



Health and wellness will be among the top concerns for pet owners going into 2021.
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Trending in 2021: Health and wellness in the pet space



Lindsay Beaton January 13, 2021

2020's pandemic has brought the need to stay healthy into sharp focus, and that focus will continue in 2021.

In the January 2021 issue of Petfood Industry magazine, the top two trends as dictated by pet food industry pro-

professionals — sustainability and e-commerce — dominated the conversation. But a third trend came in close to the top, and we're going to take a look at it now.

Health and wellness in pet food

The global pandemic in 2020 put health and wellness in the spotlight, and pet owners expanded that focus to their

pets. That natural extension, perhaps enhanced by work-from-home orders all over the world that led people to spend more time with their pets, is expected to shape the way pet food customers shop in 2021.

“Obviously the functionality of pet food products and contributing to healthier lifestyles for pets has been going on for a long time,” said Jared Koerten, head of pet care research for [Euromonitor International](#). “What we've seen with the pandemic is that people are more intensely focused on their health than ever. People are realizing that a lot of the factors that contribute to the pandemic and people getting really sick are related to your health and underlying conditions. So I think people are refocusing on their own health and, as we know, as people examine their own diets they do the same with their pets. I think you'll see a continued focus on healthy functional foods for pets.”

Ingredients for functional health support

Of course, pet food ingredients are going to play a key role in providing the health and wellness products that pet

owners are looking for.

“We are seeing strong interest in foods and ingredients that will boost immunity in humans and, similarly, we will see this trend extend to pets and pet food,” said Juan Gomez-Basauri, Ph.D., global director at [Alltech](#).

“Ingredients that fit into a category with immune benefits (vitamins, minerals like zinc, probiotics, prebiotics, etc.) will be given more attention. ‘Immunonutrition’ is a term I have referred to before and will continue to emphasize how these ingredients affect the microbiome to help address specific conditions and issues related to the immune system.”

What kinds of wellness claims might pet owners be looking for in 2021?

“We are seeing increased demand for functional ingredient solutions featuring support for skin, digestion, circulation, bone strength, joint integrity and anxiety,” said Mary Joe Fernandez, global vice president of sales and business development for [Layn Natural Ingredients, TruGro](#). “Most pets have specific health support requirements; in-

creasingly pet owners are looking for more than just standard nutrients and are turning to products with ingredients that have been shown to support these needs.”

Making the most of meeting customer needs

There are always challenges and opportunities in meeting the needs of pet owners; health and wellness desires

are no exception.

“This is an opportunity for the pet industry as a whole, particularly given the flood of information accessible on- line, to find a way to stand out with a clear health message that consumers will understand and believe,” said Jeffrey Alix, global head of business development, companion animals for [Veramaris V.O.F.](#) (a joint venture of DSM and Evonik). “The combined results of our 2020 consumer studies in the U.S. and United Kingdom indicated that 28.7% of pet parents wanted to see that their pet’s food has been fortified with vitamins and/or minerals and 25.1% wanted to see their pet’s food fortified with omega-3 EPA & DHA. This was substantiated by additional results showing the top three key benefits these same parents were looking for the food were ‘Supports bone and joint health in the aging process’, ‘Essential to healthy skin, coat, joints, eyes and brain’ and ‘Supports the immune system.’”

It’s likely to be a long-term focus for pet owners at this point, as 2020’s call for staying well as burned itself into the minds of people all over the world.

“COVID-19 has further shifted consumers towards ways to keep themselves and their love ones healthy,” said Alix. “Even if [the virus] gets under control the population will not forget the need to keep themselves healthy and maintain a strong immunity.”

Read the companion article, "2 top trends for 2021 according to the pet food industry," published in the January 2021 issue of
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