

Tempting prospects in the pet treats market

Pet treats are big business. With sales growth that regularly outpaces the pet food market, this category is expected to continue increasing year-over-year. A high standard of palatability is key to success.

Impressive growth

According to Euromonitor, dog treat revenue grew 38% worldwide over the past five years, while cat treat revenue increased an impressive 69%. Over the same period, dog treats volume increased 18% in tonnes worldwide, while cat treats grew a remarkable 59% by tonnage. These numbers demonstrate there is a large opportunity in the treat market.

Purpose of treats

Pet parents view their cats and dogs as family members. Often they use treats to enhance the relationship with their pets. Many pet parents offer treats as an indulgence or snack, similar to the way they would indulge themselves. Dog owners often use treats to reward their pets' good behaviour during training. Treats also provide entertainment when used with treat-dispensing toys. Because cats are often more independent, feline treats tend to be used to enhance bonding moments.

Treats can also serve another purpose: improving pets' health. Functional treats designed to address specific health concerns such as joint support, oral health or hairball prevention are popular for both dogs and cats.

Treat palatability

Treats are held to a higher standard of palatability than other pet food, since pet parents expect their cat or

dog to readily accept a treat. Therefore, when testing treat palatability, acceptance is the most important criteria. Manufacturers typically look for an acceptance rate of 80% for cats and close to 100% for dogs.

Because treats are given and consumed in a different way than a meal, palatability trials are different. Monadic testing, where only one product is given to the dog or cat, is used to measure acceptance. The products are given by hand during a defined time duration to mimic an in-home setting. Behaviour measures can augment the acceptance data to help determine the pet's enjoyment of the treat. Two-bowl or preference trials, while not typical, may be used if a manufacturer is trying to determine which treat is preferred.

Treat palatants

Pet acceptance often relies on selecting the best palatant to work together with the treat ingredients, processing equipment and form. AFB offers a portfolio of products that successfully deliver palatability performance to customers, whether treats are dehydrated, freeze-dried, baked or extruded. ♦



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