

TOMORROW'S DOG BOWL

Dog food has undergone various revolutions in recent decades. What does the future bring? What will our dogs be eating in 2020?

In celebrating its 40th anniversary, the Pet Food Manufacturer's Association (PFMA) is looking to the future and has launched what it calls its '2020 Vision'. The PFMA is the principal trade body representing the UK pet-food industry, and its 60 members together represent 90 per cent of the prepared pet food sold in the UK. The PFMA's 2020 Vision is how the association sees the pet-food industry being able to shape the future of pet ownership and is divided into four sections - pet food, environmental, responsible pet ownership, and pets and people.

Despite massive growth in recent years, which has seen pet-food sales hit a record high of £2billion, the market is predicted to continue growing. Currently, 85 per cent of dogs are fed commercially prepared food, but the PFMA is aiming to increase this to 90 per cent by 2020 to help guarantee correct nutrition, leading to longer, healthier lives for our pets.

PFMA chief executive Michael Bellingham said, "A key target for growth is likely to be the pets not currently being fed prepared pet food. In 1960 only one quarter of a pet's

diet was commercial food. By 1970 that proportion was still under half, whereas today we estimate 85 per cent of a pet's diet is prepared pet food. Feeding a home-prepared diet is highly challenging and very difficult to get 100 per cent right. Why take the risk when there is a wealth of knowledge behind the various pet foods on the shelf today?"

Pet Health Council vet John Foster welcomes this vision, as he remembers too well the diet-related conditions he saw pets suffering from prior to the boom in prepared pet food. He said, "The number and variety of nutritionally related problems we, as vets in practice, encountered 40 years ago was legion. Memories are short, for we saw bad skin and coats, poor teeth and mouths, compromised digestion, bone diseases, blindness and shortened life spans. These were greatly the result of inadequate and inappropriate nutrition, changed fortunately now for the better. We will continue to develop educational materials with the PFMA to deny the mischievous myths surrounding quality manufactured pet food."

