

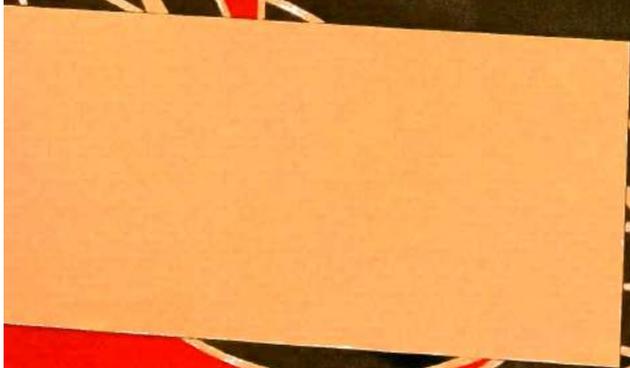
DECEMBER 2017

\$15.00

Pet Business

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2017 INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AWARDS



Back to Basics

Manufacturers are succeeding in the natural grooming category by taking an innovative approach to simple formulas for comprehensive pet dermatologic health.

BY DOROTHY CROUCH

As the demand for transparency grows in the pet industry, manufacturers are creating formulas that allow consumers to feel confident in their purchasing decisions for the products they will use to bathe and groom their animals. This natural-goods demand from consumers has grown from a trend into an integral component to any successful retail operation.

"The natural grooming trend has shifted from a trend to a necessity," says James Brandly, copywriter and public relations specialist at TropiClean. "We pride ourselves on creating natural products made with wholesome natural ingredients. Companies whose core products revolve around chemical-based ingredients may still generate sales, but that company most likely has a natural product to offer their consumers."

This growing focus on natural ingredients is being echoed by many manufacturers, some of which have accepted the challenge to create solutions that are gentle on pets, yet tough on threats to the animals. Products that are used to treat issues caused by bacteria or fungus might have once included harsh chemicals, but manufacturers are now creating formulas that address these problems while maintaining the natural integrity of pets' fur and skin. Pura Naturals Pet's president and chief merchandising officer, Beth Sommers, recognizes the importance of providing natural grooming products that are also antibacterial and antifungal.

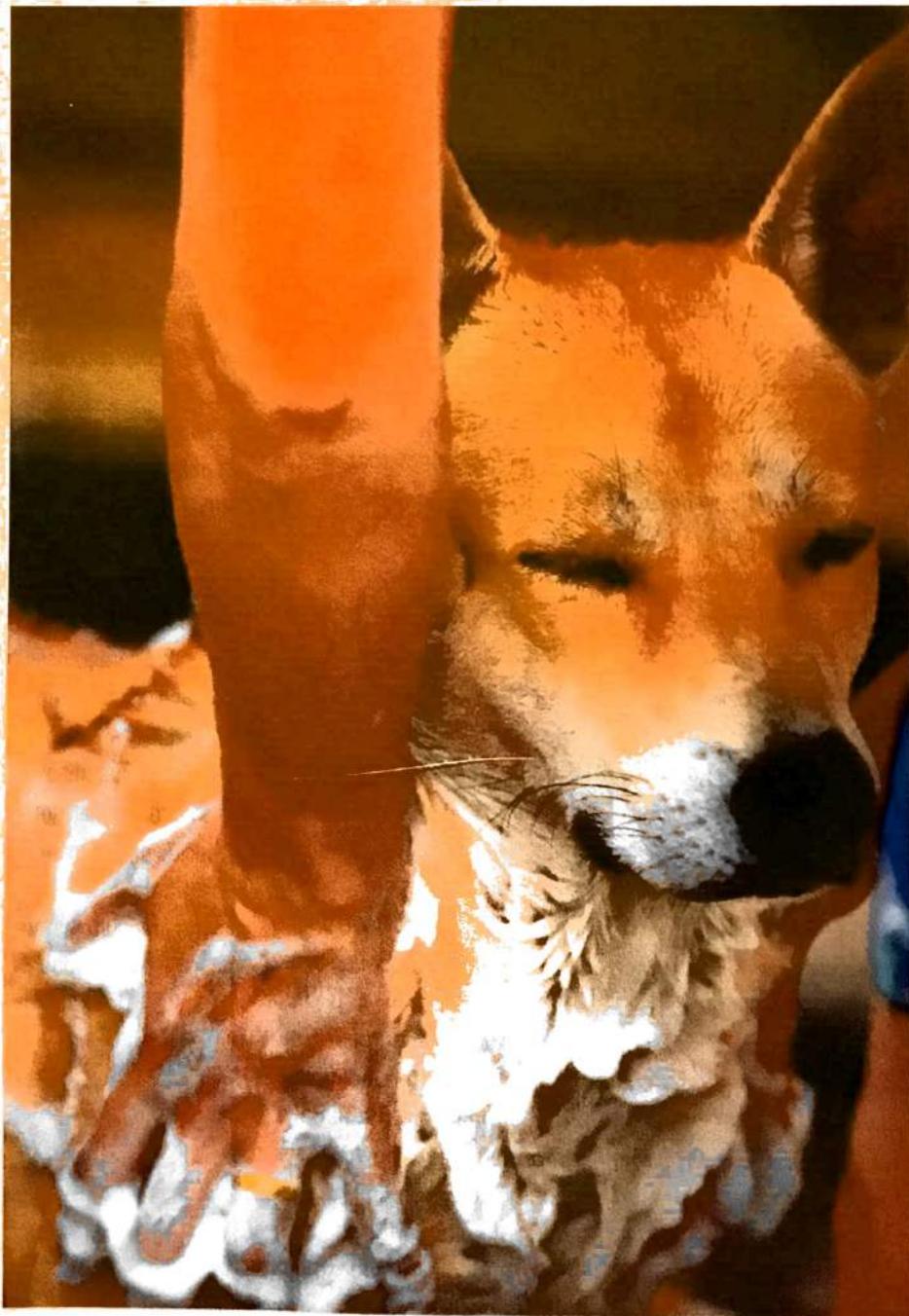


PHOTO BY SUJTISAK

"It is a necessary task," she says. "If we are going to take a stand to do things better and safer, we need to make sure that we go the extra mile to protect our pets from different bacteria, fungus and all other health-impacting hazards. The cost to test and manufacture might be higher, but the end result is a superior product."

