

The Global Pet Expo

Lisa Treen takes a look into the future of pet products

One of America's biggest trade shows is the Global Pet Expo. First held in 2005, it has been alternating coasts - Orlando one year, San Diego the next. We first attended GPE in 2006 and the growth for this year was noticeable, with more stands and the need to have a special boutique area spilling into the upper floor of San Diego's massive Convention Center.



The three-day show, not open to the public, had miles (literally) of new and not so new ideas and inventions from over 800 vendors in 2,400 booth spaces within an exhibition hall that is the size of eleven football fields. Two years ago we were gobsmacked to see nearly forty stands promoting dog prams or strollers, Jeep being one of the more visible brands. It would appear that consumers haven't been so keen to push around perfectly healthy pets as there are considerably fewer stands trying to tout the concept.

What has increased is the number of treats and pet foods billed as 'natural', 'organic', 'holistic' and 'safe'. The marketing of many of these brands suggests that this new breed of pet food is a far cry from the dirty past of pet food recalls. Names like Natura, Pet Botanics, Naturally Wild, Purely for Pets and No-Grainers are all competing for shelf space in a more competitive food market. Terms like 'Super Premium' are being traded in for 'Super-Luxe', with marketing lines like 'safety comes first' and 'safe for people, made for pets' as well as 'human-grade ingredients'.

Counting calories when doling out dog treats just became easier with 100-calorie portion-controlled packs. Bark Bars Natural (there's that word again) Dog Treats are Baked with 100% Real Peanut Butter. The same company also has treats for our equine friends with 'Mustang Munchies', the all natural treat that is made from real apples and real carrots - as well as being shaped like real apples and carrots - because no-one can fool a horse, of course.

If all that snacking on real good stuff has made your pooch portly then you can forget having to get into the great outdoors and instead buy a specially designed dog treadmill. The creatively named 'DogTread' has variable speeds - the controller is in the shape of a dog biscuit - and it has a tray for food (out of snout's reach) to keep the dog motivated. This treadmill for dogs retails for about US\$500.

There were a couple of other treadmills vying for buyers' eyes and expense accounts, and partly this potential market has been spurred on by TV's 'Dog Whisperer', Cesar Millan. Part of Millan's philosophy is that if you have a tired and well exercised dog you will have a relaxed dog. He regularly uses treadmills to wear out overly excited or 'unbalanced' members of our pack. Millan made various appearances through the show to launch a number of products to be sold through PETCO chain stores.



Real food or real marketing?



do?L GIC
DOG TRAINING

Individual & custom designed behaviour programs tailored to fit your lifestyle.
Plus puppy pre-school and adult dog classes. We come to you.

Trudi Thorpe - 0419 999 975 Julie Adams - 0421 053 438

www.doglogic.com.au

Among the products in the Dog Whisperer line are organic wet and dry dog food, treats and chews, fortified water, liquid supplements, collars and leashes, toys, grooming products, beds, bowls, feeding supplies, rounded out with an instructional series of DVDs. All of this is sure to achieve balance - a nice bank balance for all those involved. Millan seems to have become the equivalent of Dr Harry in the US for endorsements.

Reducing our carbon paw print has also become a major factor in the launch and re-launch of everything from toys, packaging and grooming products. Another trend is bottled water that is vitamin-enriched and flavour-enhanced for pets. Reusing and recycling is a big message that has filtered through to toys - from Planet Dog's range that has long used recycled materials, to a robust version of a sock monkey which you can slip a used soda bottle into for crunchy, noisy fun.

There is also a safety trend away from vinyl toys which can leach chemicals that have been proven to cause cancer. Another trend is away from Chinese-manufactured toys and treats that do not have extensive testing and certification of contents.



Homewares for pets unleashed



Pet furniture like bowls and beds seem to be integrated more into current home décor trends. We saw some stylish examples of how the humble bed and bowl has transformed into more feature furniture pieces. We no longer have to settle for plain or drab dog doors as the 'Pet Portal' is a range of decorative frames that fit around this specially designed dog door. You can even get holiday-themed frames for a festive price of \$130.

Dog apparel is still popular, with a seemingly endless array of jumpers, jackets, cheeky t-shirts and rain slickers for the smaller breeds. However, there now seems to be more choice for larger breeds as the message seems to be getting through that the market is not just for diminutive dogs.

The Pet Expo has outgrown the massive Convention Center in San Diego and it is expected that it will be held in Orlando, Florida from 2009 onwards. This is a shame because San Diego is such a dog-friendly city. There are some fabulous purpose-built dog parks and places to take dogs - even in the city centre.

NUTRIENCE

New Thinking in Pet Nutrition

What makes us different?



- Real Chicken
- No By-products
- No Wheat
- Herbs Added
- Low Allergy
- Naturally Preserved
- Holistic formulas available
- 100% Money Back Guarantee

For further information or to find your local stockist please call us Toll Free on **1800 663 664** or visit us at **www.nutrience.com**



petwiz
the smart way to shop!

FREE DOG TREAT!
When you join the Petwiz mailing list!
Email your details to redeem.

