

Patriotic Pets

Customers are pledging allegiance to American-made products.

By Kathleen Furore

New York City's Honda of Manhattan was poised to become a pet product showroom this month. There, vendors will display and sell their "Made in America" wares to retailers attending the NYC Re-Tails & Sales Expo on Feb. 19.

Sponsored by the business networking group Long Island Pet Professionals (www.LongIslandPetProfessionals.com) and Whitegate PR, the event will be the area's first boutique pet exposition showcasing American-crafted and -sourced products, according to Nancy E. Hassel, founder and president of Babylon, N.Y.-based Long Island Pet Professionals. And it underscores the role the "Made in America" label has started to play in the pet product industry.

"It seems like there are more and more 'Made in USA' labels on more pet products than there were five years ago," Hassel says. "It could also be that more companies that have always made their pet products here are just now putting that in a more obvious spot on the label or package, since more consumers are looking for that."

Why the Surge?

Recent recalls, along with concerns about the economy, are playing into an uptick in requests for "Made in America" pet products, Hassel suggests.

"There are a lot of factors influencing why pet owners want the 'Made in USA' seal on the pet products they buy. For one, there have been so many recalls and illnesses and deaths related to pet food and treats from products not fully sourced or made in the USA," she notes. Some pet parents, she adds, are just very conscious about where products they buy come from: "It is very important to them that the product is made here."

Manufacturers confirm the surge in requests for domestically sourced items, which is good news for companies like Wahl Clipper Corp., a maker of grooming products such as pet clippers and all-natural shampoos. The Sterling, Ill.-based company has been providing quality U.S.-made items for the past 95 years, Shay Moeller, product manager, consumer pet North America, says.

"A growing trend in the consumer market is a demand for American-made products," Moeller

reports. "This demand has allowed Wahl to continue to grow market share in clippers and all-natural pet shampoos."

That growth has come from Wahl's safe, value-priced, domestically made products like the Lithium Ion pet clipper with cordless operation and the power to run for two hours on one charge. "It offers pet owners the convenience of grooming their pets anywhere and anytime," Moeller explains. The No-Rinse Waterless Shampoo that lets pet owners clean their animals without water is among the company's newest offerings, he adds.

Cranbury, N.J.-based Loving Pets (loving-petsproducts.com/) also offers "100% Made in the USA" products. The company's It's Purely Natural Dog Treats and Purrfectly Natural Cat Treats are made of all-natural, USA-farmed ingredients. The treats have no additives, byproducts or artificial preservatives, and are glycerin-, gluten-, soy- and wheat-free.

Switching production from China back to the United States is another trend Hassel is seeing. Ramsey, Minn.-based CritterZone USA, for example, plans to bring operations back to the States this year. "Within the next two months, manufacturing



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The Product of USA Certified Seal and Grown in USA Certified Seal require 100 percent U.S. content. The Service in USA Certified Seal requires that 100 percent of the labor force be in the United States.