

From **BISCUITS** to **BILLIONS**

The Pet Food Manufacturers' Association is 40 years old this year - but the history of dog food goes back a lot further...

Before the introduction of pet food, most dogs and cats lived off table scraps, grains and meat, but today pet food is big business and the market is now valued in excess of £2 billion. The Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) was set up in 1970 when the pet food industry really began to take off. This year the association is celebrating its 40th anniversary so we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to explore the history of commercial pet food and find out just how we got to the global market we have today.

A lightning conductor salesman from Cincinnati, Ohio, is generally thought of as the founding father of pet food, as he came up with the idea of dog biscuits in the late 1860s. The story goes that American James Spratt travelled to England to sell his lightning conductors but when his ship docked, the scene that met his eyes changed his career path and transformed the way animals were fed. Spratt stood and watched as a bunch of dogs scavenged on the quayside for discarded ship's biscuits and immediately saw the potential for specially prepared dog biscuits.

The oldest pet food brand still available is probably

Winalot, which has been on the market since 1927. Winalot food was initially marketed for racing Greyhounds, and, over the years, the brand has had quite a few facelifts to keep up with current trends.

The first canned dog food was produced in the 1930s by the Chappel brothers, who were horse dealers from the East End of London. The brothers used contacts they had in the packing industry to can their meat and cereal food, giving it a longer shelf life. Forrest E Mars bought the business in 1935 and the Chappie brand of canned dog food that evolved from the Chappel brothers' original recipe still exists today.

Healthy eating

As early as 1948 speciality diets were introduced for dogs with particular diseases or disorders, with the first being developed for kidney and heart disease. Hill's Pet Products led the way in this field but other pet food manufacturers quickly followed as research into canine health and nutrition became more widespread.

Fresh meat was considered too expensive to feed dogs, and pet food companies developed their products in a way that fed animals economically using cereal waste products and meat that was unsuitable for

human consumption. A new method of production was introduced in 1957 by Ralston Purina, which revolutionised dry pet food. Expanded dog food offered increased bulk so pet owners got more for their money, plus the kibble could be coated in fat, making it more palatable for dogs.

A popular brand of canned dog food in the 1960s was Kennomeat, largely due to a very successful advertising campaign that reversed the roles of man and dog. The series of adverts featured an overweight dog called Albert and a thin one called Sidney who believed that they were really the 'masters' in their relationships with their owners. The dogs gave advice on the 'management' of their manservants, such as "Man is a dog's best friend. Treat him right and he'll never forget to bring home the Kennomeat!"

According to an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, Kennomeat and its feline equivalent, Kattomeat, took 20 per cent of the British pet food market at that time.

John Wrightson, who worked for Kennomeat manufacturer Robert Wilson & Son, said, "Everyone knew about Albert and Sidney, even if they didn't have a dog. It was a humorous observation about the relationship between man and dog."

In 1964 Spillers Ltd took over the brand names with the acquisition of Wilson's subsidiary, Scottish Animal Products Ltd. Kattomeat was renamed Arthur's in 1992 but the Kennomeat brand was dropped altogether.

Taking the biscuit

Before 1970 there was no association specifically to cater for pet food manufacturers, so some used links via their human food divisions to the Food Manufacturers' Federation (FMF). There was the National Association of Dog Biscuit Manufacturers representing company interests, but it wasn't considered to be a very active body, so the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) was formed.

The industry was looking for a single voice and found it in the PFMA, which initially had four members - Spillers Ltd, Quaker Oats Ltd, Petfood Ltd and Stamina Foods Ltd. Quaker and Stamina eventually became part of Spillers, which is now Nestle Purina PetCare, while Petfood Ltd later became Mars Petcare.

