



*Check against delivery*

A statement by Norbert Holthenrich,  
President of  
the German Pet Trade & Industry Association (ZZF),  
on the occasion of the ZZF **Press Conference** at **Interzoo 2022**  
on Tuesday, May 24, 9:30 a.m.

NCC Ost, Level 1, Hong Kong Room

I am likewise pleased to greet you here in person today at our first press conference at an in-person Interzoo in four years!

Have you ever felt so despondent that you thought things can never be good again? And then your dog comes along, presses his head against your thigh and – quite suddenly – you see future opportunities again, not just crises? I have had this experience and this is what makes it so wonderful to have pets in your home. Pets ground us: They have no prejudices and know nothing of fake news. And they're just a lot of fun to be with.

We are facing problems today – pandemic, supply chain disruptions, climate crisis, war in Ukraine, fears of an economic crisis. But our industry also enjoys a crucial advantage:

Pets make us more resilient. Pets make us happy. And I say this not only as a committed pet owner and it's not just a cliché. This has been proven, in fact, by a study by Dr. Jennifer Currin-McCulloch of Colorado State University. In a survey of cat and dog owners conducted during the coronavirus pandemic, she found that animal companions were highly instrumental in reducing depression, anxiety, isolation, and loneliness.

And so, we come to the first effect of the crisis on pet ownership: The importance of animal companionship has grown. In times of uncertainty and social distancing, pets give us stability, solace, and physical closeness. The images of refugees fleeing the war zone in Ukraine with their children in their arms and pets in tow also prove that pets have become family members everywhere, not just in Germany.

And so it's no wonder that more pets than ever were kept in nearly all countries of Western and Eastern Europe during the coronavirus pandemic.

In this chart, you see that among the countries of Europe, only in Russia and Italy were more pets kept than in Germany, according to the market research firm Euromonitor.

In Germany, many new pets were acquired especially in the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, while the rate of new pet acquisition slowed in the second year of the pandemic, so that the percentage of total households keeping different kinds of pets remained about the same last year. Pet shops were not always able to meet the demand for pets because animals were no longer being imported in some cases and it was not possible to suddenly breed more animals. The various after-effects of the coronavirus pandemic – including the trend of working from home, for example – was not the primary consideration for most pet owners contemplating the possibility of acquiring a new pet. The influence of the changed life circumstances is most evident among dog owners (32 percent) and terrarium owners (36 percent).

Almost half of all German households keep cats, dogs, small mammals, pet birds, ornamental fish, or terrarium pets. Significantly, the percentage of pet-owning households with children has risen by three percentage points to 69 percent. In those times when it was difficult for school-age and pre-school children to spend time with each other, they were at least able to learn how to take care of pets. Pet owners have also confirmed this observation: In a study conducted by the communication and consulting firm takefive media at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, 83 percent of respondents expressed the opinion that pets teach children in particular how to exercise responsibility.

And so, we come to another after-effect of the pandemic:

The growing importance of pet ownership is also reflected in the development of the pet market. Pet owners in Germany spent roughly EUR 6 billion on their pets. Paying more attention to their own health, they also spent more money than ever on healthful care products, premium pet food, and reward treats for their pets, but also more on new aquariums, pens, and the like.

Germans not only paid more attention to their own pets during the coronavirus crisis, but also took care of wild animals to a greater extent. Germans spent EUR 162 billion –26.6 percent more than in the preceding year – on feed for wild birds. Taking care of insects or hedgehogs, for example, is also becoming more popular. More people are keeping bees or chicken. And pet shops are expanding their product assortments to meet this demand.

The growth boost in the German market catapulted Germany to the top spot in the European sales rankings last year, followed closely by the United Kingdom and France.

Overall, the Western European pet market expanded by 4.5 percent. The worldwide market actually expanded by 9.6 percent to reach a market volume of EUR 135 billion, according to Euromonitor.

The biggest pet markets are North America, with sales of more than EUR 58 billion, and Western Europe, with sales of EUR 29.8 billion. But even the Asia-Pacific region has experienced significant growth. Pet owners in this region spent nearly EUR 23 billion on pet supplies in 2021. Pet shops remained opened in most European countries during the strict lockdowns.

In Germany, brick-and-mortar pet shops were even granted the status of essential businesses in order to ensure the continuous supply of pet care products, technology, and specialty pet food. At the same time, online sales experienced a huge boost: Sales of pet supplies via e-commerce sites rose by 28.4 percent to more than EUR 1 billion.

Looking back at the development of the market in 2021, we can say that the global pet industry held up very well amidst the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Whether this positive trend can continue is uncertain, especially considering the grave supply chain disruptions that already arose during the pandemic, which caused supply shortages and production problems. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the supply chain crisis and raised the question of reliable energy supplies. Raw materials used in pet food and other materials are becoming more expensive mainly as a result of high transport cost. Some raw materials are not even available at the present time. Many enterprises are relocating their production to Europe. Georg Müller will shortly explain the impact of these trends on the pet food industry.

The scarcity and higher prices of raw materials have indeed led to occasional product shortages in pet shops. Energy is essential for aquariums and terrariums in particular. In the first quarter of this year, pet shops observed rather subdued demand in the segments of aquariums and terrariums. We therefore hope that supply gaps can be avoided or quickly closed. We cannot yet predict how the current situation will affect the purchasing behaviour of pet owners in the long term.

However, I am convinced that the pet market is crisis-proof. Inventive as it is, the pet industry will continue to develop new products to benefit our pets also under the new market conditions. As manufacturers will show at this year's Interzoo, the pet industry is working on optimized technology that consumes less electricity. Recognizing the great importance of pets to their owners, we are confident that pet owners will continue to place a high priority on taking good care of their pets in the current year as well. After all, pets make us happy, as I'm sure you all know.

In conclusion, I hope you make many interesting discoveries and enjoy your time at Interzoo 2022.

Sources:

- Euromonitor International
- Takefive-Media: Haustier-Studie 2021 ("Pet Study 2021")
- IVH, ZZF: Der deutsche Heimtiermarkt – Struktur- und Umsatzdaten 2021 ("The German Pet Market: Structure and Sales Data 2021")
- Kogan, L.R.; Currin-McCulloch, J.; Bussolari, C.; Packman, W.; Erdman, P. The Psychosocial Influence of Companion Animals on Positive and Negative Affect during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Animals* 2021, 11, 2084.

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