



2022 Pet Food Trends

The pet food industry has seen significant shifts and growth given the lasting effects the coronavirus pandemic has had on consumer expectations for their pets. In 2021, [U.S. retail sales of pet food](#) for dogs and cats increased 6.4% from the previous year. By 2025, the industry is projected to reach \$47.9 billion based on a 6.6% CAGR. The humanization of pets continues to be stronger than ever, as pet adoptions rose amongst Millennials and Gen Z, and many owners continue to spend more time at home.

Bearing this in mind, we see that drivers of the pet food industry fall closely in line with the evolution of consumer needs for themselves. Pet health and wellness has risen as a top priority, with the pets-as-family mindset influencing healthier food and even wearable devices. Just like their owners, pets are consuming more organic and vegan foods that are boosting the premium, high-quality food category. Increased personalization and supplements are becoming a regular part of pet routines to ensure adequate vitamins and nutrients are in their diets.

As more diverse options for food and treats emerge, consumers look for more than just what's on the label when purchasing products. Sustainability and transparency across the value chain are key influences of conscious consumerism that is taking precedence. What's more is that online shopping is here to stay and should be viewed as a prominent channel for many consumer segments looking to replenish their pet food products.

TREND # 1

Pet wellness expands beyond food to supplements and wearables.

As consumers continue to place increasing focus on their own health and wellness, they have reflected this mindset toward their pets' lives. According to a [survey by Chewy](#), 73% of owners demonstrated their pets' health is as important as a family member's. With this in mind, we see that consumers are looking for customized choices that go beyond a functional three-meal-a-day routine.

In 2020 alone, the pet supplement market reached [\\$1.47 billion](#) in sales. This trend is likely speaking to consumer's personal interest in building immunity through herbs and superfoods. Owners often purchase supplements to improve their pets' joint health, skin or fur health, heart health, and oral health. Weight management supplements are also on the rise given the growing issue of obesity in dogs and cats, which is also supported by wearables.

Pet owners would do anything to better serve their pet's needs, even if that meant using technology to understand them. The pet [wearables](#) segment, for example, is on the rise to manage fitness goals or keep track of lost pets. Like smart watches and home security systems, pet collars and in-home cameras are becoming household accessories to ensure pet wellness and safety.

The prioritization of pet wellness is a trend here to stay this year, heavily influenced by pet owners' own purchasing habits. The pet food offerings that are likely to see greatest success in 2022 are those that are customized and speak directly to the personal needs of pet owners who want the absolute best for their pets.

"73% of owners demonstrated their pets' health is as important as a family member; 70% made food choices for their pets that mirror their own, with 80% of respondents revealing that health concerns led to higher-quality food purchases."

SOURCE

TREND #2

Premium pet food drives portfolio strategies, with a focus on fresh, raw, and organic options.

Gone are the days where standard kibble is enough for pet owners' furry family. Fresh, premium, and high-quality ingredients are a priority when consumers search for food and treats. Premium food brands have seen increased market share over the last 10 years, while standard food brands saw slight declines in market share. However, kibble remained a staple in U.S. dog owners' homes, with nearly [94% of U.S. dog owners](#) consistently purchasing kibble in 2021.

Fresh and raw food, including organic varieties, are continuing to rise in preference; many consumers are more willing to purchase or prepare fresh food if it becomes more affordable. Despite the cost, consumers recognize the value fresh food has on prolonging their pet's health and immunity. In 2020 alone, organic pet food reached [\\$22.8 billion](#) in sales.

"Organic pet food saw \$22.8 billion in sales in 2020."

[SOURCE](#)

We are seeing major players finding ways to better respond to this growing consumer interest in organic pet food, like Mars Petcare who recently acquired Nom Nom, a direct-to-consumer pet food brand focused on fresh food, treats, and supplements.

Brands that are established or considering entering the pet food market should consider how fresh, organic, and vegan preferences will translate into food and treat innovations. We expect to see consumers incorporating fresh and premium food as part of their regular pet routines to promote their animals' long-term health.



TREND #3

Alternative proteins drive pet food and treat innovation toward greater sustainability.

Sustainability and transparency are now regularly considered by consumers across the CPG industry. Consumers are not only focused on the environmental impact of their purchases but also the social and economic impact. Pet foods made with byproducts and renderings, for example, work to eliminate waste and greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. According to the North American Renderers Association, roughly [50% of animal meat](#) would go to waste without renderings. Alternative proteins, like crickets, algae, and yeast, also provide sustainable pet food options. Several pet foods brands, like [Purina](#), have made commitments on their end toward responsible sourcing. In purchasing responsibly sourced and eco-friendly pet foods, consumers can create a greater net-positive impact from their household.