In addition to this target in the pet food section of the

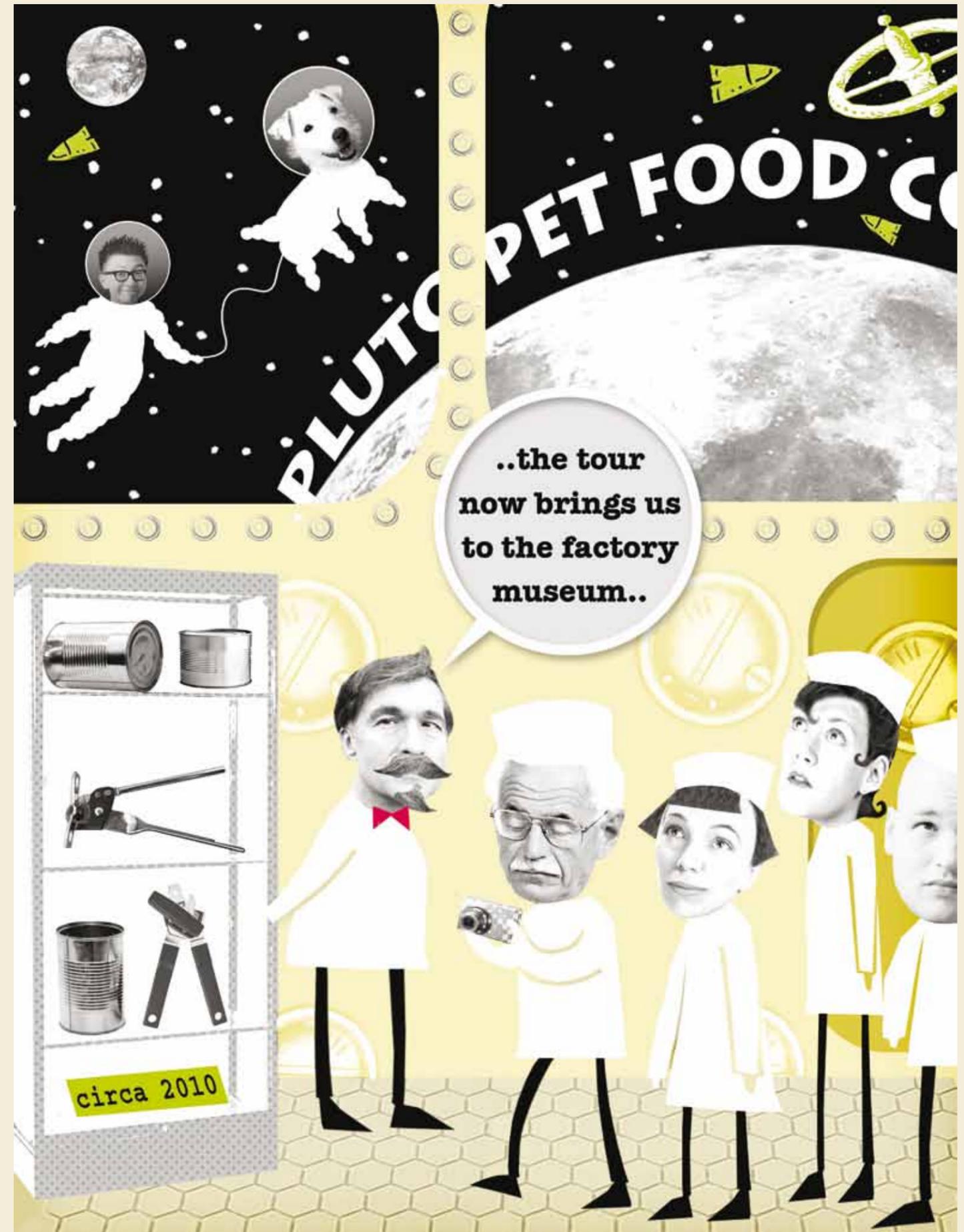
2020 Vision, the PFMA will distribute pet-obesity tools to highlight the importance of good pet nutrition to consumers and will raise awareness that feeding human foods, such as table scraps, is a major cause of obesity.

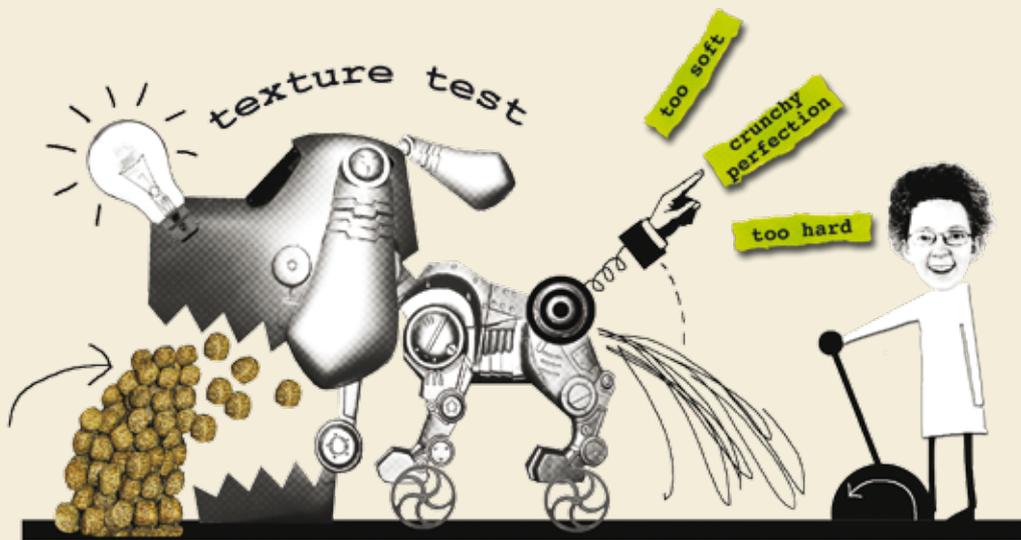
The PFMA sees the future of the pet-food market as being even more segmented than it is today, offering more consumer choice. It has noticed that one size no longer fits all and that some customers are moving towards more tailored products. First it was lifestyle, then lifestyle with food for working dogs, but we are now seeing foods designed for neutered animals, males and females, different sizes and different breeds.

