

Check against delivery.

The pet supplies industry during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A statement by
Georg Müller, Chair of the Industrieverband Heimtierbedarf (IVH) e.V.
at the press conference at Interzoo.digital
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Ladies and gentlemen,
representatives of the media,
representatives of the ZZF and WZF,

Initially, on behalf of the IVH I would like to thank Mr Holthenrich for giving us the opportunity again today, together with the ZZF and WZF, to hold a press conference to open Interzoo.

In comparison with other branches of industry and commerce, the pet supplies sector has come through the coronavirus crisis in good shape. The companies in our sector managed to adjust to the situation very quickly and without any deep cuts.

This also applies to retail. Supplies for pets were guaranteed without restrictions and at all times.

None of this would have been possible without the decisions taken by politicians, to enable continuous production and let retail open. At this point I would like to express my sincere thanks for this.

The past Covid-19 period has very clearly shown us that pets provide a real enhancement to our lives and to our very personal well-being.

In the last 18 months, when we all had only very limited social contacts, animals have had an influence that should not be underestimated. Children were particularly hard hit. They couldn't meet up with friends, as usual, but had to spend most of their time at home. A pet was a welcome playmate during this time in particular, helping them all the way through this long and difficult period. And especially for older people living alone, who sometimes received only limited or even no visits from their families and relatives for months at a time during the past year, pets were even more important than usual in overcoming loneliness.

So it's no wonder that according to our survey, which we conduct each year together with the ZZF, at the end of 2020 more than 3 million households were planning to acquire a pet – of these about 1.8 million wanted to live together with a dog in the future.

Happily, many animals from animal homes have also found a new home during this period. They were, so to speak, the “winners of the pandemic” and thanks to them their owners have gained more zest for life.

Even though it can be assumed that the majority of pets acquired during the coronavirus period will remain with their owners, it cannot be ruled out that the return to normal life will present many new owners with pet care problems, and that they might give their animals up again.

We want to make a contribution to keeping animals in families, and for this purpose, we are putting together an extensive range of information soon. Under the project name “Support for living with pets” we will shortly provide comprehensive information on a newly-created website about looking after pets during holidays, dog-walking services and many other services involving pets.

Even if the pet sector has survived well during the coronavirus period so far, since December it has been possible to recognise inflationary tendencies and shortages in many areas. These have since grown to become substantial procurement problems and produce partly significant price rises. A few key words at this point.

- The newly introduced CO₂ tax and other measures involving the energy transition have pushed up energy costs by about 10% since the start of the year.
- Plastic granulate as the raw material for packaging has gone up by more than 50% in just a few weeks.
- Logistics costs on the Asia to Europe route have more than doubled, and have in some cases tripled, within one year.
- Because restaurants have been closed for months, abattoir activities have fallen by 20 to 25% throughout Europe. This has led to a significant reduction in animal by-products, which we use for pet food.

All these events are leading to developments on the overall procurement market that haven't been seen for decades – and we must get used to the fact that many things will remain this way.

But there are developments that began before Covid-19 that will keep us busy beyond the pandemic.

In nutrition, for example. Most innovations in human nutrition today come in the area of vegetarian and vegan food. This trend can also be observed in pet nutrition.

Using insects as an alternative source of protein has also already reached our sector.

Innovations in living trends and horticulture have also reached pet supplies articles, such as technical innovations in aquariums or the garden pond segment.

Once we have overcome the Covid-19 restrictions, soon hopefully, there will be a stronger focus on one of the greatest challenges of the future again: the striving for more sustainability and climate protection.

Many companies have already gone a long way towards CO₂ neutrality and have identified that customers notice this in a really positive manner. Consequently, climate protection is also an increasingly important argument in competition.

It is good and correct that this issue is being dealt with at European level. We started taking part, actively and intensively, in EU pilot projects on the issue of CO₂ years ago through our European association, the FEDIAF.

I am confident about the future. The sharper focus brought about by the coronavirus pandemic in many respects will also make a contribution to our sector acting and reacting even more flexibly and pragmatically in the future. Even if we hopefully return to “normal” life step-by-step this summer, people will also continue to appreciate the positive aspects of living together with pets.

I have already pointed out the innovativeness of the pet supplies sector. Of course, this also applies to the new digital trade fair format, which the ZZF has brought to life in record time. After Interzoo had to be cancelled last year due to the pandemic, the ZZF has now created a possibility for the sector to come together, despite the current pandemic-related restrictions. This is also a great innovation.

Last year, I wouldn't have thought the pandemic would still dominate our lives so much in June 2021 – even if we can look at a much more optimistic future today.

I would like to wish the first digital Interzoo every success and look forward to seeing you again in person in Nuremberg at Interzoo 2022.