



# PET CATEGORY PLAYBOOK

An Independent Grocer's Guide to Maximizing Pet Sales

IGA in partnership with





## CONTENTS

- Apply Science to the Aisle
- How Do You Make Your Pet Aisle a Destination for Shoppers?
- Choose the Level of Engagement That's Right for You
- Step 1: Assess the Opportunity
- Step 2: Optimize Your Inventory
- Step 3: Organize Your Pet Aisle & Shelves
- Step 4: Market Your New Pet Aisle & Offerings



# Happy & Healthy! PETS

Pet owners love their pets, and retailers should, too.

- Pet shoppers spend 27% more than non-pet shoppers
- Pet category is the No. 2 trip driver behind pharmacy
- Pet category is valued at \$47 billion—up 44% in last year\*

The pet population is growing.

- 23 million+ Americans own pets
- 1 in 5 households adopted since 2020\*\*

Inflation hasn't impacted the pet category.

- 80% of consumers do not plan to alter their pet care purchasing
- Pet Care is the No. 1 category in which consumers did not intend to reduce spending\*\*\*

This pet aisle playbook will help IGA retailers capture pet category sales through expert advice from Nestlé Purina PetCare in:

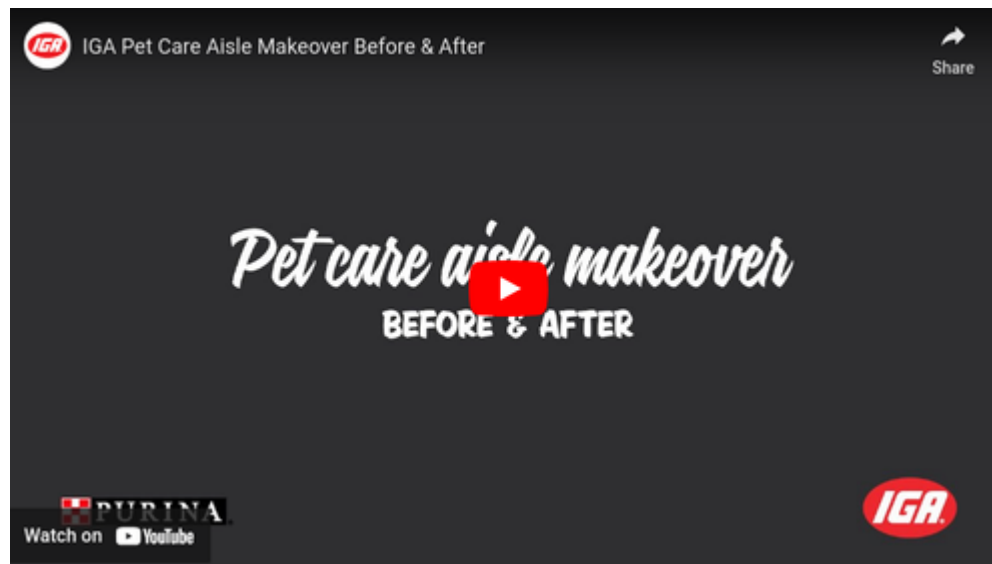
- Marketing
- Merchandising
- Assortment

Keep reading to see pet category best practices in action through our pet aisle optimization at an IGA store.

# APPLY SCIENCE TO THE AISLE

## Pet Aisle Optimization at Mahomet IGA

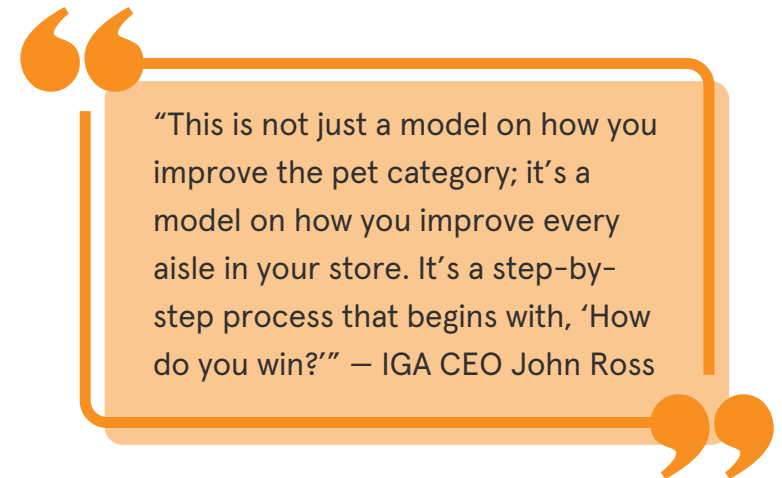
The Mahomet IGA full pet aisle optimization pilot program serves as an example of what any independent grocery store can do in pet and in other center store categories, applying best practices like remerchandising, visual merchandising, updated signage, and marketing to the aisle.



