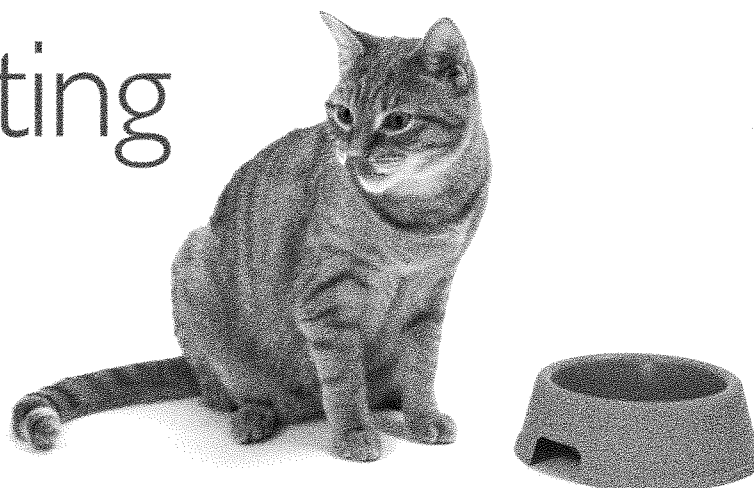


Trend setting

MICHAEL BELLINGHAM, chief executive of the PFMA, looks at the trends that drove pet food sales in 2012 and considers whether they are set to continue in 2013



How has the recession affected purchasing habits?

Last year the PFMA surveyed over 2,000 UK adults and asked how they had been affected by the recession. The results suggested that only six per cent of owners had cut back on treats for their pets and just four per cent on their pets' food. This is in contrast to other savings pet owners have been making, with 36 per cent of pet owners cutting back on eating out; 25 per cent on clothes shopping; 24 per cent on holidays; 16 per cent on their food shopping; 15 per cent on petrol and travel costs; and 12 per cent on heating their houses.

Certainly, the feedback from our market research indicates that pet owners generally do not want to compromise on their pets' nutrition and the market is fairing pretty well. We have seen a growth in the sales of value pet food ranges but also growth at the premium end of the market, with the middle market feeling more of a squeeze.

The pet care sector as a whole seems to be performing well and Euromonitor predicts the market will have grown by around six per cent by the end of 2012 reaching close to £4 billion. So we ask, what has been driving sales and are these trends set to continue in 2013?

One of the family

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and encapsulates more closely the relationship we have with our pets. A recent article in *The Sun* highlighted that pet owners are likely to have spent more on their dogs' Christmas present than their grandparents'.

The trend towards anthropomorphism of pets is having an impact on spending on pet products. Packaged Facts, a US-based market research group, sees pet parenting, and the role of pets as members of the family, not just as a trend but a long-term societal shift influencing spending in the pet market for years to come.

Growth in health-related products

There's an increasing interest in what we eat and how it affects our health and this is at the forefront of the human food movement. Trends in the pet food market tend to follow very closely those in the human food sector. The field of pet nutrition has become more science-based than ever and as with human diets, anti-oxidants, omega fatty acids, glucosamine and chondroprotectives are included in pet diets for the potential health benefits they may bring.

An increasingly educated consumer

We are seeing a consumer who is becoming more educated about the impact of diet. Consumers are better educated about nutrition for themselves and their pets. This is not only evident in the cat and dog market but the small animal sector too. There is a growing understanding among pet owners about the dietary needs of small animals and this has been driven by welfare organisations and pet food manufacturers.

Feed the birds

In 2012, PFMA welcomed into its membership 11 bird food producing companies and established a dedicated bird group. In next month's article we will be focusing on this area but it is clear that, with a market value in excess of £200 million,



looking after birds is hugely appealing to the UK population.

The RSPB has recently launched its report, the 'State of the UK's Bird Population', which charts the ups and downs of the UK bird population over the last few decades and shows that 44 million birds have been lost since 1966. Now, in the midst of winter, there have been pleas to the public through the welfare charities and the press to feed the birds, as their natural feed stocks have suffered the same fate as most of the country's crops.

Look out for the PFMA Market Report in March 2013

PFMA will release its latest market and pet population data following the annual general meeting in March 2013.

About the PFMA

The Pet Food Manufacturers' Association is the principal trade body representing the UK pet food industry; a key focus of activity is to promote animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. Its 60 members account for over 90 per cent of the market and produce a wide range of products for cats, dogs, rabbits and other pet animals. To find out more or download some useful information sheets for you and your customers, please visit: www.pfma.org.uk