All-encompassing

The first ever dry food aimed at crossbreeds is also on its way to market. Mike Hepke from Dereham, Norfolk, is in the process of developing the food to help raise money and awareness for mixed-breed dogs in rescue who often find it more difficult to find new homes than purebreds.

Mike currently runs the website www.plusbreeds.com and prefers the term 'plusbreed' to 'cross' or 'mongrel', as





he believes mixed breeds offer so much more. Inspired by his own plusbreed, Tess, Mike has trademarked the name Plusbreed and is joining forces with a small pet-food manufacturer to produce the new food.

"Many of these dogs are owned by people without vast cash resources, so we will be mid-market price-wise," explains Mike. "The dried food, however, will only contain natural products with no additives, and the meat will be human-grade with vegetables and wholegrains, but no wheat. Plusbreed dogs are less likely to suffer the digestive problems of some of the pedigree breeds, but, even so, our food will be both natural and easily digestible."

Easy to swallow

Mike's initial plan is to start with a plusbreed adult food, but in time increase the range to include senior and puppy, with any profits being re-invested into helping rescue plusbreeds. Mike continues, "The idea is to have visitors to our website nominate worthy local rescues, which we will make donations to and we'll supply as many rescues as possible with literature pointing out the advantages of plusbreed dogs. We hope to have the final recipe sorted out in the next couple of months and should launch our food early next year."

Small-animal nutrition is a rapidly evolving science and as new beneficial ingredients are

discovered, they are assessed and added to the products we see on the shop shelves where possible. We are already seeing maintenance pet foods that include pre- and probiotics to support the digestive system, EPA and DHA for joint, skin and coat condition, and gastrointestinal health and cognitive development.

Pauline Devlin, PFMA veterinary nutrition committee member, said, "Small-animal nutrition is a fast-moving science - developing all the time and every day there's an enhancement brought to products. This isn't likely to slow down. As companies become aware of additional benefits, they do what they can to add them to products. It's no longer enough just to meet the nutritional requirements of pets - it's now about the extras."

Environmental issues are a growing concern for both pet owners and pet-food manufacturers, which is why the PFMA has consulted with the government's Waste & Resource Action Programme (WRAP) to include targets to reduce the environmental impact of prepared pet foods in its 2020 Vision. These include: cutting CO2 emissions, reducing water usage, supporting best practice and behaving responsibly towards local communities, reducing the impact of transport, and using recyclable packaging where possible.

Andy Dawe, WRAP head of retail programmes, said, "We welcome the move by the

pet-food industry to commit to setting these goals. Reducing the amount of waste produced is the most effective thing we can do to protect our natural resources, cut costs and reduce our carbon footprint. We look forward to working with the PFMA and monitoring progress over the next 10 years."

The future's bright

A Mintel market-research report on cat and dog food published this year revealed that pet-food manufacturers are cashing in on our desire to humanise our pets by developing products that mirror human tastes. New developments in the US that are set to break into the UK market

soon include restaurant-style meals for dogs, such as Tuscan-Style Stew with Braised Beef, celebrity chefs creating dog food ranges, and the first national brand on refrigerated dog food.

There also seems to be an emerging trend for eating out with your pet. While we are still a long way off from France's canine café culture, there are eating establishments not just opening their doors to dogs but serving up special food for them, too.

Butchers has teamed up with pub company Brakspear to offer doggie diners their own menu with a choice of meals from its Meaty Feasts and Special Fayre ranges. The pubs involved - Five Alls near Lechlade, Gloucestershire, and the Catherine Wheel in Goring-on-Thames, Berkshire - were chosen because they already operate a dog-friendly policy and are popular with dog walkers. It is hoped that more pubs and restaurants will welcome doggie diners in the future, recognising them as part of the family.