### Store details:

- 39,000 SF Store
- Pet category down 0.5%
- Large millennial market; young families with pets

\*Average sales results calculated from 83 store kit implementation



“This is not just a model on how you improve the pet category; it’s a model on how you improve every aisle in your store. It’s a step-by-step process that begins with, ‘How do you win?’” — IGA CEO John Ross

### The results speak for themselves:

- 10.5% pet sales increased
- 20% wet cat sales increased
- 28% cat treats increased
- 53% cat litter increased

\*In three months without any additional promotions

# APPLY SCIENCE TO THE AISLE

## Pet Aisle Optimization at Mahomet IGA

The Nestlé Purina PetCare team reviewed:

- Community demographics
- Existing pet category sales
- Nearby pet competition
- Current pet aisle square footage



Next, the team drew up a plan that used Mahomet IGA's existing pet aisle space more efficiently by adding shelves and moving products into locations that made it easier for customers to shop.

This pet aisle redesign didn't require ripping out shelving or an expensive remodel. The team simply:

1. Evaluated the store's category data
2. Determined the right product assortment for their shoppers' needs
3. Paired re-merchandising with better use of existing space through visual merchandising & updated signage

“This is what happens when you apply science to center store.”  
— IGA CEO John Ross

Read on to learn how you can apply these practices to your pet aisle for increased sales using your existing space.

**HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR PET AISLE A**

*Destination*

**FOR SHOPPERS?**

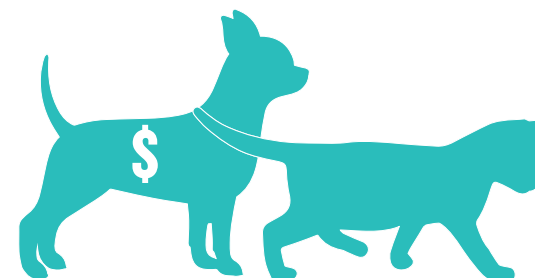
# CHOOSE THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

From quick efforts to a comprehensive plan, this playbook has tips for all engagement levels to boost your pet category sales.

## QUICK & EASY EFFORT

Want to make a quick investment in the pet aisle but not ready to spend more than a few hours on it?

Order and install the Happy & Healthy Pets Sign Kit in your store, which will quickly update the look of your pet aisle and attract shoppers to it.



## MODEST EFFORT

Ready to make a difference beyond the pet aisle?

Combine the [Happy & Healthy Pets Sign Kit](#) in store and digital advertising resources to reach shoppers online. Advertise your existing pet products via social media and weekly circulars.

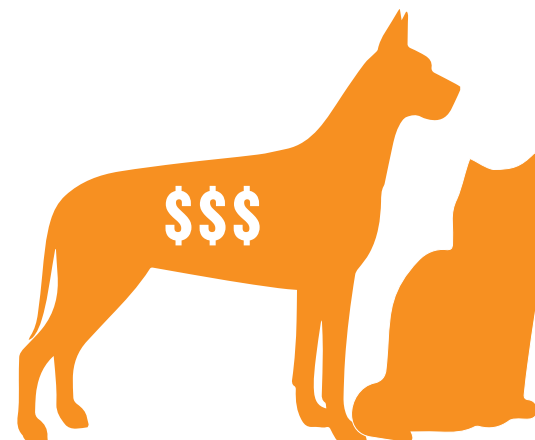
Find marketing tips [here](#).



## BIGGEST EFFORT, BIGGEST REWARD

For a full pet aisle and category makeover, examine your current pet sales to determine who your pet shopper is and what they're buying. Then curate your assortment based on the trends you're seeing.

Redesigning your pet aisle takes a few extra steps, but the tips in this playbook outline how to attract shoppers and make the pet aisle easy to shop for boosted pet sales. See the whole process [here](#).



# STEP 1: ASSESS THE OPPORTUNITY

## 1. Establish a benchmark

How much do you need to change about your pet aisle?  
To establish a benchmark, compare pet category growth to the rest of your store's growth.

If pet sales don't match growth trends elsewhere, take action.

