

SUPERZOO TAKEAWAYS

Dog Toys

Made in the US, environmentally-conscious toys that keep pets occupied and mentally stimulated for longer are a new standard for dog toys. At SuperZoo 2018, manufacturers showed their heart was firmly in the game with innovative products.

David Hayford hopes Tether Tug's customers realized the company was getting better and here to stay. "It's hard to break through. We are fortunate to have a unique product that separates us from the noise. We rebranded our products to be more dealer-friendly, added a video monitor to our display and several new products including Easy Tug, another game changer that is easy for everyone to bring in," Hayford said.

iFetch's main focus at SuperZoo was launching its new iDig—a digging toy for dogs. "We entered the iDig in SuperZoo's New Product Showcase and won Best New Product in the dog category. It was so exciting for our family-run company. We're proud to say every iFetch product we've developed has won an award in the SuperZoo New Product Showcase. It was nice to keep the streak alive," said Renae Donus of iFetch. "It's confirmation that what we're doing matters to the industry. It's very rewarding to be recognized," Donus said.

At every SuperZoo, ZippyPaws looks to show the industry what the company is all about—trendy, colorful and high-quality pet products for the modern dog and owner. "SuperZoo is also the perfect opportunity to engage face-to-face with customers and others in the industry so we can get to know them on a more personal basis," said Leah Angelos of ZippyPaws.

Lafayette Bay Products' wanted to convey to retailers that it is an expanding company with innovation. On the show being a success, Ward Myers said, "We landed a couple of large accounts that were unexpected."

Huxley & Kent's Robin Kershner was at SuperZoo for several reasons. "We were there mainly to show our holiday merchandise and take preorders. We were also debuting new products for Spring 2019 and were there for customer feedback," Kershner said. "That input from retailers is invaluable," she added.

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**Michael Dagne,
Pet Palette**

The focus for West Paw at SuperZoo was its new collection of Zogoflex Echo dog toys. "These toys were designed and manufactured by us to bring a fun squeeze to two of dogs' favorite shapes—a stick and a tennis ball. They were well received because they are safer than the original shapes and extremely durable. Our Zogoflex dog toys continue to be popular among our retail partners and customers, we enjoyed giving them more of what they want," said Spencer Williams of West Paw.

Starmark's main focus was to showcase its new products, Bend-E Branches and FlexGrip Toys, and meet buyers and retailers. "We hope visitors were able to take with them Starmark's story and dedication to improving the lives of canine companions with behavior solutions through product innovation," Starmark's Emily Benson said.

True Dogs' aim was to showcase its expanding product range and addition of several brands to its portfolio. "We are implementing a channel segmentation strategy made up of multiple brands including SodaPup, USA-K9, Spotnik, Industrial Dog, Diva Dog and MuttsKickButt, each targeting a different distribution channel and consumer type," said Adam Baker of True Dogs.

Kershner revealed Huxley & Kent wrote a lot of orders, saw a very high-quality buyer and met several new retailers. "The numbers were good in terms of orders and traffic. This got our holiday pre-book season off to a great start," she said.

iFetch was pleased to be a part of the first-ever Pet Tech Center at SuperZoo. "Our iFetch Too automatic ball launcher was featured as one of the more than 50 products on display in this special area. That SuperZoo recognizes how integral

the pet tech category has been to industry growth is refreshing," Donus said.

Michael Dagne of Pet Palette thought SuperZoo 2018 was a very good show, especially with the change in dates and moving closer to Global. "With that said, we would still like to see this show a little later in the summer. We sell a lot of holiday Q4 merchandise, so we prefer dates when retailers are ready to put their orders together," Dagne said. "We saw a very high-quality buyer at this show, and we'd like to suggest SuperZoo help keep up that quality," he added.

Williams appreciated that SuperZoo organizers listened to feedback from longtime participants. "It is clearly reflected in their new showcases. We appreciate they continue new tactics to help drive traffic to our booth and call out unique differentiators the marketplace is looking for," he said.

Baker suggests the size of the show be limited. "It has gotten so big that retailers and vendors suffer. If we assume the number of retailers is not expanding, then larger shows mean the same buyers have to cover more ground. There's a dilution effect, which is bad for retailers. Too much choice is bad. It creates confusion and fatigue," he said.

Myers suggests SuperZoo make the show later in the year. "A lot of customers did not go as they were either just at Global Pet Expo or Interzoo," he said.

Hayford would also like to see the show pushed farther back. "Consensus is Global and SuperZoo are too close together," he said. Hayford felt it strained resources. "Both shows wanted us to reserve our booth for next year within a couple weeks of each other. Both are great shows but when they are stacked on top of each other it's tough," he said.

Benson's overall experience at the show was good. "We had a lot of booth visitors, both new and those familiar with Starmark. Having multiple entrances to the floor appeared to help traffic flow to different areas," she said.

Angelos said, "We had an amazing show this year but did have a product go missing from the New Product Showcase." She added, "It just means that someone couldn't resist getting their hands on our products."