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Pet Treats and Chews in the U.S., 3rd Edition

SAMPLE

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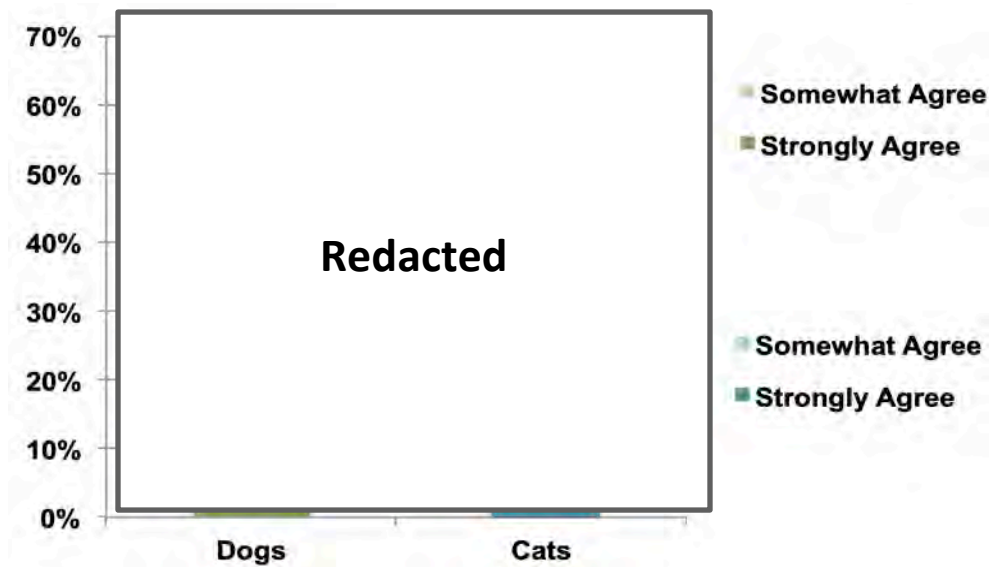
Natural and Organic Treats

Although the term “natural” remains highly subjective in both the pet and human food markets, marketers rely heavily on the term when advertising their products. Natural products, those products for which natural ingredients represent a primary part of the product positioning, are making up a larger and larger part of the pet market, including the treats business, with many of the new product introductions featuring natural claims. Organic products are growing as a percentage of the market as well, especially as more consumers realize that, unlike natural products, organic products must fulfill a stringent set of criteria in order to be labeled as such.

Either way, natural and organic treats are no longer a niche part of the market. Most major marketers currently field at least one brand line devoted entirely to natural or organic products, and many retailers have entered the fray as well, launching natural or organic private-label lines. A wide range of treat trends falls under the natural banner, including the desire for simpler ingredients and whole-foods-based treats, as well as the need for limited ingredients due to allergy concerns. Melissa Olson, marketing director of raw food and treat specialist Vital Essentials, notes that the natural trend is now being driven by younger pet owners. “Millennial pet parents are beginning to influence the trend to more natural treats and chews...As they are increasingly becoming among the largest consumer group to own pets, they are also changing the types of food and treats that are being purchased and ultimately become in demand. They want to treat their pets with items that are healthier and natural, more so than their older counterparts” (petproductnews.com, July 1, 2019). With more and more younger pet owners seeking out natural treat options, treat marketers can be sure that the natural treat trend is going to continue its market impact.

In response, the percentage of treats featuring “natural” in their description has sky-rocketed, to the point that being a “natural” product is no longer enough: consumers now *expect* to see natural labels, equating these products with being healthier and better for their pets, while also seeking out additional innovation. As more and more pet owners are feeding their pets premium natural pet foods, more are realizing that they want to support their pets’ health with treats of similar quality. Luckily, one of the changes in the natural treats market is affordability: natural treats are now available at price points ranging from value to premium to accommodate consumers along the entire price spectrum. The appeal is widespread, and Packaged Facts survey data show that XX% of dog owners and XX% of cat owners seek out pet treats made with natural ingredients. [Figure 4-2]

Figure 4-2
Level of Agreement with the Statement, “I seek out pet treats made with natural ingredients,” 2019
(percent of dog and cat owners)



Source: Packaged Facts July/August 2019 Survey of Pet Owners

Many of the other trends in the treats market dovetail with the broader movement towards natural products: product pitches and trends featuring a discussion of “what’s *not*” in a product (as seen in trends including grain-free, non-GMO, no byproducts or fillers, no artificial preservatives, and limited ingredients); formulations boasting human-grade ingredients; more “real” or “whole” ingredients, including fresh meat, fruits and vegetables; and trendy functional ingredients and superfoods. Ever-increasing specificity about nutritional content, ingredient sourcing, and manufacturing practices, as well as the brandishing of overtly human food product claims such as low-glycemic and gluten-free, are taking the natural pet food and treats market ever further down the path of pet humanization and the adoption of human product market trends.

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- Pet treats and chews
- Natural, organic and eco-friendly pet products
- Equine market
- Pet supplies
- Pet medications
- Pet supplements
- Dog and cat durables
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