



Playing It Safe

RuffDawg's philosophy is that anything a pet puts in its mouth should be harmless, and for the company, that starts with U.S. manufacturing.

By Carrie Brenner



Dave Pentland's family started RuffDawg because they wanted to create safe, made in the USA toys for their dogs.

Jerry E. Moffett, vice president of sales and marketing for Worcester, Mass.-based RuffDawg, reveals how the dog toy maker emerged from a family-owned rubber-molding company.

Pet Product News: RuffDawg is a division of Jefferson Rubber Works, a family-owned rubber-molding company. Tell us how the brand came about.

Jerry E. Moffett: The company is family owned by the Pentland family, with Jefferson Rubber Works starting in 1975 to provide a source of high-precision, cost-efficient rubber molded parts for large-volume rubber consumers. RuffDawg was started in 1998 in order to find safe made in the USA dog products for their pets.

PPN: The made in the USA product category has taken off in the past few years. How has this affected your company?

JM: It definitely has increased business. We have the staff to create new, colorful, innovative products, and the ability to make them conform to higher standards than what is coming from overseas. Customers are demanding traceability of their purchases. We stand behind every product we sell.

PPN: Right now, much of the focus on made in the USA pet products seems to be on consumables. Do you believe nonconsumable products in this category will be getting more attention in the future?

JM: Yes, we now know that consumables—food and treats—made overseas may not be safe for our best friends, so why would we take a chance on anything that goes in our pets' mouths, even if it's not consumed? That's besides the fact that made in the USA products create and maintain good jobs here at home.

PPN: What are the challenges of making dog toys entirely in the USA?

JM: Consumers, buyers and retailers want to buy made in the USA pet products, but they want to pay "overseas pricing." I just returned from a large mass account down south that actually told me that they want to buy our products because they are made in the USA but only if we could meet overseas pricing. We have to continue to educate everyone involved that paying a little more is not only safer and better, but it helps everyone.



Photos courtesy of RuffDawg



Left: RuffDawg owner Dave Pentland inspects toys. Below: Members of the RuffDawg team pose with some of the company's popular toys.



PPN: What tips can you offer retailers trying to boost sales of made in the USA toys? Does the higher price point make selling these products a challenge for some?

JM: No doubt! We understand our products are a little more expensive, yet more and more consumers are demanding products made here. My suggestion is to proudly fly the flag.

PPN: How do you come up with ideas for new toys?

JM: Almost everyone at RuffDawg has pets, and we are open to any and all suggestions on our next new products. Also, we know rubber and always keep our eyes open for something new to do with this great material.

PPN: What philanthropic efforts is RuffDawg involved in?

JM: Back in August 2016, we started our sponsorship of Canines for Disabled Kids (CDK), an independent nonprofit founded in 1998, also based in Worcester. CDK connects families in need with service dogs and training programs, and awards scholarships to offset some of the approximately \$25,000 it costs to train a

service dog and provide ongoing support to the child-canine team.

PPN: Is RuffDawg releasing any new products this year?

JM: At Global Pet Expo, we introduced Om Dawg. It is the first-of-its-kind stress-reduction system for dogs and their people.

It includes a sound bath CD, which has been used successfully by veterinarians and professional groomers to relax, soothe, and calm dogs, horses and cats. A sound bath “bathes” the body and brain with resonant vibrations—sound. It’s perfect for calming pets during stressful times, such as bathing and grooming, or during alternative therapies like acupuncture or holistic treatments. It also helps ease separation anxiety.

The system also includes a solid rubber ball that’s been formulated with a softer texture than the original RuffDawg balls. The soft and springy texture of the rubber entices chewing, and gently massages teeth and gums, calming dogs as they settle down and move into a more relaxed state, ready to listen to the sound bath. ★

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