Example: If the pet category is growing nationally at 6% and your store is losing 10% in pet, it's time to examine your aisle and merchandise.

## 2. Consider your demographics

Evaluate your demographics to address your pet shoppers' attitudes and behaviors. The pet category's SKU performance tells you what products your pet shoppers want more (and less) of.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is my customer?
- What is selling? Dog, cat, premium, treats?
- Who is my competition? Who also sells pet in a 5-mile radius?

By knowing your shopper, your competitors, and your differentiators, you can quickly determine the best merchandising plan for your store.

Example: If you have a big-box pet store, like PetSmart or PetCo, in a 5-mile radius of your store, then shoppers who buy pet products at your IGA will likely be making fill-in trips, meaning they won't be seeking specialty products like toys or treats. With that knowledge, you can stock more food and bigger bags, but reduce your inventory of treats, toys, and add-on products.



Example: Are you the only pet supply provider in town? Ensure your assortment reflects that you are the community pet care destination with a variety of food, treats, and toys.

## STEP 2: OPTIMIZE YOUR INVENTORY

Stock a better variety of products that your data suggests customers are already shopping for.

Current customers buying premium SKUs? Increase your premium products and offer bigger bags of premium pet food.

Customers mostly purchasing economy SKUs? Increase your economy product options, including bigger bags.

As you determine your optimal inventory, reflect the national trends in the pet category.

- Vary your assortment by life stages, from kitten or puppy to senior.
- Offer all-natural options and treats that have meat as the first ingredient.
- Pay attention to Nestlé Purina PetCare's trend reports and update your offerings accordingly while prioritizing your own shopper data.

Example: If one of your biggest sellers is Blue Buffalo dog food, a premium product, stock a variety of sizes in Blue Buffalo dog food, as well as other premium pet foods. That data suggests that your customers prefer premium pet options, so increase your premium variety while decreasing standard or economy SKUs.





## STEP 3: ORGANIZE YOUR PET AISLE & SHELVES

Organize your aisle to make it easy for shoppers to find what they need and location add-ons that help your bottom line.

- Welcome shoppers to the pet aisle with end caps and signage to announce the pet aisle's location.
- Use space efficiently. Add shelves in certain segments, pusher racks in treats, and move products to make it easier to shop. These tactics help increase assortment variety without expanding the pet aisle size.
- Use signage to make shopping simple and easy. IGA's Happy & Healthy Pet Kit uses colors and imagery to call out the segments (cat is blue, dog is green).

Next, organize your shelves with these visual merchandising best practices.

- Lead with ultra-premium products, then premium, then value, etc. within all categories. Show the best product first, as the shopper can always work down from the top. This strategy ensures you don't leave margin on the table.
- Move opening price points to a lower shelf, since shoppers who want that product will find it anyway.
- Use eye-level space to introduce premium products.

- Make it convenient for shoppers to find items that will add profit for the store by positioning them at eye-level, on end-caps, or POP displays.
- Place anchor brands — those with strong consumer recognition — in vertical brand blocks to help the shopper navigate the aisle.

Example: Tidy Cats has strong consumer recognition. Blocking this brand in the Litter POG will help shoppers understand they found the pet department. Regardless of their intent to specifically purchase Tidy Cats, the brand awareness will bring pet shoppers into the department.

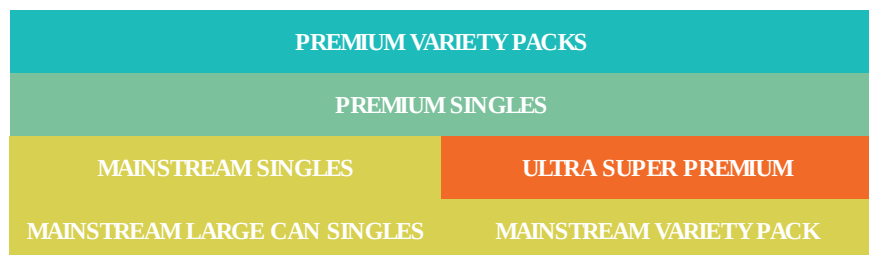


# STEP 3: ORGANIZE YOUR PET AISLE & SHELVES

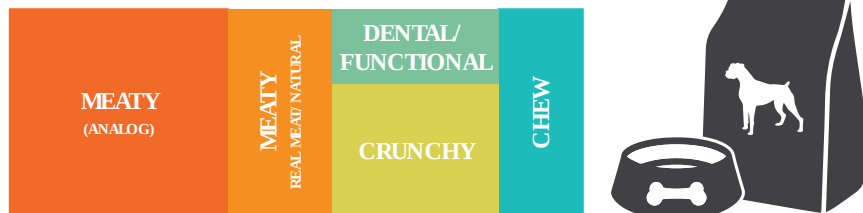
## Dry Dog



## Wet Dog



## Dog Treats



\*Bonus Tip: Cross-merchandise

Cross-merchandising is key to boosting single-basket sales. Use data trends to help you determine the best options in the pet category.