Research and development director Peter Messent has been in the pet food industry since the mid 1970s and comments on the forming of the PFMA: "Discussions around purchase tax on pet food were a major factor in forming an industry



40 years of the PFMA



1999

Dog population is 6.6 million and cat population is 7.7 million

2000

Pet food pouches hit the market

PFMA launches its website at www.pfma.com

Pet passports are introduced

2001

Defra established

Outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease

2002

New Animal By-Products Regulation



2003

New Feed Additives Regulation

2005

SCAS report on Pets and Older People supported by the PFMA

New PFMA logo and website www.pfma.org.uk

The PFMA conducts market research into pet food buyers' needs on pet food labels, in anticipation of the revision of the Marketing Directive



2006

The Animal Welfare Act is passed, following the PFMA's briefing of MPs and is followed by the PFMA's assistance in drawing up codes for dogs, cats and rabbits

Publication of the Fediaf Guide to Good Practice for the Manufacture of Safe Pet Food, with reference to the Official Journal of the EU

2007

National Pet Week becomes National Pet Month

The first animal blood bank is set up

2008

Publication of the Fediaf Nutritional Guidelines for Cats and Dogs

2009

Publication of the European Regulation 767/2009 on the marketing and use of feed - the first major revision of the rules on the labelling of pet food since the 1979 Marketing Directive and the extension of those rules to cover advertising and internet activity. The PFMA is extensively involved in the consultations leading up to this

PFMA White Paper on obesity

2010

Dog population is 8.3 million and cat population is 8.6 million

The PFMA now comprises 60 members (95 per cent of the market)

Pet food market value exceeds £2 billion



body. Such matters meant that a unified voice was required. Companies were starting to be more proactive and very much saw the benefit of positive public relations."

The PFMA's founding members agreed it would be useful to have a body that could provide advice to smaller pet food companies, disseminate information to organisations interested in animal welfare and act as an industry voice talking to government. Even in the early days, the PFMA represented manufacturers of all pet foods, not just those for dogs and cats, and budgies were extremely popular pets during the early days of the association.

The science of diet

The first piece of European legislation came into force in 1970, covering the area of additives, and legislation was introduced in 1979, regulating pet food labelling. With this increased activity, the European Pet Food Industries Federation (FEDIAF) was set up with the PFMA as a founding member.

In 1974 the US National Research Council (NRC) published its first recommendations on the nutritional requirements of cats and dogs. This publication was a major scientific advancement, as it listed all the nutrients cats and dogs need for healthy body function. A year later, the first

thesis was published on the amino acid requirements of adult dogs.

As well as representing pet food manufacturers, the PFMA has always worked to promote animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. The PFMA was a founding member of the Joint Advisory Committee in Society, now known as the Pet Advisory Committee, which was formed to encourage responsible pet ownership in 1976. Three years later, the PFMA worked with the veterinary profession to establish the Pet Health Council, which advises on the health and welfare of pets, specifically looking at areas that relate to human health.

Reflecting on how the pet food market has changed over the past 40 years, Terry Plant, from pet food manufacturing and marketing consultants TA Plant Consulting, said, "From a relatively small industry in the 1970s the sector has just blossomed. Rabbit was the first flavour to come on to the market and up until the 1970s there was very little variety."

Terry continued, "The market saw further segmentation in the mid to late 1970s with premium products coming on the scene and we also saw lifestage diets brought to the market for the first time. Pet food manufacturers could apply the increasing knowledge of pet nutrition to product formulation and, as a result,

Win six months' supply of Natural Dog Food



A decade ago, a group of dog owners decided to take their dogs' nutrition into their own hands, and by teaming up with holistic vets and nutritionists, they were able to put together

the UK's first 100 per cent natural complete dog food. The Natural Dog Food Company was born.

The inspiration behind Natural Dog Food was to provide everything a dog needs in a natural form in one food. Approaching the problem from a purely holistic angle, only ingredients that help to promote health throughout the body as a whole were selected. This meant going back to basics and looking at the kind of diet our dogs' ancestors would have eaten in the wild - the sort of foods a dog has evolved to eat.

Naturally, the foundation of Natural Dog Food is a very high proportion of meat. Added to this are a unique range of vegetables, herbs and nutritious whole grains with no by-products, derivatives, fillers or bulking agents whatsoever.

