

Skin and Coat Products Solve Problems for Pet Owners

Innovative ingredients and effective education go paw-in-paw in the natural skin and coat category.

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The market for natural skin and coat products is growing as more pet owners seek alternative solutions for common conditions and demand ingredients and solutions that mirror those in the human health industry.

“In the last 50-plus years we have been doing this, we [have] noticed that trends in the human industry are soon followed by

our industry,” said Steve Nicolosi, national sales manager for Glo-Marr in Lawrenceburg, Ky. “What’s good for the owner is good for their pets.”

Nicolosi added that sales of products such as shampoos, sprays and creams rise year after year.

Dave Campanella, sales and marketing director for Best Shot Pet Products in Frankfort, Ky., said there are many reasons for this category’s success.

“Coat and skin care product sales are booming at retail as well as within professional trades such as pet grooming, boarding and veterinarian services,” he said. “This is attributed to a

booming economy, high consumer confidence, correlating increases in pet ownership of dogs and cats, as well as the social media explosion.”

Today’s pet owners are turning to natural remedies for a variety of skin and coat issues.

Campanella said the top skin and coat issues he sees customers seeking relief from are shedding, tangled coats, odor, itching, stains, and flea- and tick-related issues.

Skin allergies continue to be one of the top conditions that veterinarians encounter, according to Dan Archetti, sales director for Westmont, Ill.-based Pet King Brands, the maker of Zymox.

“Allergies can’t be cured, and most pets will be plagued for life,” Archetti said. “Stocking products that provide relief is good for the pet and good for business.”

Sales in this sector do not show any signs of slowing down, he added.

Campanella noted that pet owners are increasingly demanding transparency, disclosure and accountability from grooming product manufacturers.

“Consumers are demanding products that actually live up to their claims,” he said. “It’s all about performance, not promises.”

Ingredients

Animal Apothecary

Manufacturers and pet specialty retailers report success with a variety of natural ingredients when it comes to skin and coat issues.

Amy Dalgliesh, manager at The Holistic Pet Shop in Kill Devil Hills, N.C., said products containing cannabidiol (CBD) oil and omega fatty acids, such as fish oils, are “the two go-tos” for skin issues at her store.

Hemp seed oil, lavender and aloe vera are among the ingredients that make up EQyss’ Elite Anti-Itch Shampoo. It is the company’s best-selling natural skin and coat product, said Dallas Van Kempen, president of the Carlsbad, Calif.-based company.

Pet owners seem to be looking for ingredients they already purchase for themselves, said Steve Nicolosi, national sales manager for Glo-Marr in Lawrenceburg, Ky.

“I would say the oatmeal-based products are still [our] best-sellers because the consumer is still so familiar with the benefits of oatmeal as a moisturizer for itch relief,” he said.

While oatmeal-based products might be top sellers, Nicolosi said Glo-Marr’s emu oil-based products might be one of the most effective. According to Glo-Marr’s website, emu oil

comprises omega fatty acids and can help treat inflammation, hot spots, insect bites, rashes and more. Glo-Marr offers emu oil shampoo, cream and spray through its Kenic line.

“They are designed to penetrate the top layer of skin and re-moisturize where it all starts: below the skin,” Nicolosi said. “This provides a nice, healthy hair shaft and promotes skin cell growth.”

Glo-Marr is working on a new botanical line. Nicolosi said the products will be based on “ingredients and fragrances that are popular in the human cosmetic market.”

Zymox by Pet King Brands gives pet owners alternative ways to keep pets’ skin and coats healthy or soothe pets’ inflamed skin. The brand offers shampoo, a conditioning rinse, a topical cream and a topical spray with the company’s patented LP3 Enzyme System, which harnesses enzymes’ antimicrobial properties to treat skin conditions gently and safely, according to the company.

“Ask any pet owner with a pet who suffers from hot spots or allergic skin, and you’ll probably hear story after story of their many attempts to help their pet find comfort before the skin becomes infected,” said Dan Archetti, sales director for the Westmont, Ill.-based manufacturer. “Helping the skin begins with the gentle calming benefits of the naturally derived, patented combination of enzymes.

“Alternatives to antibiotics for infection relief will also be on the rise due to increased resistance to conventional pharmaceutical treatments,” Archetti added.

Christi Gephart, owner of All is Well, which has two locations in South Carolina, said she is particularly excited about offering Vermont Soap Organics Pet Shampoo.

The shampoo is U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-certified, and its ingredients include coconut and olive oils, aloe vera and essential oils. According to Vermont Soap’s website, the product is free of chemical detergents and synthetic fragrances or coloring. The shampoo’s only preservative is rosemary extract, and it is hypoallergenic, making it ideal for pets with sensitive skin, according to the company.

Still, Campanella warns that while customers understandably want the ingredients in their pets’ skin and coat products to be just as recognizable as those in their food, they should keep in mind that “the chemistry of food vastly differs from that of pet shampoo and conditioner.”

He said some artificial or synthetic ingredients, such as sulfates and silicones, have been unfairly demonized and are safe and beneficial to pets with skin and coat problems.

Education

Online and Offline

The internet continues to empower consumers when it comes to self-education and choosing the right products and ingredients for their pets, said Dallas Van Kempen, president of EQyss in Carlsbad, Calif.



“People are asking questions,” he said. “They’re making informed decisions, not just buying whatever is available at their local store.”

Dave Campanella, sales and marketing director for Best Shot Pet Products in Frankfort, Ky., emphasized the importance of marketing integrity and consumers’ desire and right to know what is in their products.

“Pet owners are now weary of ‘all natural’ claims and anything that sounds too good to be true,” he said. “What good comes from products stating what’s not in them, when there is no disclosure whatsoever of what is actually in them?”

Although there is seemingly infinite information online, Van Kempen said it is not always the best place for pet owners to turn to.

“There is no substitute for having a real conversation with a real, knowledgeable, experienced person who has dealt with whatever issue you need to deal with,” he said.

This means retailers should take the initiative and stay up-to-date on their own education so they can guide customers in the right direction.

EQyss offers training sessions for its retailers and also encourages them to try out free product samples, Van Kempen added.

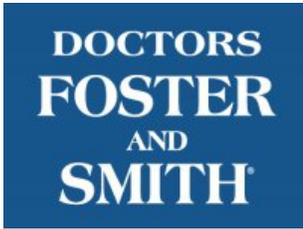
Earth Pets Natural Pet Market in Gainesville, Fla., turns to its vendors for support to educate employees on products.

“A lot of the [manufacturing] companies have online training that we have our employees go through to learn about the products,” said store manager Brian Sharp.

And when a customer has a question that a retailer doesn’t feel equipped to answer, additional resources are just a click or a phone call away.

“We’re always happy to call the manufacturer for [customers] if they do have a question that we can’t answer,” Sharp said.

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