

Special Report: Supporting the Independent



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Smiley Dog**

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SwedenCare USA**



From Pg. 2

their products from being sold on Amazon, Chewy and big box retailers. "This is different from MAP and policies which are moving targets," he said.

"I did not get the impression that many manufacturers were overly concerned or serious about supporting independents at the expense of lost sales from other channels. The few that were, have and will receive more support from us," Weindling said.

Similarly, Bill Trufant of B&B Pet Shop didn't see too much independent support from manufacturers. Trufant said, "I really can't say that I feel that they do. Blue Buffalo and Nutro going to the mass market certainly doesn't help. Greenies going mass next year is not good for us either. Fortunately, since we've been doing this for more than 37 years we've made friends in the industry and probably will get more 'help and support' than the average store."

Trufant believes this reinforces why retailers have to go to shows. "You have to make those contacts and meet with these people. You have to see and be seen! That would be a way of looking at how manufacturers commit to brick-and-mortars. They show up and exhibit at these shows," he said.

Scott Reinhardt of SwedenCare, USA reinforced its commitment to pet specialty independent retailers at SuperZoo 2018. "First and foremost, our long-term plan is to maintain the independent channel of trade as a path to the consumer. Many brands are jumping track into the big box pet and grocery—food, drug and mass market like Walmart," Reinhardt said.

"Our product depends on a knowledgeable individual at store level that can engage a consumer on problems—apparent or not, like the importance of clean teeth and proper oral care—and

then recommend solutions for those needs," he added.

Shane Sommerville of Paddywack likes to attend SuperZoo as it gives her an opportunity to connect with her representatives and owners of companies that her store works with. "Developing personal relationships with the people behind what we offer gives us continuing confidence in the brands that we offer at our store," Sommerville said.

What Sommerville dislikes is the break-neck pace that she and her husband, Adam, have to work at while attending the show. "The show is only so many hours, plus trying to make time for educational seminars, it can create a really hectic and stressful time," she said. "My husband and I often do a divide and conquer strategy, plus we come in with a list of booths to visit ordered by booth number, so we can be sure not to miss anything we need to see," she added.

The Sommervilles are always excited to learn about the ways that companies are enhancing and expanding their products so that they can share that all with their customers. "We also like finding new brands to work with that offer unique or fun products that our local competitors don't offer," she said.

Sherry Redwine of Odyssey Pets loves attending SuperZoo because of cheap flights, fun stuff to do within a short distance after the show, many after-parties, the helpful app and lots of hotel choices. "The only drawbacks are that it may be a little too big. I would like longer show hours. I get up early and would hit the floor at 8 a.m.," she said.

Redwine believes big companies like Blue and Science Diet throw money at their booths and it's a little much. "Manufacturers that aren't 'independent only' usually have a way to lure us in. They'll assure us that we're getting the same pricing as everyone else or offer

a line only we can carry," Redwine said.

Trufant said, "If I had to only go to one show it would be SuperZoo, though we go to both SuperZoo and Global. I like the general feel on the show floor at SuperZoo." Trufant also liked the availability of water and lounges on the show floor and the party after the first day but suggested more seating and more than one door at the beginning.

"Kenny Loggins was great! The Monday seminars were first class. We sat in on a couple of Lynn Switanowski's talks and as always, she was great," he added.

That said, Trufant thought SuperZoo 2018 was too big. "The whole reason to go to these shows is to meet face-to-face with company representatives, see their new products and pick up on deals. With the show being so big we found ourselves rushing through booths just so we could see everything and everybody," Trufant said. "I really don't like the show being so early and so close to Global Pet Expo," he added.

After having received from SuperZoo attendees about the show being too early in the year and conducting a post-show analysis, the WPA announced on Aug. 8, that it was rescheduling the show to Aug. 19-22 in 2019.

Jacinthe Moreau, WPA president believes SuperZoo's goal is to provide the most robust platform of product discovery, education and networking. "After several conversations and in-depth post-show research analysis, we realized that hosting SuperZoo in August more efficiently matches the business goals and priorities of both brands and retailers," Moreau said.

"In visits with independent pet retailers across the country, our community relations team was able to gain valuable insights and bring information back to our team to ensure the needs of

Cont'd on Pg. 6