Barking Up the Right Tree: 12 Really Cool Pet Startups

By John Egan May 8, 2014

At SpareFoot, we love pets and we love startups. So we decided to mark National Pet Month by putting together a list of 12 of the coolest pet startups in the U.S.

These businesses on our list range from a pet-focused law practice to a tick-checking service. They're among hundreds, and maybe even thousands, of pet startups around the country. And by no means are the startups on our list the only cool pet startups in the U.S.

Why is there such a big litter of pet startups? The answer is simple: There's tons of money to be made.

If the U.S. pet products industry collectively was a Fortune 500 company, it would be bigger than Dell, UPS, Google or Coca-Cola. This year, it's estimated that Americans will spend an estimated $58.5 billion on their pets this year, up from $55.7 billion in 2013, according to the American Pet Products Association. And it's no wonder that number is so eye-popping: The association says 68 percent of U.S. households own pets.

Here are 12 cool startups we found that are trying to take a bite out of that $58.5 billion market.

FlipFlop Dogs

Taffy and Jack Miltz of FlipFlop Dogs with Chloe (left) and Charlie.

What it does: The two FlipFlop Dogs locations, one in Ohio and the other in Georgia, offer an alternative to putting your dog in a kennel. Rather, your dog stays with a carefully screened "companion family" during what's billed as a "doggy vacation."
Headquarters: Mentor, OH
Number of employees: 10
Founders: Jack and Taffy Miltz
Year founded: 2011
What they say: Companion families chosen by FlipFlop Dogs "maintain the dog's day-to-day routine in a safe, warm, loving home environment."
Website: FlipFlopDogs.com

Furry Kind

Rachel Grant of Furry Kind with Kia.

What it does: Furry Kind produces two all-natural pet products—CocoMutt Shampoo and SunShine Serum—that are used to clean a dog's coat.
Headquarters: Los Angeles and New York City (International headquarters is in the Philippines.)
Number of employees: Two
Founders: Rachel Grant and Marlene Pinel
Year founded: 2013
What they say: Grant developed the Furry Kind concept after realizing that "many pet shampoos contain tons of these harmful chemicals—ones we can clean the toilet bowl with! Surprisingly, no government agency regulates the ingredients of over-the-counter pet cosmetics, so don't you wonder what's in them?"
Website: FurryKind.com

Gerrard Larriett Aromatherapy Pet Care

Gerrard Larriett with Dada.

What it does: Gerrard Larriett Aromatherapy Pet Care sells aromatherapy pet-grooming products online and in stores.
Headquarters: Brooklyn, NY
Number of employees: One
Founder: Gerrard Larriett Aromatherapy Pet Care
Year founded: 2012
What they say: Larriett spent six months consulting cosmetic and pet care labs across the country until he developed an aromatherapy regimen "special enough to spoil cats, dogs and pet parents."
Website: GerrardLarriett.com

Give A Hoot Pets

Krista Allenby of Give A Hoot Pets with Moose.

What it does: Give A Hoot Pets produces one-of-a-kind, custom-order pet beds made by hand from reclaimed fabric and materials.
Headquarters: Austin, TX
Number of employees: One
Founder: Krista Allenby (Full disclosure: Krista is an employee of SpareFoot.)
Year founded: 2012
What they say: Allenby launched Give A Hoot Pets "as a result of being unhappy with pet-bed options and costs. I thought it would be fun to make my own and was inspired by fabric I found in a local vintage shop. I taught myself how to sew, and started selling beds at flea markets and craft fairs."
Website: GiveAHootPets.com

Hamilton Law and Mediation

Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton with Atticus.

What it does: Hamilton Law and Mediation helps resolve disputes over pets. Clients include divorcing couples who are trying to share a pet and veterinarians who are coping with disgruntled customers.
Headquarters: Armonk, NY
Number of employees: One
Founder: Debra Vey Voda-Hamilton
Year founded: 2010
What they say: Voda-Hamilton's nationwide practice helps people "who are in conflict about their beloved animal, or someone else's, resolve their disagreement by addressing the problem safely and fully, allowing them to keep their relationships intact, and avoid costly and relationship-ending arguments that end in litigation."
Website: HamiltonLawandMediation.com

JoJo Modern Pets

Savina Singh of JoJo Modern Pets with JoJo.

What it does: On the web, JoJo Modern Pets sells designer products like a three-piece dinnerware set with two stainless steel bowls and a magnetic mat; pet sofa beds; and a pet chaise lounge. The business also offers a line of natural and organic grooming supplies, such as paw cream, body spray and dental spray. In the works is a pet first-aid kit.
Headquarters: Washington, DC
Number of employees: Five
Founder: Savina Singh
Year founded: 2012
What they say: "JoJo Modern Pets was started to show Savina's appreciation for having her dog, JoJo, in her life. Savina does not have children, so she built her own family. Savina is a proud urban pet mom and wouldn't change it for the world."
Website: JoJoModernPets.com

Kumfy Tailz

Gail Sanders-Luckman of Kumfy Tailz with Sadie.

