



2021 PET FOOD TRENDS

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The Consumer Products industry has seen significant shifts over the last year and Pet Food is no exception. In 2020 not only did people buy more for their pets, but they also welcomed new furry companions into their families. According to the Pet Food Industry, [25%](#) of dog or cat owners added a pet to their household in 2020. Among those who acquired or adopted pets, 15% reported doing so at least partly due to COVID-19. With an increase in working from home, many pet owners have built stronger bonds with their pets and as a result, many feel inclined to pamper their pets. As the Millennial and Gen Z populations dominate as pet owners, we continue to see that they value pets as an extension of their close family. Some pet owners would even consider [going into debt](#) if it meant providing the best medical care for their pets.

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SOURCE

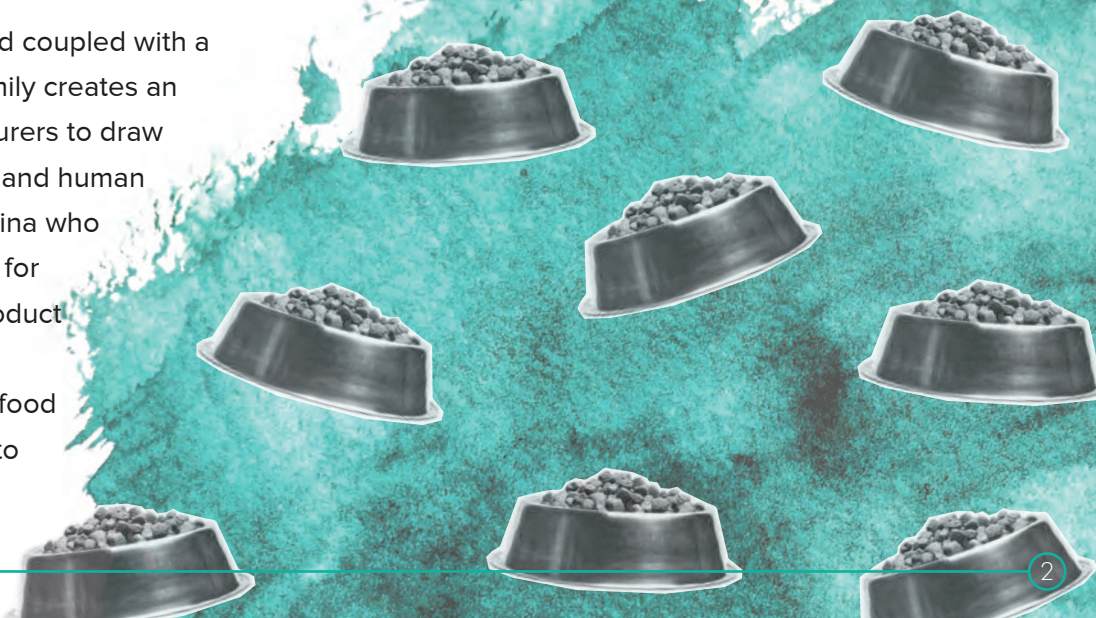
Pets provide support for people in an irreplaceable way, in many cases boosting mental health and aiding in cases of loneliness. We have found the key consumer trends driving the pet food industry include humanization of pet diets, desire for sustainability, health-consciousness, elevated treats, and online shopping preferences.

TREND #1

The Blurred Line between Human and Pet Food

As years go by, [we've seen](#) pets in many cases have become part of household families. That trend has since accelerated given the pandemic's impact on the increased time at home. As people are spending more time with their furry family, they have become increasingly aware of their pet's health and care about their diets. Despite a constrained economy, pet owners still seek the best value and quality for their pets. We see consumer purchasing habits of pet food growing more like their own consumption habits. Foods with fresh ingredients, superfoods, whole grain, and high protein are a few which have caught on. It's no surprise that many of these diet trends mirror similar food trends seen in the broader CP industry. According to a [Packaged Facts survey](#), pet owners are fairly open to new types of foods with over half (51%) of pet owners like the idea of new types of pet food and 42% like the idea of refrigerated and [fresh-made food](#) specifically.

The recent spike in pet parenthood coupled with a growing desire to treat pets as family creates an opportunity for pet food manufacturers to draw more direct parallels between pet and human food. Take for example Nestle Purina who released a [Fancy Feast cookbook](#) for humans inspired by their latest product line launch this year. Appealing to consumers through human-grade food and accessories could contribute to greater future growth.