The general consensus is that the future of dog food looks very bright. More choice for consumers, advances in nutrition and an increase in food quality with a reduction in environmental impact are all expected. ▶



We asked the experts - pet-food manufacturers in the market today - to give us their predictions for how they think the industry will change over the next 40 years. Turn over to find out their thoughts...

Future Food: how today's pet-food manufacturers think the industry will change over the next 40 years...

Craig Taylor, AMP

Once pet owners realise how simple it is to feed a fresh, raw diet, I think the future of pet food will be 'complete' raw foods. There's a greater awareness about healthy eating in general, and as a result we're reading the labels on packaging more. The media is promoting that we must make a conscious effort to reduce our intake of processed foods, to counter the rise in obesity and associated illnesses. Pet owners, too, are becoming more aware of the effects of processed feeding on their pets.

Many owners might have been daunted, confused or anxious about feeding a raw diet, but with products such as Natures Menu's complete single-serve portions and easy bite-size nuggets, nothing could be simpler to feed. These prepared raw frozen varieties offer the 'complete' food that our convenience lifestyles demand. But they also provide peace of mind for owners who want to feed their pets a healthy diet, packed with the natural nourishment they're looking for to give their pet a genuinely balanced diet that promotes good health.

George Burns, Land of Holistic Pets

The way we feed dogs has evolved at an alarming rate over the last 10 years, primarily because owners are becoming more informed about the relationship between diet and health. Set against this is the increasingly deceptive and subtle marketing claims - owners who are not fully clued up are becoming confused. With these main issues, the market will remain divided between the misinformed and the informed owner.

My interest lies with the people who know, understand and appreciate that knowledge improves health and, as the owners become more informed, as a manufacturer we too must be constantly looking at ingredients that can contribute to the overall health of their pets.

From this standpoint, I believe the market of what can be best described as the ultra-super-premium dog food will include increasing numbers of 'super foods' like spirulina, wheat/barley grass, green tea, leafy green vegetables, berries, nuts and others that are still to be discovered.

I have recently set up my own blending and packaging plant to be able to change and modify at short notice as new ingredients become available. Robbie's Meat Free Mixer, launching soon, is made up of a combination of instant whole grains, which include brown rice and oats, vegetables including spinach, green beans and carrots, supplemented with dried herbs - sage, parsley, spearmint, oregano and thyme.

Henrietta Morrison, Lily's Kitchen

This is a very exciting time for pet-food companies - customers are much more pro-active in their choices and really demand transparency in terms of labelling and what it is they are purchasing. I think they are fed up of blindly feeding their pets something that doesn't really reflect the promises of the label.

Our range is more expensive than most pet foods and this is because of the quality and quantity of ingredients we use. I was nervous about launching a range like this in a tight economic period, but the company has grown hugely over the last few months. Our customers tend to think, well, a Lily's Kitchen 400g tin of really good ingredients including 60 per cent real meat, is making my dog healthy as well as happy - it is worth the price of half a pint of beer or a cup of coffee!

I firmly believe that the days of discount pet foods are numbered. What we have noticed is the growth of people who cook for their pets themselves, because they feel that's the only way to really trust what's going into their pet - like I did for Lily. So, it's very much up to us, as pet food companies, to give them the transparency so they can make a choice they can trust.

Simon Loud, Futures Dog Food

With so much information available to us, many people are choosing hypo-allergenic recipes to help eliminate any allergy-related ailments, while the holistic approach offers confidence that what you are feeding your dog has been designed with good long-term health as a priority.

