

Pandemic pet craze feeds cos' cash boom

John.Sarkar@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Pet food has emerged as one of the fastest growing segments in the Indian FMCG sector as more people staying at home led to a pandemic pet boom over the last two years. Related businesses such as grooming, pet supplies and hospitality, too, witnessed a surge in growth during the period as millions of Indians brought in new pets.

The pet food market — currently pegged at Rs 3,500 crore — grew 16% in 2019 and 20% in 2020. Since then, the category picked up pace with London-based market research company Euromonitor predicting a 68% rise in sales of

pet products by 2025.

“The category has reached a sizable scale and a 30% annual growth over the last two years has made it into one of the fastest growing in the FMCG industry,” Ganesh Ramani, MD at Mars Petcare, told **TOI**.

The company that sells brands such as Pedigree, Royal Canin and Whiskas has lined up an investment of Rs 500 crore in Telangana for expansion as the pet population is set to grow, leading to more consumers shifting from home-cooked to packaged food for their dogs and cats.

“In India, people still feed kibbles as treats to their dogs — penetration or awareness is that low,” said Ramani.

RIDING THE TREND

➤ The pet food market, currently pegged at ₹3,500 crore, grew 16% in 2019 and 20% in 2020

➤ Euromonitor sees a 68% increase in sales of pet products by 2025

➤ Businesses such as



grooming, pet supplies and hospitality also witnessed a surge during the pandemic

➤ From five-star hotel chains to cafe companies, hundreds of hotels and resorts adopted a pet-friendly policy

The hospitality sector, too, latched on to the opportunity as more people started traveling with their furry companions during the pandemic. The ‘pet-friendly’ filter has become the third most used filter on booking.com with its use doubling since the beginning of the pandemic.

Latching on to the opportunity, from five-star hotel chains such as ITC Hotels, Indian Hotels Company and Marriott International to even cafe companies such as Cafe Coffee Day (CCD), hundreds of hotels and resorts adopted a pet-friendly policy during the pandemic.

And as somebody, who has been operating pet-friendly boutique properties from even before the pandemic, hospitality industry veteran and founder at Tree of Life Resorts and A Dog's Story, Himmat Anand said, the trend is here to stay. “Reservation at our Dog's Story properties, for instance, goes out in the name of the pets. From the location to the menus, everything is curated for pets. And, we are expanding,” said Anand.

In the retail space, apart from established retailers witnessing an uptick in sales of pet products, new entrants have caught the eye of investors. Surat-based pet supplies platform Zoivane just raked in significant seed capital.