

SUPERZOO TAKEAWAYS

Litter Boxes

The SuperZoo show gave suppliers the chance to show, which is quite often easier, than explain what sets their litter box solutions apart. By demonstrating at their booths for visiting retailers, companies drew attention to common pain points for cat owners and effective solutions to address these issues.

"As we were launching our line in the US market, we were mainly focused on being seen and trying to get people into the booth to explain our new and innovative technology," said Frederick Soares with Cateco. "Unfortunately, a passive technology is harder to explain than just 'showing' how it works, so the best way is still to explain how it works," Soares said.

Tradeshows like SuperZoo give exhibitors the chance to test out their latest solutions and product lines on retailers whose input they value. Catit, a leader within the litter boxes category, seized the opportunity to debut its entry into the consumables segment. "Catit is proud to introduce consumables to our faithful followers," said Jeff SanSouci with Catit. "Since the early days of Catit we have always received requests for foods and treats," SanSouci said. "At SuperZoo we debuted our Creamy Lickable Cat Treats, Nibbly Crunchy Cat Rewards and Catit Pate Cat Food, along with our Catit Clumping Litter."

"We know pet owners' needs evolve," said Chantal Saelen with Moderna. "We look at households that have multiple cats, bigger cats, also households that have a dog and a cat, so we need to make sure that products are adapted to those new lifestyles," Saelen said. "Our latest innovation includes a top-entry Top Cat Closed Litter Box where it makes it difficult for dogs to sniff around in the cat box, which is a solution to one of those problems. The last boxes we designed are also bigger so they accommodate households that have more than one cat. We try to adapt our new products to that."

"We're seeing a lot more connected or electronics tech products for sure," Soares said. "We're also seeing a lot of new alternative cat litters which is always interesting as we develop a prod-



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uct that claims to work with mostly any type of cat litters to avoid transitions and stress for the cat," he said.

"The Pet Tech area was eye opening to see how much technology and innovation are being pumped into our industry," SanSouci said. "These items might get lost when they are scattered through the show, but when you see it all together, it is eye opening," he said.

"In the ideal world, we look at stores where staff and store managers have the ability or time to explain the product, but that's not always the case," Saelen said. "So there needs to be educational materials on the shelf that explain the product better," she said. "We also know a lot of retailers have online support where we can offer small movies, or there are small screens in the store where we can upload those kinds of videos in real life—how it's used, how it needs to be cleaned, how it needs to be assembled. All of those things that would help grow the category. Education is key."

"Knowing the assembly instructions, these are the three steps you need to take to assemble the product; these are the three steps you need to follow to clean the product and then the top three features of the product would help educate consumers and justify the pricing in many ways," Saelen added. That information should get to the consumer in different ways."

"Considering our budget and booth size (10 x 20), we managed to get quite a few retailers, chains and distributors in the booth and are actively working on getting the line in with most of them as of now," Soares said. "As this was our target, we can claim we achieved our goal!" he said.

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"As our product line is made in Canada, we weren't able to showcase our products in the 'Made in the USA Showcase', and although being a 'tech' product, it is not an electronic or 'connected' one," Soares said. "The Cateco's technology is based on passive air circulation to lower the bacteria growth and therefore odors in the cat litter box," he said. "Our NOBA scoops are innovative by their design and efficiency as well as their very affordable cost!"

"Although we did not participate in the Pet Tech and Made in the US showcases, they were both very impressive," SanSouci said. "It was nice to see all the innovation highlighted in one area," he said.

"The main target is always trying to stand out in our product category and even in the New Product Showcase, this is one big challenge," Soares said. "We saw a lot of advertising opportunities and we'll probably consider them next year to get in front of people we weren't able to reach prior to the show," he said. "One step at a time I guess!"

"I would like to see the show go a little later," SanSouci said. "When the lights go off at 5 p.m., we are still busy in our booth," he said. "The extra hour would be nice."