

heardabout

# Going to the Dogs

**S**OME YEARS AGO, a company that sent regular mailings to our magazine had us erroneously entered in its addressing system as "Tack 'n Dogs." I guess it simply figured our primary topics were horses and dogs!

Who knew that one day we'd be writing about how equine retailers can use the natural synergy between horse owners and dog owners to boost sales and profits?

Trends have been a big part of equine retailing since the beginning. At one point in our evolution, Western boots were the purview of footwear stores.

Later, the trend moved toward Western boots as part of the lineup of products Western stores stocked.

Some years later, a handful of retailers discovered that work boots sold well in their Western stores, and several manufacturers jumped in with work lines to create another trend. Today, most Western stores have a line of work boots.

Gift lines and home furnishings have also become commonplace in equine stores in recent years.

Slowly and carefully, pet products have been making their way onto shelves of both Western and English stores. The trend actually seems to be strongest with English-oriented stores.

A number of manufacturers in our industry offer pet products, and a growing number of retailers recognize that folks who will buy high-end goods for their equine are also willing to shell out for their canine.

The story in this edition gives retailers an idea of the size of the market for pet products, the experience of a number of retailers already signed up and some suggestions for products to get them started.

The American Pet Products Marketing Association (APPMA) was a big help in providing statistics and "talking points" for the story. The association is a fountain of facts and figures and hosts one of the largest trade shows in the country. The association also produces a comprehensive national pet owners survey, which provides really useful information for both manufacturers and retailers.

It would be extremely helpful for the equine industry to have a similar study, although I'm guessing the price tag for the study is probably equal to the total annual operating budget of the Western-English Trade Association.

Almost every day, someone calls our offices asking for sales statistics and similar information for the equine industry. There are some pieces here and there, some more helpful than others, but nothing comprehensive.

The reasoning for not having such information has always been that the mostly smaller companies in our industry would never give up their sales data by category. The APPMA got around that by conducting its survey of pet owners.

A survey of horse owners would be the equivalent in our industry. Of course, that opens the door to the question of how honest horse owners would be when completing a survey! 🐾



Paul Wahl, Editor



## Editorial and Production

Editor

Paul Wahl

Assistant Editor

Barb Kastens

Advertising Production Coordinator

Sue Slominski

Graphics Production Coordinator

Jim Heffron

Copy Editor

Kristin Kauffman

English Editor

Charlene Strickland

Business Editor

Phillip Perry

## Advertising Sales

Advertising Sales Manager

Dustin Rossow

Phone (952)930-4375 Fax (952)930-4362

E-mail [drossow@tackntogs.com](mailto:drossow@tackntogs.com)

Classified Advertising

Sarah Haslerud

Phone (952)930-4357 Fax (952)930-4362

E-mail [shaslerud@tackntogs.com](mailto:shaslerud@tackntogs.com)

INDIA

K.S. Giani/A.S. Gianni

Westcott Bungalow, 37/17 The Mall,

P.O. Box 175, Kanpur-208001, INDIA

Phones (91)(512) 360528, 268491 or 315259

Fax (91)(512) 311356 (GIANI/57) or 311627

## Corporate Officer

Publisher

Sarah Muirhead

## Editorial & Advertising Sales Offices

Miller Publishing, 12400 Whitewater Dr.,

Suite 160, Minnetonka, MN 55343

Telephone (952) 930-4390

FAX (952) 930-4362

## Web Site Address

[www.tackntogs.com](http://www.tackntogs.com)

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