A unique and fun way to shop for your pets has finally arrived!

We specialise in:
· Party Plan services · Shopping Consultations · Unique Pet Products
· Pet Care Advice · Product Education

Owned & Operated by Qualified Veterinary Nurses!
For more information visit: www.petwiz.com.au
or contact - email: info@petwiz.com.au ph: 0421578844

One evening we went to a dog and wine event that happens every week at the San Diego Wine and Culinary Institute. Here people bring their dogs and sit outside, around gas-fired pits and burner umbrellas, sipping wine and snacking on local and imported cheese while their furry friends socialise off-leash. No canine fitsticuffs as everyone seems perfectly happy to take things at their own pace.

We sit at a table where a lady tells me that she and hubby bought their tiny Chihuahua from a local flea market for only \$200, whereas they normally fetch into the thousands. There's a notorious and seedy trade in smuggling these dogs over the border from Mexican puppy mills. Almost always they have health problems and are well under eight weeks at sale. The smaller they are (and likely the younger they are), the more chance these little illegal immigrants carry big health problems. Generally they make the stuffy journey in car seats – they're literally stuffed into the car seat to get them over the border. Thankfully this little one has a nice set of parents who admit that they knew no better and didn't realise the trade they were unwittingly supporting.

I cheekily wonder whether the flea market dogs come with free fleas. Talking of smaller dogs, I'm beginning to think that people are really trying to shrink dogs down over there. I meet lots of 'teacup' Yorkies, Pomeranians and Chihuahuas. I'm trying to reason why you would want to fit a dog into a teacup. A vision of a woman sitting in a restaurant keeps popping into my head: "Waiter, there's a fly in my soup."

"No, madam," the waiter replies, "that is the Yorkie you ordered."



Fashion doggy-style

Perhaps a dog sitting in Royal Doulton (or is that Royal Dogton?) is what appeals to some people. I would just be afraid to bring out the Dyson unless the little tyke was crated. Then again, you wouldn't need to go to the expense of a crate as you could always use a piece of Tupperware.

It's also been fun meeting our pet media counterparts over there and taking our publication around with us. As the only Australian pet media at GPE, we stood out to standholders seeking Australian distributors or advice about the Australian market. But for us, catching up with the editors of consumer pet stalwarts Dog World, Dog Fancy, Cat Fancy, Bird Talk, Modern Dog, the trade Pet Products International and the Tails Inc mob of multi-city free pet press was a welcome break from being hounded by product salespeople.



VEBO PET SUPPLIES
www.vebopet.com.au

The only online direct outlet for pet accessories in Sydney!

COLLAPSIBLE CAGES
great for travel, recovering pets and crate training

DOUBLE DECK & BREEDER CRATES

BIRD CAGES

PORTABLE CRATES

For all prices and sizes please checkout www.vebopet.com.au or visit our showroom 20 Minnie St, Belmore (02) 9029 9385

Save over 40% off normal pet shop prices by buying direct from the wholesaler!

OUTDOOR RABBIT HUTCHES

S, M & L PET EXERCISE PENS

DOG RUNS 2x2m, 3x2m, 4x2m

ALUMINIUM SHOW TROLLEYS

Opening Hours
Mon - Thu 10 - 5 pm
Fri Closed
Sat 10 - 1 pm
Closed Public Holidays

© 2008 Vebopet Supplies

We found some new titles over there too this year, such as Pet Elite, which is geared to the upmarket fashion apparel trend, Doggie Aficionado, which is produced by the same publisher of a cigar lovers' mag, and Best Friends, which is from a rescue perspective. Our friends at Bark in San Francisco were unable to come down as they were in the midst of their 10th anniversary edition and putting out a book, "Howl", from which we'll have an excerpt next issue.

Sadly, a few mags have rolled over in the past year in the US at newsstands, including Paw Luxuries, New York Dog and Hollywood Dog - all glossy upmarket titles. The good news is that we have managed to snare an exclusive story from Hollywood Dog for the next issue on Hugh Hefner's three girlfriends, with more syndicated stories from overseas press being a part of Urban Animal this year.



Overall the Global Pet Expo is a looking glass into the future of pet products and the trends that the pet product market will follow. It's estimated that Americans spend over \$40 billion annually on their pets so it follows that hundreds of new pet products are launched at these trade events. Some of products will have legs and others won't, but it sure is fun looking.

Pegetables®

It's Vegetables with a 'P'!
The first gourmet veggie chew treats for Doggies.

Made with real vegetables and available in three delicious flavours:

Carrot

Can help your dog maintain good vision and provide nutrients necessary for energy.

Corn

Can help the appearance of your dog's coat. Supports the digestive system and heart.

Celery

Can help your dog maintain a healthy heart, immune system, liver, urinary tract and joints.

Each Pegetable treat is fortified with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and omega fatty acids that help support a strong, healthy immune system and general wellbeing. Real vegetable flakes aid in better breakup and digestibility. Treat your dog to a healthy snack with an irresistible taste!



For more information email,
pegetables@vetcompanies.com.au

