

## **NEW GENERATION DOG DENTAL CHEWS FEATURE INNOVATIVE DESIGNS**

**October 2017**

**New dental chew products for dogs look to take a step beyond the traditional.**

**LINDSAY BEATON**

**Dental-focused pet treats , particularly for dogs, are hot-ticket items for pet parents. Looking for a simple, inexpensive way to contribute to their pets'**

**oral health, customers want something that will catch their eye as well as their animal's. Overall, the treats and chews market in the US stands at a projected US\$6.4 billion for 2017, according to the latest Packaged Facts data, with dental treats and chews making up a 15 percent share (US\$960 million).**

**"Pet owners grab up treats and chews for many reasons: healt-related, as is the case with dental treats and those formulated to address a specific condition or enhance general wellness; for entertainment, as with edible long-lasting chews or with treats inserted into a play-inducing dispenser; or training, as is the case with compact, easily pocket-able treats used as a reward for good behavior," said Packaged Facts. "At the same time — and top of list for many pet owners — treats offer a way to interact with their pets and express affection, with treat time serving an important role in the uman/animal bond."**

**Those pet treat manufacturers venturing into the dental segment are aware of all the components pet owners are seeking, and are turning to innovation to provide what their customers are looking for. Design innovations combine visual appeal, functionality While pet dental treats must obviously work for the pet, dogs and cats aren't the ones making purchases. As a result, pet treat manufacturers work to catch customers' eyes, knowing that if they don't, pets may never see their products. "People like**

different, cute things to purchase,” said Dawn Bowerman, former director of sales and marketing at Dozers Dental Chews. “People buy our products, not the dogs. They buy them because their dogs like them, but if something catches their eye ... ”

Dozers has merged form and function in its new dental treats . “What our product line does is it allows dogs to break that bacteria and things off their teeth in just the chew motion, to help keep their teeth clean and give them fresh breath,” said Bowerman. “A couple different things we did in our treats, is we made the design so that dogs can also clean their tongue. We have different-sized teeth on what looks like a toothbrush, so during that chewing motion it helps break plaque right off dogs’ teeth and then it freshens their breath, which is helping again with the bacteria. It’s also made so you can put other things in the back, like peanut butter.” Merrick Pet Care has just launched Fresh Kisses, a new line of pet dental treats with a double-brush design that the company says is new to the category. “The double brush provides double the benefits,” said Pete Brace, vice president of communications and pet parent relations for Merrick. “Not only do they provide fresh breath, but they also clean teeth. So, two benefits are being delivered in one treat. We know that pet parents looking for a dental treat have both issues that they have to overcome.” SwedenCare USA’s approach to dental treats has involved a focus on clinical functionality, appealing to customers from the additional benefits side of things. “With the ongoing humanization of pet foods and edibles such as treats, consumers are seeking products that are functional,” said Scott Reinhardt, vice president of sales and marketing with SwedenCare. “Products that, when fed, actually produce more than just caloric intake or good taste. Our dental chews offer a comprehensive oral care solution as well as essential omega fatty acids and, in our vegetable fusion flavor, the addition of probiotics.”

“Our PlaqueOff system dental care bones offer the only comprehensive dental chew available on the market today

containing the clinically proven and 100 percent natural PlaqueOff ingredient,” said Reinhardt. “The bone cleans plaque and tarter by abrasive action, and the PlaqueOff ingredient helps prevent reformation.” Whimzees is trying to create a fun, playful approach to dental treats that offers all the health benefits of plaque and tartar control and fresh breath, hitting the customer desire and the functionality for pets standpoints. “The way that Whimzees is approaching it is to really

bring the fun aspect to health and wellness, and really promote the bond between pet and pet parents,” said Erin Terjesen, principal at public relations and marketing firm Propel Communications. The company’s SuperZoo 2017 launch of Brushzees focused significantly on the new chew’s design, which Terjesen said makes it easy for a dog to hold the treat with its paws.

“It gives them a better angle to chew where it’s not on the floor,” she said. “The ridges are designed to really grind around the teeth and promote that healthy blood flow to the gums, helping to fight plaque and tartar.” The smiling tooth on the chew adds a whimsical aspect to the treat that draws customers in, according to the company. One size doesn’t fit all

Functionality of the treat itself is important, as is customer appeal. Taking that appeal one step further, companies are customizing the size of their dental treats to suit all types of dogs. “With the consumer in mind, we created four bags” of our dental chews, said Bowerman. “The reason why we did that is there are four different sizes, so now not only is it easy to read, I know that if I have a large dog, I need a pink bag, if I have a small dog, I need a blue bag, etc.” There’s also a health component involved, as manufacturers remain sensitive to the possibility of pet obesity. “They’re safe to give every day, we just don’t want the pets Merrick’s new Fresh Kisses dental treats come in two recipes: one infused with coconut and botanical oils, and one infused with mint-flavored breath strips. The color of Dozers dental treats is natural, which means they won’t make a stain on carpets or furniture as dogs chew on them, according to the company. Dozers SwedenCare’s dental

treats use the company's PlaqueOff ingredient, which helps prevent reformation of plaque and tartar, according to the company. Photo courtesy SwedenCare USA  
Whimzees' new Brushzees dental treats are vegetarian with six ingredients, which the company says ensured transparency for customers so they know what they're feeding their pets. Photo courtesy Whimzees

making a meal out of it," said Bowerman of the different-sized treats.

Pet obesity was also a consideration when formulating Whimzees' Brushzees.

"Whimzees is very committed to sizing, and giving our product a caloric intake that's appropriate for their weight," said Terjesen. "They come in sizes from extra small to extra large, with the approach being so many people give their pets way too many calories with treats and we are fighting obesity with our pets. We want to promote that fun aspect, but it needs to be within the size parameters and based on pets' weight. And that's Whimzees' approach as well, to educate about caloric dosing and finding the right size for your dog." There's more than one way to cater to size needs, and Merrick has come at it from multiple angles. "We have multiple sizes [of the Fresh

Kisses chews] for large, medium and small dogs," said Brace. "We also know

that pet parents are seeking a quantity on hand, so we provided a larger-sized multipack for that. We have the individual sizes, too, so if people want to try

it, they can grab one on the go." SwedenCare focused on efficiency and flexibility when creating its dental treats. "The bone breaks in half to cover multiple breed sizes, which helps consumers with multiple-dog households and retailers saving precious shelf space," said Reinhardt.

**Future of pet dental treats** Dental treats and chews remain highly popular, according to Packaged Facts, with a host of new products hitting the market in 2017. As customers demand more options for their pets, manufacturers will need

**to continue to respond with innovation, whether in formulation, variety or presentation.**