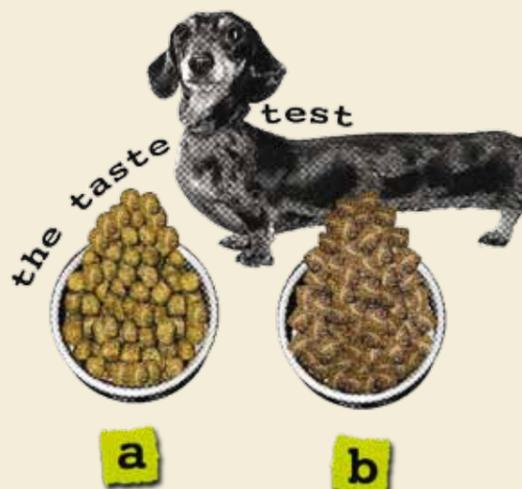
Can our dry dog food get any better in the future? We are not so sure; at present we use one of the best combinations of ingredients and processing procedures known to us. With the use of highly digestible ingredients of the highest quality, we may be at the pinnacle. However, as technology evolves, so shall our perception of what a complete dry dog food should really be and in recent years, with an ever-increasing demand for high quality, maybe some complete dry dog foods cannot get any better, but many more can!

Jonathan Self, Darling's Real Dog Food

In the short term, there will be lots of tiny companies like my own, producing high-quality, raw dog food - which is what dogs are biologically designed to eat - direct to consumers. Dog owners are starting to see the benefits of raw feeding and there's enormous interest in switching.

In the medium term, larger raw-dog-food companies are going to emerge - we hope Darling's will be among them - and the big players are going to find that they are no longer supplying what the market wants. Consumers are going to be angry that they weren't warned about some of the potential health issues with processed food. There may well be a huge dog food scandal along the lines of what happened with tobacco or powdered milk for babies.

In 40 years the market will have done a complete U-turn. Hardly any companies will sell processed food. The majority of dogs will be fed raw. Retailers will have cold cabinets and freezers with raw dog food in it. Feeding your dog dried or processed food will be frowned upon in the same way that feeding children fizzy drinks and fast food is frowned upon now - and for the same reasons!



Karen Rodger, Bern Pet Foods

We foresee an increasing demand in the coming years for the number of speciality foods available that contain large inclusions of good-quality meats and have a much lower reliance on fillers, such as rice, wheat or maize, that are currently found in many mainstream pet foods.

Uniquely different to conventional pet foods, ORIJEN and ACANA are designed to 'nourish as Nature intended' and more closely match the eating anatomy of dogs and cats, which are oriented to metabolise proteins and fats from meat, rather than the high-glycemic grains and vegetable proteins found in many regular pet foods. This reflects exactly what Mother Nature evolved dogs and cats to eat, and it is what they would choose if left to their own devices.

John Burns, Burns Pet Nutrition

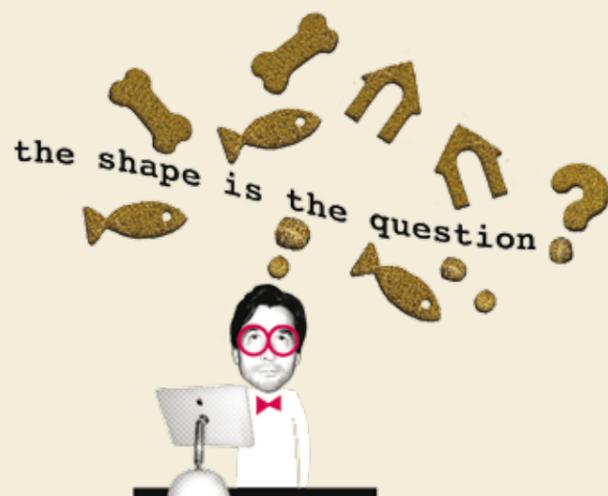
I recently gave talks entitled The Future of Pet Food at PATS (Pats and Aquatics Trade Show). In this I drew an analogy with the car industry. Imagine if the cars we have today were available in the 1960s, when having windscreen washers and heaters were luxuries. Why can't we have the pet food of the future now, rather than wait 40 years?