GROOMING CATS AND DOGS

To meet the species-specific needs of pet parents, manufacturers must not only find safe ingredients, but also remain conscious of the different grooming needs of all animals. While products might be made with natural ingredients, they should not be used interchangeably between cats and dogs—an important point to remember when helping pet parents select the perfect grooming items.

"One major difference in creating natural formulas that are specific for dogs, cats and horses is the selection of ingredients," says Shannon Moore, NCMG director of grooming and education for Espree Animal Products. "Certain species have more sensitivities to specific ingredients than others. For example, tea tree oil is an ingredient that should not be used on cats because many cats are sensitive to that specific ingredient."

Other manufacturers echo this sentiment regarding the specific sensitivities of different pets. Debbie Guardian, founder and president of Opie & Dixie, explains that she chose to exclude certain ingredients from the company's cat shampoo to prevent irritation of strong feline senses.

"Even though dogs have four to five times as many scent receptors as cats, cats are much more sensitive to odors," says Guardian. "This is why our cat shampoo is unscented. There's a common misbelief that essential oils are toxic to cats. In fact, not all essential oils are harmful...[but] we chose to exclude essential oils from our cat shampoo because most have powerful scents."

When searching for supplies from natural sources, pet parents will abandon products that irritate their animals, regardless of the ingredients that appear on the label. Retailers must remain thoroughly informed regarding any side effects or adverse reactions that could occur from improperly matching a pet with a product that is not suitable for it.

To successfully sell natural grooming products, retailers must also recognize that the ethics and culture of a manufacturer

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Understanding that pet owners don't want to use any harsh, harmful chemicals on their furry friends, a number of manufacturers have developed a new wave of all-natural grooming products that are not only safe, but effective. Here is a sampling of the latest and greatest products to hit the natural grooming aisle:



TrueBlue Pet Products' (truebluepets.com) full line of grooming products includes Super Fresh Body & Paw wipes that not only clean, but also moisturize the skin and coat using grapefruit and macadamia nut oil. The company's Super Easy Ear Wipes contain an all-natural cleansing solution, and the

textured pads clean away infection-causing debris. For stubborn tear stains, TrueBlue's Safe and Sure Eye Wipes use an all-natural cleaning solution that's safe and gentle, yet effective.

Mad About Organics'

(madaboutorganics.com) shampoo line is derived from all-natural, organic ingredients. The company's traditional approach to making shampoos that do not have any chemical detergents, synthetic fragrances or added colors yields unique formulas that are all pH balanced and will not strip away the pet's natural oils. Every product is safe for animals four weeks and older, including pregnant females.



The premium features and patented design of the Bass Hybrid Groomer, from Bass Brushes (bassbrushesonline.com/pet), give pet parents the efficiency of thoroughly working through knots while yielding maximum shine. Natural boar bristles help evenly distribute a pet's natural oils through the coat, and a durable handle made entirely from bamboo promotes sustainability.





Organic Oscar's (organicoscar.com)

Organic Lavender Puppy Shampoo is an extra-mild organic shampoo designed to be safe for a puppy's sensitive skin. The shampoo has been formulated to meet the NSF organic certification standards and is pending its seal. Organic, all-natural and biodegradable, it does not contain soap, parabens, sulfates, phthalates, artificial fragrances, dyes or petroleum-based ingredients. Organic Oscar Organic Lavender Puppy Shampoo is made in the U.S.A. at the company's California-based facility.

Bio-Groom's (biogroom.com) rejuvenating Natural Scents Shampoo is infused with organic cold-pressed baobab protein. Harvested from the baobab tree, this fruit nourishes the coat from root to tip, promotes rejuvenation of skin cells, protects skin from free-radical damage and is free of sulfates. The powerful, yet gentle, natural cleansing formula is available in four scents: Pink Jasmine, Tuscan Olive, Lemongrass and Verbena, and Desert Agave Blossom.



can translate into increased sales from customers who share these values. In addition to being able to connect customers with products whose formulas meet pets' needs, retailers can gain client trust by recommending manufacturers who adhere to strong convictions in their practices.

"Becoming Leaping Bunny Certified was always our goal," Sommers explains, regarding her company's recent cruelty-free recognition. "It further validates our company's vision and mission statement of creating trusted products for family pets by using the best ingredients the earth has to offer. Along with Leaping Bunny and USDA, Pura Naturals Pet is also Eco-Cert and Oeko-Tex Certified."

The natural-grooming segment will see continued growth in 2018, and manufacturers who produce these products want to cultivate their relationships with retailers to gain the business of consumers who are more inclined to choose natural products. Retailers can serve as intermediaries between manufacturers and customers to ensure client voices are heard, Brandy explains.

"Our retailers play a pivotal role when it comes to sales and how our products are perceived by pet parents," he says. "We seek out knowledge from our partners and pride ourselves with keeping up with trends in the industry from our packaging, merchandising options and ingredients."

When retailers understand the motivation that drives pet parents to buy natural products, they can help manufacturers create grooming lines that reflect these values and secure repeat business. **PB**

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