Example: Shoppers who buy wet cat food tend to buy more cat treats. When Mahomet IGA moved their wet cat food and treats next to each other, cat treat sales rose 28% and wet cat rose 20%.



# STEP 4: MARKET YOUR NEW PET AISLE & OFFERINGS

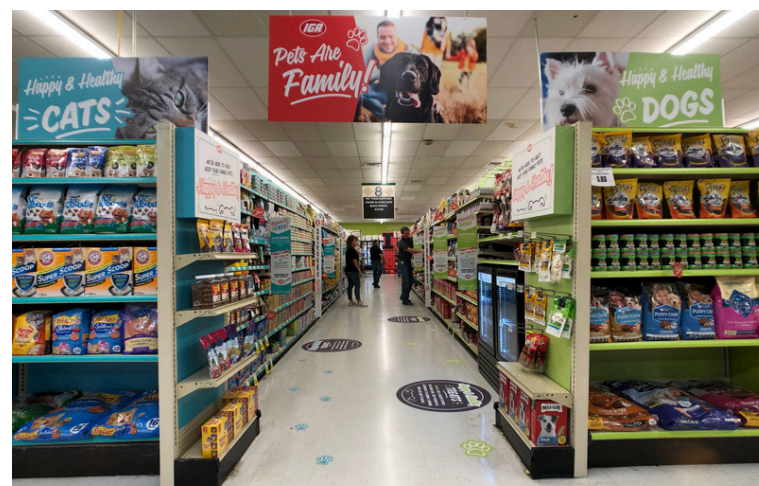
Pet is an emotional category, so stores can use that bond between humans and pets in their marketing efforts. Keep reading for marketing tactics for announcing your pet aisle redesign to the community.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Create social media graphics and call-outs for your weekly circulars using the educational aisle blades in the signage kits to educate shoppers on the best ingredients for their pets.
- Promote the annual Pet Photo Competition to share your store's love for pets.
- Share posts that remind shoppers to buy and replenish their wet food and treats.
- Promote your expanded assortment.
- Create campaigns to attract new puppy and kitten owners, as well as non-subcategory users.
- Target non-treat buyers with engaging content to increase education and awareness for functional treating benefits.

## IN STORE

- Use signage and displays to attract shoppers, increase purchases.
- Cross-promote treats with food, wet, or litter across all price tiers to drive trade-up.
- Offer a puppy and kitten bundle or a welcome kit for new pet owners.
- Leverage secondary displays and conversion tactics to disrupt the shopper and trigger purchases.
- Reward shoppers for buying more.
- Disrupt the shopper at checkout through impulse conversion tactics.



## STEP 4: MARKET YOUR NEW PET AISLE & OFFERINGS

Example of disruption: Treats are more likely to be an unplanned purchase than dog food, which means it is beneficial to disrupt consumers on their shopper journey.

Try signage and secondary displays to disrupt the shopper in-store. For online shoppers, banner ads, pop-ups on food pages and add to basket at checkout are beneficial tactics.

### OUTSIDE THE STORE

#### Community

- Develop a seasonal plan to increase purchases with light/medium dog treat buyers.
- Create campaigns to attract new puppy and kitten owners and advertise those offers.
- Include educational facts in printed circulars to drive trade-up purchases in-store.



#### Printed Circulars

Leverage community resources to partner for the launch of the redesigned aisle and in the future.

- Partner with shelters, veterinary practices, and schools.
- Highlight shoppers' pets in a special pet of the month feature on end caps.

#### Pet Club Email Newsletter

IGA's Pet Club Newsletter serves as a monthly touchpoint with shoppers, reminding them that their local IGA store is a true partner for their pet's needs.

Readers gain:

- Pet-focused educational content
- Valuable pet resources
- Exclusive offers for pet owners

Shoppers can sign up via the QR code on select sign kit aisle blades or [here](#).





# PET CATEGORY PLAYBOOK

**An Independent Grocer's Guide to Maximizing Pet Sales**