The Penlan range of moist dog food is my vision of the future. Sustainable farming methods, high standards of farm animal welfare, conservation and respect for the environment are the principles, which underpin how the ingredients are produced. The raw materials and the food itself are produced using a local workforce. The finished product is designed to give maximum health benefits to the dog consumers.

Peter Lancaster, James Wellbeloved

With an increasing human population there will be more demand for all resources - this is a global issue that will affect every pet food manufacturer. It will be essential that we all put every effort into sustainability, ensuring that the resources are used wisely and effectively. Quality and food safety will also be top of the list, and it's an area we have already committed to, with our plant in Somerset meeting the highest levels.

Feeding dogs the healthy, natural way will become even more important, and pet owners will seek out the convenience of foods like ours, which make it easy to feed healthily. I'm not going to reveal any trade secrets, but it's probably a pretty safe bet that if there's a naturally healthy option that gives dogs what they need, James Wellbeloved is probably already on the case! ▶



Dog Days...

SEPTEMBER

11 Saturday 11 September & Sunday 12 September
What: Paws in the Park - the UK's largest outside annual dog show for working, trained and pet dogs. With arena events, demonstrations, a companion dog show and heelwork to music workshop, quality trade stands and lots of have-a-go events.

Where: The Hop Farm, Kent
Time: 10am to 6pm
Cost: Adults £9, children and seniors £8, families £32. Pre-book online to save money at www.pawsinthepark.net
Contact: MDS Shows on 01730 266633 or visit the website above

12 Sunday 12 September
What: The Annual Reunion of Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, celebrating 150 years of helping dogs and cats in need. A great day out for all the family, including our four-legged friends.

Where: Battersea Park Boules Area, London SW11 4NJ
Time: 11am to 4.30pm
Cost: Free entrance. Classes cost £2 per entry
Contact: 020 7622 3626 or visit www.battersea.org.uk

18 Saturday 18 September
What: The Great Greyhound Gathering is a national dog show celebrating Greyhounds and the work of Retired Greyhound Trust. In its fourth year, the event will be attended by hundreds of Greyhounds and other breeds, with face painting, an archery competition

and stalls stocked with doggie goodies. All funds raised on this family fun day will go to the RGT.
Where: Nottingham Racecourse, Colwick Park, Nottingham NG2 4BE
Time: Registration from 9am, judging in three rings from 10.30am
Cost: Admission is free with a £2 charge per dog per class
Contact: Visit www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk or telephone 0844 826 8424

18 Saturday 18 September
What: UK Wolf Conservation Trust's exciting, fast-moving and hands-on Predator to Pet Workshop, developed in association with Wolf Park of Indiana, USA. Charting the domestication of dogs, this workshop includes a walk with an ambassador wolf

and a gift as a memento of the day.
Where: Butlers Farm, Beenham, Reading, Berkshire RG7 5NT
Time: 10am to 2pm
Cost: £50 per person; booking is essential
Contact: To book, call 0118 971 3330

19 Sunday 19 September
What: Annual Labrador Rescue South East & Central Dog Party, with fun games, agility, a gundog display, Caribbean food, homemade cakes and more.

Where: Dogs Trust, Harvil Rd, Harefield, Middx UB9 6JW
Time: 11am to 4pm
Cost: No admittance charge
Contact: Janet Butler on 01923 446785 or email janettebutler@aol.com or visit www.loveyourlabrador.co.uk



Dog Days...

SEPTEMBER

26

Sunday 26 September

What: The Autumn Kent Greyhound Rescue off-lead day in safe and enclosed paddocks. Let your Greyhound off for a run and swap stories with other owners. There will be the KGR 'Puppyganda' stall, open raffles, refreshments and other games

Where: Newington, Kent - off junction 12 of the M20

Time: 12pm to 5pm

Cost: £10 per adult, children and dogs go free. This is a ticket event only, so book early, as places are limited

Contact: Visit www.kentgreyhoundrescue.com or email kentgreyhoundrescue@yahoo.co.uk

26

Sunday 26 September

What: Chiswick House Gardens dog show, a day of doggie delights and fun dog classes for all the family. In its sixth year, expect a delicious treat bakery, a training school running agility and heelwork to music demonstrations, a Dogs Trust parade of canine residents, and a barbecue and food stalls.

