

Pick of the Litters

Ed Owens, vice president of engineering for American Wood Fibers, explains how the company is leveraging more than 50 years of experience to create high-quality pet litter and bedding products.

Pet Business: American Wood Fibers has a long history as a leader in the pet bedding and litter category. What are some of the attributes that have made the company so successful?

Ed Owens: American Wood Fibers was established over 50 years ago as a company that collects the sawdust and shavings from wood manufacturers and turns them into economical products that help farmers, ranchers, pet owners, home owners and industrial companies. To be successful, we have to provide good service to our wood suppliers, balance the supply coming in with the market for products going out and find customers for every portion of the raw material so none goes to waste or to the landfill. Our products are inexpensive, so we have to be efficient and safe in our operations. We have 10 different manufacturing locations around the United States to reduce freight and service national companies.

PB: What are some of American Wood Fibers most popular products? What are the key features of these products?

Owens: We produce over a billion pounds of finished goods per year, and our most popular products are wood shavings for large or small animals, industrial wood flours that are used as fillers and absorbents in many products, and wood pellets for barbeque, home heating or animal litter.

With wood shavings, people want soft, dry, dust-free products delivered at an economical price and available during the peak seasonal periods. Wood pellets need to be dry, dust-free and designed for the end purpose, whether it is burning or absorbing liquid. The users for wood flour tend to need large volumes with just-in-time delivery and conforming to very tight specifications for particle size, wood species and moisture content.

PB: American Wood Fibers will soon be introducing a new line of cat litter. When do you expect to launch the line? What will make this litter stand out from other products on the market?

Owens: The new cat litter is called Nature Scents and it is just entering production now. We are excited to see it start appearing in stores.

The first comment we get from most users is that the litter has the best odor control of any litter they have tried. It is also very easy

AMERICAN WOOD FIBERS



to use and doesn't stick to the litter box. It is all natural, made from recycled materials, biodegradable and lightweight.

PB: Are there any other notable new products the company has introduced recently? What are the key features of these products?

Owens: In the pet market, we have introduced our Uber line of small pet paper bedding in a variety of styles, including natural, white and bright colors. Again, we start with clean by-product and convert it into a very soft and absorbent bedding that small animals really love to burrow in and build nests. The bedding is comfortable, clean and absorbent with excellent odor control.

PB: What does the future hold for American Wood Fibers?

Owens: We are always listening to our customers to see what they would like to have in new products, and we are introducing some new products for the backyard chicken enthusiast. **PB**