

AUSTRALIA'S PET FOOD MARKET



Fuelled by the humanisation of pets, the pet food market is growing and changing with product quality and safety at top of mind. But is it meeting conscious consumer expectations? **Caroline Zambrano** investigates the challenges faced by pet food companies and how they can remain competitive and build consumer confidence.

Australia's pet market consumer landscape is changing with younger pet lovers influencing the pet industry in unique ways and wielding a significant

purchasing power for the industry. These pet owners are adults between ages 18 and 34, and - unlike their parents and grandparents - are more informed, have tech prowess and indulge their pets, increasingly treating their pets like family members (pet humanisation)¹.

Numerous pet food industry studies are revealing health and wellness trends and changing consumer attitudes towards their own health and increasing pet nutrition awareness.

Pet food companies have every reason to lift their game in fulfilling more conscious consumer demand!

Regardless of trends in raw and packaged pet food, "As long as it's safe, nutritionally correct and appeals to the pet, then we feel as though our role is to offer value and variety choice to the owners," said Dr Duncan Hall, CEO of the Pet Food Industry Association of Australia (PFIAA).

"Pet owners also share some of the responsibility in feeding their pet a healthy diet, by understanding what they are trying

to achieve nutritionally for their pets."

Dr Hall said the pet food industry is also inherently reliant upon pets being seen as a core element of Australian society, "and as many of us in the industry are committed pet owners, we support initiatives for responsible pet ownership and the role of pets in our community."

For instance, Mars Petcare's Keep Australia Pet Friendly campaign, launched in 2016 by celebrity vet Dr Chris Brown, champions pet owners' right to have animals in their homes. The campaign has brought together academics, politicians, health organisations and pet owners to give a voice to companion animals across Australia that are proven to make a significant impact to our health and our hip pocket, according to a Mars Petcare-commissioned *Healthcare Economics of Pets* report.

Mars Petcare further conducted a new nationwide survey that revealed more than 4.3 million (22%) Australians struggle to find a suitable home to share