Where: Chiswick House, Chiswick House Grounds, London W4 2RP

Time: Show starts at 10.30am and finishes with Best in Show at 3.30pm

Cost: Entrance is free, with a £2 charge for the dog show

Contact: To register for the dog show and for more information, visit www.chowgroup.co.uk. Alternatively, call 020 8742 3905 or email thechowgroup@yahoo.co.uk

26

Sunday 26 September

What: Charity Fun Dog Show in aid of The Canterbury Oast Trust, which provides homes and care for disabled people. There are 20 fun classes and fancy dress, dog agility, other stalls and refreshments. A great day out for families and dogs of all shapes and sizes.

Where: The Rare Breeds Centre, Woodchurch, near Ashford, Kent TN26 3RJ

Time: Booking in from 10am

Cost: Free admission, classes £3

Contact: Yvonne Bryce on 01233 860644

OCTOBER

9

Saturday 9 October

What: Dog Day Afternoon - a fun-filled day with obedience and trick demos, a dog show, and masses of stalls to choose accessories for your pet. There will also be lots of likeminded two- and four-legged friends to talk to, plus food and fashion stands.

Where: Cabbages and Frocks Market, St Marylebone Parish Church grounds, Marylebone High Street, London W1U 5BA

Time: 11am to 5pm. Demonstrations 12pm to 2pm, competitions from 2.30pm

Cost: Free admission

Contact: 020 7794 1636, info@cabbagesandfrocks.co.uk, www.cabbagesandfrocks.co.uk



Beate Rothon, Markus Muehle

Although Markus Muehle has only just entered the UK market, it does not mean that we do not have a clear vision of the future of pet food.

We have already started with the innovative Swiss Bone - a feeding treat, which is a high-quality dog food pressed into the shape of a bone. This allows the dog owner to feed their dog while on the go. There is no need to carry a bowl, which makes feeding very easy and fun, because the dog sees this bone as a treat.

Our vision for the future of cold-pressed dog food has already begun. Our sister company - Canis Natural - has created an innovative complete dog food that is soon coming to the UK market and its main message is: 'Hand in hand with nature.' This means producing a dog food without exploiting nature and, going a step further, actually helping it. As a result of this thinking, our whole company uses only green energy in the form of hydro power.

Our aim in the future is to refine this philosophy in all aspects, starting from the sources of the ingredients, production of the pet food and supplements, right up to the packaging, whether it is paper or organic material.

Ben Thompson, Mars Petcare

People-pet relationships are stronger than ever, with many owners believing that their pets have the same emotional and physical needs as humans. As the human population becomes increasingly urbanised, so pets are more often kept indoors. This invariably leads to stronger bonds between pet and owner, pet pampering and the desire to indulge - and this is a trend that's here to stay.

Pet food has evolved in response to this trend and we now see an increased desire in pet owners, not only to treat their pets to the very best, but also to ensure that what they feed them will be good for them and respond to all their nutritional requirements. Just as people are more concerned about what they eat, they are equally concerned for their pet's well-being and this will remain an important consideration when pet owners are selecting pet food.

Increased sales revenue in the pet-care category will not be driven by an increase in the animal population - this will remain more or less static. Growth will come in the form of an increased spend per calorie as consumers trade up to more premium and authentic lines.

Pauline Devlin, Royal Canin

Nutrition for dogs will become more and more tailored to individual needs. We're already a long way down the path, but as dog owners become increasingly discerning, they will demand more. Value for money will also continue to be a priority - and the notion that cheapest isn't the best is clearer and clearer. The environment will be another key issue - we are already into biocompostable packaging, reducing our carbon footprint by sourcing locally as much as possible and organising distribution for maximum efficiency.

