

INTERVIEW



John Howe, CEO,
Manna Pro Products LLC

“Manna Pro is a forward-thinking, progressive animal wellness company in high growth mode”

You spent 30 years in the pet industry. How did you decide to join?

I was recruited out of college by Ralston Purina, along with some other big consumer product companies. I chose Ralston Purina because I grew up in a pet-owning household and recognized the deep connection between pets and their owners. I thought it would be a very interesting business to work in.

Specifically what about working in the pet industry appeals to you?

I continue to love the business. Pet owners are incredibly enthusiastic about their pets and always looking for a better way to care for them. This makes the business very fun and rewarding for those inclined to innovate.

How did you decide to join Manna Pro in 2001? What makes it a good fit for you?

I joined Manna Pro as VP of Sales and Marketing primarily because I saw an opportunity to focus the business on the pet consumer. I felt that this focus would have a big impact on the company and it certainly has.

What are your top priorities to focus on in the coming year?

We will focus on growing our dog, cat and backyard chicken businesses in 2018 through marketing, sales and new product development. We will follow up our 2017 implementation of SAP by continuing to invest and improve our overall operations and efficiencies.

How did your experience with Spectrum Brands, Golden Harvest Products and Ralston Purina (now Nestle Purina PetCare) prepare you for

your role as CEO of Manna Pro?

My experience at Ralston Purina was a professional bedrock for me. I fell in love with the pet consumer and, of course, that consumer is still near and dear to me. Making the jump to smaller company environments was great preparation for my time at Manna Pro.

In what ways does Manna Pro's line of products differ from other brands when it comes to providing everyday solutions in supplements (Nutri-Vet & Corta-Flx), flea & tick (Nutri-Vet), grooming (Espree) and oral care (Espree & PetzLife)?

Manna Pro offers innovative, high quality, safe and trusted brands that nurture life and enhance our consumers' connection with their animals. Our consumers view their animals as members of the family and we want to provide them products that are consistent with that vision.

Manna Pro appeals not only to cat and dog owners, but also to the backyard farmer. How has this helped Manna Pro to stand out among its competitors?

Manna Pro's roots go back to the 1800s and include pioneers of the animal feed industry. Almost 20 years ago we saw an opportunity to market a broad, high quality product line to these lifestyle farmers who viewed their horses, chickens and goats as pets.

During the last several years we have expanded into the traditional dog and cat pet space by acquiring established companies that manufacture and market wellness products, grooming products and flea-and-tick products.

How do pet owners prefer to shop for their pets and how is Manna Pro working with retail partners to meet them halfway?

There has been a huge trend among consumers to humanize their pets. Pet “parents” want their animal companions to mimic their lifestyles by living healthier, looking better and participating in enjoyable activities.

They are willing to pay more for quality and/or luxury products. We provide our partners with the products and the materials to meet the demands of this growing consumer segment.

How has Manna Pro's record of 10 acquisitions within seven years enhanced its product portfolio?

These acquisitions have given us the opportunity to deliver Manna Pro's heritage of quality, value and service to a whole new set of customers and consumers. And, by adding these brands in our trade channels, we also experienced sizeable growth.

How does Manna Pro determine which companies to acquire while maintaining steady, sustainable growth?

We look for leaders in areas that complement our existing product lines and help customers with a fuller range of nutrition and health issues.

In 2017 alone, Manna Pro acquired Corta-Flx, Espree, PetzLife and Star Horse Products, strengthening its presence in the supplements, grooming and oral care categories.

What made each company appealing to Manna Pro and how have they played a role in helping the compa-

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