This approach meant that, for the first time, everything required by a dog could be found in a natural form in the raw ingredients, making The Natural Dog Food Company the first not to need to add any artificial vitamins or minerals to its diets - the very first 100 per cent natural complete dog food.

News spread quickly right from the start, enquiries began to pour in from across the country and before long The Natural Dog Food Company had become one of the country's fastest growing pet food producers.

Over the decade since its conception, The Natural Dog Food Company has continued to drive natural nutrition forward with the launch of two puppy-specific varieties, a senior/light diet, two sensitive foods and a range of 100 per cent natural treats. Keep watching this space for upcoming developments, but, for the time being, The Natural Dog Food Company is keeping its cards very close to its chest.



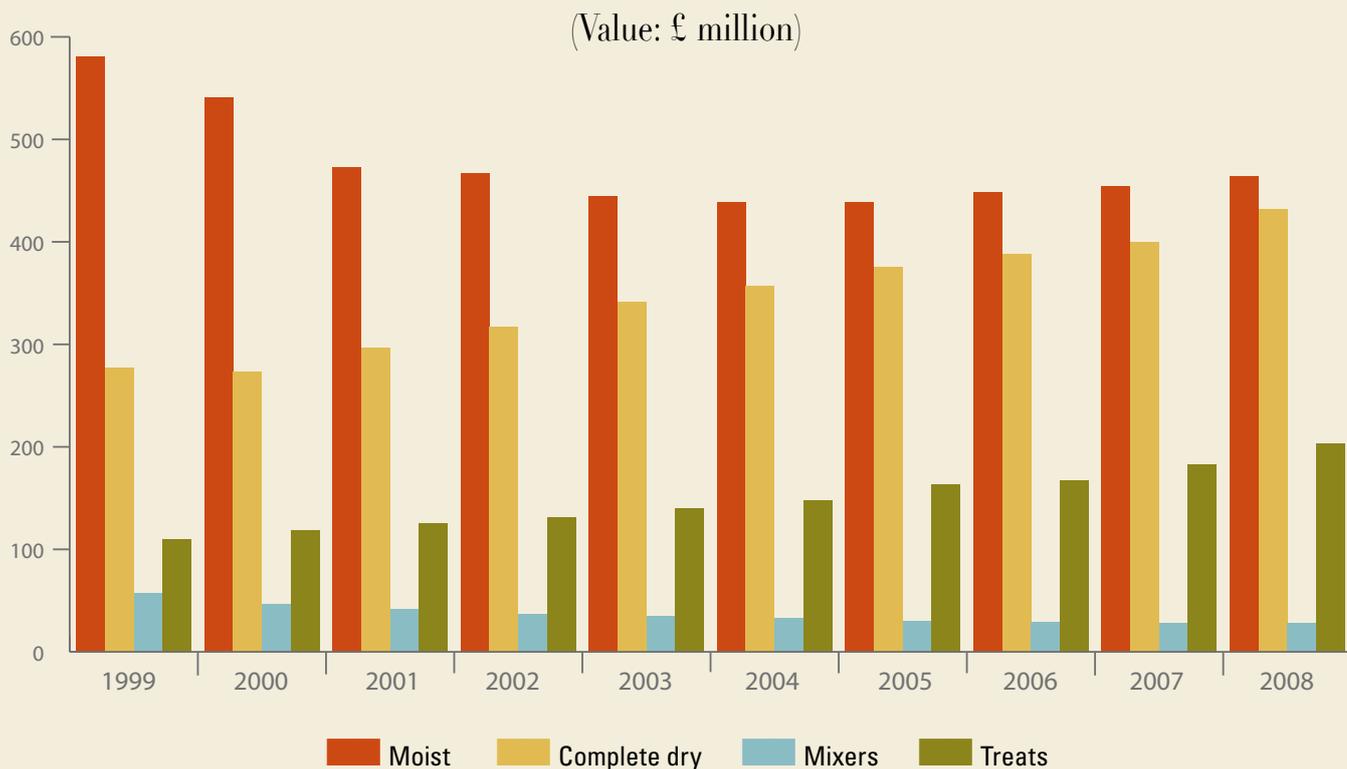
How to enter...

