ask

the question why, and whose ethics are they catering for?”

Schweitz knows that feeding a dog vegan food can be controversial for some.

“It is up to each individual to determine if the vegan diet is right for their pet. We address particular problems with our

vegan recipes, but we also know that the philosophy/lifestyle of a dog owner also often plays a role.”

“It can initially seem as though we are breaking some fundamental law of nature,” de Vries says. “Often the people who are most alarmed at the idea of vegan pet food have misunderstood a couple of key concepts. Firstly, ‘vegan’ doesn’t mean ‘salad’ or ‘herbivore’. The second misconception is often the idea of what is and is not ‘natural’. After all how would an African wild cat have ever caught itself a 300kg tuna fish from the Pacific Ocean?”

Nutritional needs

Both Benevo and Yarrah stress that their vegan products are nutritionally complete for the animals they are created for. “Benevo dog and cat foods are formulated to be complete nutrition, so they have all the protein, vitamins and minerals needed,” says de Vries. “Cats in particular have requirements that are very different to dogs and humans, so we need taurine, vitamin A and other essential

nutrients that cats can’t produce for themselves. These days we can obtain these from non-animal sources.”

Schweitz says that Yarrah doesn’t make vegetarian cat food due to the taurine issue. “If we were to consider making a vegan cat food, the amount of taurine we would have to add would no longer allow it to be certified organic.”

The brands are both positive about the future growth of the vegan pet food category. “We are sure that over time, feeding dogs a vegan diet will become less polarizing, less strange once consumers better understand the reasons for doing so,” says Schweitz.

De Vries agrees: “In the foreseeable future, it is clear that a growing number of consumers will be willing to try vegan pet foods, which presents an opportunity for retailers in the independent sector who need to find ways to keep customers coming back. Pet food is a regular purchase that will guarantee you see that customer again.”

Hot Stocks

Sea-sourced nutrients

Seagreens Pet & Equine Granules are easily digested pure seaweed granules, described as great balancers of a pet’s nutritional profile, regulating metabolism, strengthening immunity and vitality. A natural prebiotic and antioxidant, the product can be helpful for weight regulation and obesity.

Faithful friend

Faith in Nature offers a range of natural pet shampoos to clean and freshen, including Faithful Friend Fresh Dog Coconut Shampoo with organic coconut oil and Dirty Dog Conditioning Shampoo with Tea Tree Oil.

Fancy a cuppa?

Doggy’s Cuppa is an eight-strong line of cold brews combining human-grade herbs designed to address a range of issues. Calming

Brew incorporates lemon balm, hawthorn, valerian root, St John’s wort and peppermint to help alleviate unease and stress.

Vital nutrients

Higher Nature Pets Vitality is a supplement designed to support joint and muscle health with a combination of glucosamine, chondroitin, green lipped mussel and MSM. Taken by mixing into food, it is suitable for both cats and dogs.

Hemp help

Charlotte’s Web Paws Hemp Extract Oil For Adult Dogs is designed to maintain cognitive function, assist in normal hip and joint mobility, support the immune system, calm, aid the digestive tract and sustain blood sugar levels.

Wild things

WildWash produces a range of natural shampoos and cosmetics for pets, including WildWash PET Purrfect Cat Shampoo – a quick-rinsing formula which is kind to the skin and incorporates aloe vera along with a catnip infusion.



Benevo Vegan Cat & Dog Foods

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Since 2005, Benevo's award winning vegan pet foods have provided healthy, ethical and environmentally-friendly alternatives, with no compromise on nutrition.

With professionally formulated plant-based recipes, these nutritionally complete foods contain all the essential nutrients and vitamins required for the good health and well-being of cats and dogs.

Tailor made to meet the special requirements of naturally carnivorous cats, Benevo Vegan Adult Cat Food is an excellent, entirely meat-free alternative to dried kibble. Benevo's dog food range features a unique wheat-free recipe, ideal for those with food sensitivities, includes an organic option for adult dogs, as well as Benevo Puppy Food for growing pups.

Bug Bakes

Bug Bakes
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Bug Bakes are the UK's first dog treat made with sustainable insect protein - cricket flour! Our human grade, hypoallergenic cricket flour is a great source of animal protein for your dog, while having far less environmental impact than traditional sources of meat. These healthy biscuits are hand made in the UK and use organic certified, British grown oats, carrots and parsnips. No preservatives or artificial colourings/flavourings are used. In addition, 5 pence from every bag sold is donated to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. Good for your dog and good for the planet!



Natural Healing for Pets

Helios Homeopathy
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At Helios we know the healing benefits that homeopathy and natural plant based products can bring to all creatures great and small. Our pet care range covers a wide variety of minor ailments and first aid situations for pets and comprises of a 24 remedy homeopathic kit, a natural healing beeswax balm, an SLS free botanical shampoo and a combination flower essence for those emergency situations.



Nature's Greatest Secret 10PPM Premium Colloidal Silver

OPTIMISED ENERGETICS
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Pet owners who appreciate the antibacterial benefits of Colloidal Silver on themselves will need little persuasion to purchase our best selling 10ppm premium Silver solution for pets. Good bacteria is anaerobic and bad bacteria is aerobic. So for survival bad bacteria needs oxygen. The presence of colloidal silver near a virus, fungus, bacterium or any other single celled pathogen disables its oxygen metabolism enzyme. Within a few minutes, the pathogen suffocates and dies, it is then cleared out of the body by the immune, lymphatic and elimination systems. Unlike pharmaceutical antibiotics, which destroy beneficial enzymes, colloidal silver leaves these tissue-cell enzymes intact.



The NEW Yarra Organic Pet Food

Yarra Organic Pet Food
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Yarra is more than natural, Yarra's complete range of dog and cat food has been certified organic since 1992. We have never cut corners, we firmly believe that making the best certified organic pet food means so much more than just "natural". Yarra proudly presents our further improved recipes and new packaging designs. Yarra is now even better positioned to meet the market trends; organic, chicken/meat as first ingredient, many grain free recipes, fully traceable, and just as important, the highest regard for animal welfare of any brand.



Saint Come Aromasprays

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100% vegan & natural Saint Come's Aromasprays contain only 100% pure premium grade essential oils botanical & chemotype defined. Without phthalates, terpene or other harmful toxins, propellant gas or suspicious synthetic chemicals, benzene or formaldehydes, these room sprays are safe for everyone in the family including your pets- and perfect for the most harmonious family atmosphere!

Choose from (5) five delicious scent- Lemon Cedar, Lavender Rosemary, Orange Palmarosa, Thyme-Cinnamon, or Mint-Eucalyptus. Stored in recyclable bottles and lasting over 500 sprays per bottle, one pump covers 10 square meters in a room. It's an air freshener you won't want to live without.

