

Looking at Litter

As the litter market continues to grow, specialize and innovate, keeping track of changing trends is a priority for any pet retailer.

BY HANNAH MILLER

The cat litter category has become more complicated than ever by offering an increasing number of choices for pet owners. Retailers need to be aware of changing trends that emphasize eco-friendly materials, greater variety, lightweight lifting and litter solutions designed to prevent accidents. By becoming well-informed about

shakeups in the litter category, retailers can help customers select innovative products that meet both their own needs and those of their felines.

When customers look for litter at a pet store, they may come with common questions about odor control, clumping, cleanliness and dust volume. It's up to retailers to not only address these typical concerns, but to direct their customers to a wide range of products that may unexpectedly resolve cat waste-management and behavioral issues.



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“Litters are beginning to focus more on specific consumer needs, offering a problem-solution,” says Jean Broders, senior brand manager for Kent Pet Group. “You need to call out those pain points that consumers are dealing with and offer easy solutions that fit the need.”

Based in Muscatine, Iowa, Kent Pet Group oversees the World’s Best Cat

Litter brand. The company prides itself on offering different varieties of corn kernel-based litter that anticipate every conceivable issue when it comes to cat waste management.

“We have a formula that addresses every consumer need,” explains Broders. “If they are looking for overall performance, our Clumping and Multiple Cat Clumping formulas are for them. If they like scent, our lavender-scented formula is available. For those who are really focused on a messy litter box and tired of dealing with it, our Advanced Zero Mess formulas are for them.”

Even with such a diverse product range, the brand wants to push the envelope further when it comes to cat litter. The company’s newest product actually aims to correct feline behavior.

According to Broders, “Choosing the right litter can be a solution for cats that are not going in the box. We are introducing our Advanced Picky Cat formulas, which naturally attracts the cat to the litter box. Consumers need to know they don’t have to settle with their current litter if they aren’t getting the performance they expect.”

World’s Best Cat Litter isn’t the only brand with products designed to prevent cats from having accidents. Dr. Elsey’s Cat Attract litter line has a natural herb attractant that emits a pleasing scent, as well as an ideal texture and particle size. This combination of qualities lures cats to litter boxes and prevents them from going outside of the box. Retailers can also let customers know that each Cat Attract package comes with a Litter Box Solutions pamphlet that helps resolve waste-management problems.

Cat Attract litter was not only designed to correct behavior, but also to save cats’ lives. According to Gina Zaro, marketing director for Englewood, Colo.-based Dr. Elsey’s, “Cat Attract is for cats that don’t use the litter box, which is the No. 1 reason cats are euthanized or put in shelters.”

This litter line also includes a Kitten Attract version that helps train kittens to use the litter box. In addition to the Cat Attract litters, Dr. Elsey’s

The advertisement features a close-up of a grey kitten with green eyes. At the top center is the Dr. Elsey's logo, which includes a portrait of a man and the text "VETERINARIAN FORMULATED QUALITY PRODUCTS FOR CATS". Below the logo, the text reads "the litter cats love™" and "cleanprotein™". Under "the litter cats love™" is the tagline "litter that can be loved by cats & their owners". Under "cleanprotein™" is the tagline "the diet for a healthy and active lifestyle for all cats". At the bottom left is a bag of "ULTRA the litter cats love™" litter, with features listed: "99.9% DUST FREE - LOW TRACKING", "SUPERIOR ODOR CONTROL", "HARD CLUMPING", and "UNSCENTED - NATURAL INGREDIENTS". At the bottom center and right are packages of "cleanprotein™" cat food, including a bag and a can, with features like "95% of Protein is GRAIN-FREE" and "CHICKEN RECIPE FOR ALL LIFE STAGES". At the bottom center is the website "drelseys.com".

offers products with other specific purposes. For example, the brand's Health Monitor Everyday litter provides insight into medical conditions like kidney function, diabetes and hyperthyroidism. The clumping litter comes with a chart and scale to check whether cats' urine balls are at a healthy weight. The brand also has litters tailored for multi-cat homes, senior cats and felines with respiratory conditions.

"The reason that we offer a wide variety of choices is because we're a solutions-based litter," explains Zaro. "We try to provide solutions for cats and their owners depending on the issue."

ECO-FRIENDLY FELINE

As retailers help their customers select litters, they can also bring up another recent trend rapidly overtaking this category: eco-friendly materials. This new tendency is often paired with an emphasis on litter that's lightweight and easy to lift.

"The trend over the past few years, as people have learned more about the health effects of clay and clumping clay litters, is toward more natural, healthier and lighter weight products that won't last forever in landfills," says Ed Owens, vice president of engineering for American Wood Fibers. "While lighter weight and healthier products are desired, they must still perform as well or better than the clay they are replacing."

Headquartered in Columbia, Md., American Wood Fibers recently introduced Nature Scents, a wood-based cat litter formulated for cats' sensitive noses. The company is one of the largest wood shaving manufacturers in the U.S. and has more than 50 years of experience working with wood-based bedding and litters.

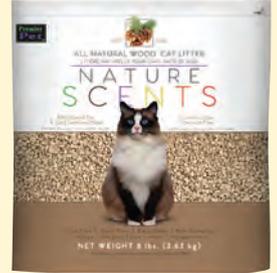
"We saw a need in the cat litter market for an all-natural, non-clumping, healthy alternative to the heavy clay and chemically perfumed litters on the market," says Owens. "Most wood-based litters are made from pine, but pine is not the best wood for odor control and the strong pine smell is not preferred by cats. We start with a different wood that is better for neutralizing ammonia, and we compress it to reduce tracking and increase absorption."

The company also takes a green approach in its manufacturing process. According to Owens, "Our base wood is sourced from the sawdust that is generated from wood manufacturers, so we aren't harvesting trees to start

LITTER LOWDOWN

These litters stand out for their innovative odor control, clumping capability and minimal dust production.

Nature Scents Cat Litter from **American Wood Fibers** (awf.com) is made of 100 percent natural, virgin wood and is safe for all cats and kittens. This new clay-free, grain-free and chemical-free product is a lightweight litter that can absorb three times its weight. Nature Scents offers superior odor control—due to its balanced pH/alkalinity level—and is available in four scents: lavender, pine, mint and cedar. It scoops easily, does not clump and features low tracking and dust, which makes for easy cleanup.



Next Gen Pet's (nextgenpet.com) Green Tea Leaves Cat Litter uses the natural properties of green tea and wood to suppress bacterial growth. The litter has been conveniently developed to be 90 percent lighter than clay and is made from recycled and sustainable materials including natural binders that form small, firm clumps and minimize waste. Next Gen Pet now offers Green Tea Leaves Cat Litter in a new, larger bag. These bags are designed to last one cat approximately 6-8 weeks (that's two weeks longer than the average lifespan of the company's small bag). The litter also helps fight odor naturally without having to mask it with strong artificial fragrances.



The new BoxiePro Deep Clean litter series from **Boxiecat** (boxiecat.com) eliminates germs in the litter box so cats won't track them throughout the home. By wiping out harmful bacteria and odors, BoxiePro keeps cats and homes cleaner and healthier. BoxiePro's innovation is that it keeps the litter clean and fresh 24/7, even when cats aren't using the box. The



litter uses natural probiotics and in third party lab tests, BoxiePro probiotics eliminated 100 percent of bacteria in the litter box. Boxiecat offers four formulas of cat litter that improve the consumer experience with litter care. All formulas are long lasting and feature the innovative Flat Top clump, ultra-low dust, exceptional odor control and tracking resistance.