To win a six-month supply of food or one of 10 runner-up prizes of a 2kg bag of food, simply answer the following question:

A diet that aims to promote good health throughout the whole body is called: **A. Complete B. Holistic C. Prescription**

Send your answer, along with your name, address, daytime telephone number and breed/type of dog, to: Natural Dog Food comp, *Dogs Today*, The Dog House, 4 Bonseys Lane, Chobham, Surrey GU24 8JJ. Closing date for entries is 13 August.

A breakdown of the dog food market over recent years



pet foods became increasingly sophisticated. More recently we've seen this knowledge extended to produce a number of breed-specific products."

Pet food manufacturers first started formulating lifestage pet foods, starting with a puppy formula, in the early to mid 1970s, but they did not become widely available until the mid 1980s. Today, lifestage diets are not only available for cats and dogs but also more exotic pets, such as iguanas and bearded dragons!

Manufacturers actually tried to bring dry pet foods to the UK market as early as the 1970s, following their massive success in the US, but pet owners over here were reluctant to make the switch and, as a result, dry food did not become popular in the UK until the 1980s. "Pet owners viewed their dogs as meat eaters and the association was that meat came in cans and therefore they bought cans for their dogs," said Peter Messent. "However, it was only a matter of time, as dry pet foods were becoming increasingly popular in other European countries as well as in the US."

As advertising regulations have become stricter over the years, some claims that were made in the past about

pet foods would simply not be allowed today, such as "PAL prolongs active life" and "keep your cat a kitten cat". The famous cat food slogan, "Eight out of ten cats prefer Whiskas" had to be changed to "Eight out of ten owners who expressed a preference said their cats preferred Whiskas." Not quite as catchy, is it?

Scientific advances in pet nutrition have meant that manufacturers are now not only thinking about meeting the nutritional needs of pets but also how health and wellbeing can be enhanced. For example, there are now foods with specific antioxidants to support the immune system and others with glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate to help maintain joint health.

Change to the menu

Mars Petcare started a formal study of pet nutrition in the early 1950s and by 1965 the Nutrition Research Unit was founded, which later became the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition. The Waltham logo was introduced to all Mars Petcare brands in 1991 to recognise their scientific formulation.

Chairman of the Pet Health Council, John Foster MRCVS,

said, "Thirty years ago we saw bad coats, poor teeth, poor digestion, rickets and shortened life spans as a result of inadequate nutrition. The widespread feeding of prepared pet foods and advancements in these diets has made a major difference. Pets are now living longer, healthier lives and we just don't see the nutrition-related conditions we used to."

Prepared pet foods have had to adapt to fit in with our changing lives over the years too. Urban living and modern working practices have driven a need for convenient ways of feeding pets. In the early days of pet food bigger was considered to be better and dog food cans gradually increased in size from 8oz to 3lb, which meant that packaging costs were considerably reduced. However, in this age of convenience, single-serve packs in pouches and aluminium trays thrive and have grown in popularity over the past 20 years.

Another shift in pet food fashion has been caused by the change in our relationships with our pets. Dogs are no longer seen as man's servant but as man's best friend, leading pet owners to favour premium and super premium prepared foods.

For an increasing number of pets in the UK, it seems that budget brands are just not good enough.

A survey conducted by the PFMA shows that 90 per cent of pet owners believe the food they feed their pet greatly affects its health and 92 per cent of pet owners make sure they give their pet the best-quality food.

Today's special

Commenting on food fashions, Michael Bellingham, PFMA chief executive, said, "Health and nutrition is a key trend. Consumers are increasingly focusing on high quality, premium pet foods for their dogs, cats and other small pets. Health-conscious consumers are aware that a good, balanced diet can have a major impact on wellbeing and this is equally relevant for their pets."

Next month we'll be finding out the UK's top brands as we focus on the current pet food market. We'll also be looking at the rise of the small independent manufacturer and decipher some of the latest pet food marketing buzzwords so you can make an informed choice about what to feed your dog. ■