With the vegan market projected to reach over [\\$15 million](#) by 2028, we will continue to see brands test sustainable vegan formula options. Pet food brand Wild Earth, for example, uses vegan superfood and high-protein ingredients to provide significant health benefits. The company saw 700% growth between 2020 to 2021 and seeks to disrupt the pet food industry with advanced scientific technology.

As more companies are venturing into the sustainability-led protein movement, we will see greater creativity in the digital marketing space to drive awareness of sustainable pet food benefits. Take a recent partnership between Bond Pet Foods and Sia Furler, Grammy-nominated musician and animal advocate. Sia has [joined Bond Pet Foods](#) as an investor and advisor to inspire “a more humane, responsible food future through a variety of social and digital marketing initiatives.”

“The vegan market is projected to grow from US\$ 9,302.47 million in 2021 to US\$ 15,651.22 million within 7 years.”

[SOURCE](#)

Whether through investing in manufacturing technology, promoting greater awareness, or acquiring growing leaders in the alternative-protein food space, companies should evaluate how they can offer food options that are overall better for the environment and for pet diets.

TREND #4

The rise of at-home testing creates greater opportunity for personalization of sought-after nutrients in food.

In a survey by Just Right Pet Food, [60% of respondents](#) were unsure of whether their pet food choice is the best for their canine companion. More broadly, there are a wide variety of health conditions that impact pets across different breeds. Several established brands are aiming to aid in obesity, arthritis, digestion, and diabetes, but there is a growing rise in the need to address anxiety and skin health as well.

As younger generations of pet owners overtake the market, they are more interested in personalized nutrition options to give the best for their pets. Bearing this in mind, we expect to see food and treat formulas that cater to the unique health conditions and genetic make-up of pets. One way to do this is to leverage biometrics and genetic data through at-home testing, which is becoming more popular as consumers take control of their pets' health management.

Brands should determine how they personalize their product recommendations, formulas, or engagement strategies so that they are unique to a pet's given needs. At the same time, they can use the data to customize future product offerings and reach their target market more effectively.

“60% of dog owners are unsure whether their pet food choice is the best for their canine companion, according to a survey of 800 dog owners.”

[SOURCE](#)



Online pet food sales expected to surpass brick-and-mortar sales, driven by convenience and differentiation.

Despite a push from retailers to revive brick-and-mortar purchasing, pet owners have formed habits in favor of online ordering and subscription plans. According to Packaged Facts, pet food eCommerce will account for [55% of total U.S. pet food sales](#) by 2025. With the growing market opportunity comes increased competition to stand out online.

Brands that continuously optimize their digital shelf across owned and e-tailer channels will see greater success in attracting consumers. Consistently evaluating how product images, titles, and descriptions are portrayed across devices is also essential, as consumers continue to browse and purchase through mobile devices.

Whether buying in bulk or in personalized portions, pet owners are more interested in opting in for subscription services that are both tailored and conveniently delivered. As recurring product subscriptions become more prominent, we see brands taking subscriptions to the next level with technology and personalization. Brands that can offer personalized food for specific health and breed needs are more likely to catch consumers' attention among the variety of options available online. These brands are making the sell for online subscriptions that both make purchasing more convenient and offer a better quality of food for their beloved pets.

“Online purchases and subscriptions of pet food and related products have reached an all-time high.”

SOURCE

As brands grow their own eCommerce channels to sell direct-to-consumer (DTC), retailers are experimenting with ways to grow sales in stores. [Petco partnered with Lowe's](#) to pilot select 'store within a store' concepts to cater to consumers increasingly purchasing products for their homes and pets. We also see retailers like PetSmart or other local pet stores leveraging [delivery capabilities of DoorDash](#) to compete with even faster delivery times than a traditional parcel shipping method used by DTC brands.

Conclusion

The pet food industry continues to evolve in parallel with consumer trends. The humanization of pets is the leading cause of this, as consumers increasingly regard their pets as family. Pet health and wellness are a top priority, along with premium and high-quality ingredients. Supplements, personalization, and pet wearables all support pets' health and wellness as well, while consumers make conscious and sustainable purchasing decisions. With most pet owners being Millennials and Gen Z, eCommerce will only continue to drive market growth. To capitalize on each of these trends, pet food brands must leverage their marketing and match the habits of their consumers.

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