What it does: Kumfy Tailz sells apparel incorporating gel-pack technology—like what humans use to ease aches and pains—to keep dogs cool or warm, depending on the weather.
Headquarters: Chicago
Number of employees: Four
Founder: Gail Sanders-Luckman
Year founded: 2010
What they say: "Inspired by a cold Chicago winter, Kumfy Tailz is disrupting the pet apparel industry with a new category of apparel focused on the canine physiology and the overall health of the dog."
Website: KumfyTailz.com

PetPaint

Abe Geary of PetPaint with a painted pooch.

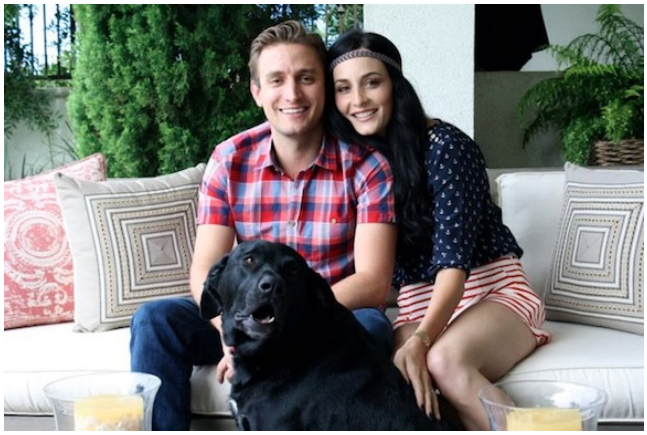
What it does: PetPaint makes a pet-safe, veterinarian-approved aerosol "furspray" that gives dog owners a new way to celebrate holidays and special occasions with their pooches. Essentially, an owner can create a sprayed-on "costume" for a dog. The spray comes in a number of bright colors.
Headquarters: Camarillo, CA
Number of employees: Four
Founder: Abe Geary
Year founded: 2012
What they say: Founder Abe Geary describes himself as "an entrepreneur who has a passion for animals."
Website: PetPaint.com

Pet Pizazz!

Dr. Andrea Freeman of Pet Pizazz! with Bonnie Bay (deceased) and Annie.

What it does: The Pet Pizazz! boutique offers luxury products and services for pets, including pet grooming, pet greeting cards, pet spa products, and pet couture and jewelry.
Headquarters: Flemington, NJ
Number of employees: 10
Founder: Dr. Andrea Freeman, a veterinarian
Year founded: 2013
What they say: "Pet Pizazz! guarantees the convenience and variety of a larger pet store while maintaining the hometown feel of a small boutique."
Website: PetPizazz.net

Petswag



Doug and Amanda Loback of Petswag with Dexter.

What it does: Through its website, Petswag sells unique, stylish, hand-picked products—such as beds, bowls, collars and carriers—for dogs, cats and other pets.
Headquarters: Phoenix
Number of employees: Two
Founders: Amy and Doug Loback
Year founded: 2013
What they say: "We love good design almost as much as we love our pets. So when we got married and began to furnish our first home, we realized the only thing missing was good design for our three dogs, Dexter, Holder and Lucy."
Website: Petswag.com

SmartEnergetics

Thom Kisner of SmartEnergetics with CrystalxFreshKitty containers.

What it does: SmartEnergetics makes an all-natural product, CrystalxFreshKitty, designed to eliminate the smell of urine *before* a cat uses a litter box. The product comes in a small, permanently sealed aluminum bottle that is buried in the center of a cat's dry-food storage container or is kept next to a cat's wet-food supply.
Headquarters: Provo, UT
Number of employees: Four
Founder: Thom Kisner
Year founded: 2010
What they say: CrystalxFreshKitty lets cat owners change kitty litter less frequently, "which leads to less stress on our landfills and our environment. This is important, because Americans dump approximately 8 million pounds of cat litter into U.S. landfills every year, with a carbon footprint the size of Antarctica!"
Website: CrystalxFreshKitty.com

TickChek.com

Jonathan Weber of TickChek.com with Captain.

What it does: As its name indicates, TickChek.com provides tick-testing services for people and pets. If you find a tick, you can send it to TickChek.com, which will test it for Lyme disease and six other tick-borne diseases.
Headquarters: East Stroudsburg, PA
Number of employees: Eight
Founder: Jonathan Weber
Year founded: 2013
What they say: "We've found that tick testing is even more beneficial for pets because, unlike humans, pets can't tell you if they notice early signs of a tick-borne infection."
Website: TickChek.com

John Egan
John is editor of The SpareFoot Blog. He first moved to Austin in 1999, when downtown Austin wasn't nearly as lively as it is today. John's loves include pizza, University of Kansas basketball and puns.

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