TREND # 2

Desire for Sustainable and Value-Driven Brands

Consumers are looking for pet food and treat options that are sustainable, traceable, and responsibly sourced. It's critical to raise awareness about the sourcing and manufacturing process through marketing and packaging strategies. Take [The Farmer's Dog](#) who is growing in popularity because of their personalized food subscription service coupled with a promise that their food is tested on humans.

Not only is the pet food itself becoming better for the environment, so is the packaging. Improving the shelf life and quality through use of resealable pouches rather than traditional tape or string can make a difference in longevity particularly for specialty foods and treats. For example, [Open Farm has partnered with Loop](#) to pioneer the reusable container program for pet food.

Looking beyond ingredients and packaging, consumers are gravitating towards brands who are mission-driven in terms of reducing their footprint and contributing towards a more sustainable future. Pay attention to how corporate social responsibility initiatives promote brand loyalty.

TREND # 3

Sought-after Health Benefits from Supplements

Pet owners aspire to have equal, or sometimes more, levels of health and wellness for their pets as they do for themselves. Just as people have dietary needs that require supplements, pets do as well. Better supplements are in high demand as animal health awareness rises. Pet supplement sales [reached \\$800 million in 2020](#), up 21% year over year, and will continue to rise throughout 2021.

Pet food supplements such as vitamins, fish oil, probiotics, and even CBD are rising in popularity similar to how humans are paying more attention to their health and ensuring they have the right balance of nutrients to lead a healthier lifestyle. In fact, many companies have started offering pet products featuring the hemp derivative to target health-conscious consumers interested in natural remedies

to address issues including anxiety, pain management, and inflammation for both themselves and their pets. We see parallels here with consumers preference of sustainably sourced products that are inspired by similar human-food trends.

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TREND #4

Convenience & Elevation of the Treat Category

Pet treats have grown in popularity as consumers aim to pamper their pets. Pet owners also view them as a great alternative to full meals especially when on-the-go. We see [Nestlé and Mars Inc.](#), who control about 43% of the global pet food market, aiming to defend share by investing in emerging pet foods and snacks. Offering sample packs for snacking is a creative tactic to provide consumers with more variety while encouraging trials of new products.

Treats provide opportunities for pet owners to bond with their pets and spark joy. A few notable treat categories that will continue to gain traction include comforting or indulgent treats and digestive health treats. Marketing treats which relate to shared human experiences is a great tactic to convince pet owners of the joyful memories they can make together with their dogs.

TREND #5

Online Pet Food Purchasing Continues to Rise

Online shopping for pet food and products has continued to increase in part due to the pandemic but also from the convenience factor. [Packaged Facts](#) expects e-Commerce sales to cover 34% of the pet food market by 2024. Pet owners are diligent with finding the highest quality and best value for their pets, which means they use online channel to browse, compare, and ultimately purchase pet food.

Amazon and Chewy e-tailers have been paving the path for pet e-Commerce sales in recent years, but that doesn't mean the window of opportunity for manufacturers is narrow. Consumers have shown interest in subscription services for replenishment or stocking up on meal-time foods but also for surprise treat boxes. Identifying which niche fits best with your product lines could contribute towards greater loyalty and repeat purchases overtime.

As pet owners grow closer with their beloved pets, they have been sharing their pets' journey through social media. Pet Influencers have gained large followings in recent years; so much so that Mars estimated 30% of pet owners follow celebrity pets on social media. Pet owners are more likely to trust and follow pet influencers who share similar stories of pet health, nutrition, and growth. Partnering with pet influencers is a great opportunity to build content, increase brand awareness, learn about target consumers, and ultimately drive more online traffic.

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Bottom Line

Pets have been and will continue to be a big part of pet owners lives and families. The inspiration from human-centered food trends has been shaping the pet food industry whether through healthy-alternatives, clean ingredients, sustainable practices, and pampering treats. How these pet food products are sold will be present across stores but increasingly online and through social channels. However, it is important that pet owners, especially novice pet owners, understand the importance of keeping pets healthy through proven practices and diets. Pet food manufacturers should be weary of the health impacts of their products, regardless of if they are typically considered safe and nutritious for humans. As much as we would like to think our pets are family, they are still animals, and thus manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure they are engaging and educating consumers appropriately.

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