



WHAT DO PET OWNERS THINK ABOUT PET TECH?

The Consumer Technology Association's Pet Technology: Ownership, Use and Perceptions study (April 2018) shows consumer technology makes life better and that applies to people and their pets, too.

- > 6 in 10 pet owners acknowledge pet tech has useful applications that could bring them peace of mind.
- > Awareness of pet tech is highest for products that have been around for several years, such as wireless fencing systems (63%), automatic feeder/fountain products (56%) and electronic training collars (56%).
- > 43% of pet owners learn about pet tech from physical stores, friends and family members (37%) or searching online (37%).
- > When it comes to ownership among pet owners aware of a given technology, interactive toys (50%) top the list, followed by pet health apps (37%).

The survey also showed spending on pet tech is greatly influenced by previous pet ownership.

- > Among owners of pet tech, 60 percent who previously owned a pet spent more than \$200 on pet tech in the past year.
- > 58% of pet tech owners who have not previously owned a pet spent \$200 or less on these solutions last year.

Pet owners purchase pet tech based on cost (62%), ease of use (60%), durability (52%) and the trustworthiness of the brand (33%). Barriers to ownership of pet tech include cost (56%) as well and a perceived lack of need (53%).

CTA's research shows safety and security are the biggest problems pet owners want technology to solve. Also, pet owners want technology to ensure their pets are not lonely when they are away from home.

- > 35% of dog-only owners report their pet's behaviour is the biggest problem pet tech should solve versus 20% of cat-only owners.
- > 32% of cat-only owners report their pet's food/water intake is the biggest problem pet tech should solve versus about 18% of dog-only owners.

1. American Pet Products Association's (APPA) 2017-2018 National Pet Owners Survey,
2. <https://petobesityprevention.org/>

"One could say if tech is the be all and end all, we won't need veterinarians because we have artificial intelligence. That won't work for pet and owners because they appreciate and value the intimacy, care, understanding and individualisation and personalisation of those interactions."

What retailers must recognise, Urquhart said, is that the true value, satisfaction, fulfilment and love that we have with our pets involve time.

"Unfortunately, a lot of people are driven by time and they think because they are time-poor they can have technology to help them do things in their absence. But that will only fracture the pet-owner relationship. If we have pets, we need to invest time not technology," he said.

It's also a question of timing – do you need the technology right now? Over time the tech product or service will improve, become cheaper, more effective and efficient.

"When you are dealing with technology, you are looking at efficiency rather than effectiveness. To have a better relationship and greater control over your pets, you need not efficiency but effectiveness," explained Mr Urquhart.

In the past, Australians have been very much at the forefront in embracing technology. But this has slowed down because we do not see the value, he said.

"Instead of rushing out to buy the latest tech, many will sit back and watch the innovators (who pick up and run with anything new) and the early adopters (those driven by technology) and see what comes of this," he said.

Urquhart also shared advice for retailers who are reluctant about entering the tech space, warning they will miss out on giving customers a better in-store/clinic experience.

"The difficulty you'll have is with customers who heard about the tech, will look for it, 80% won't buy it but they will look at it and evaluate it. If you haven't got the tech product, what's locked in their mind is that you are out of date and therefore they won't go back. You're not losing a sale, you're building an image in the customer's mind of what is available," he said.

Of greater concern to the pet industry is the change in how individuals can learn about companies and its products and services, compare service and