

# The pet industry in the Benelux: an update



## How is the pet industry doing in Belgium and the Netherlands? How has it been affected by COVID-19?

Almost half of the households in the Netherlands own 1 or more pets. The latest results from a survey conducted by I&O Research show that in 2021 a quarter of Dutch households owned 1 or more cats. Dogs come in second: 18% of Dutch households own a dog.

A Belgian Ivox survey confirms that we all love pets more than ever, with 52% of Belgian families owning at least 1 pet. Most owners are young families with children (64%). Yet, remarkably, the average owner has not 1, not 2, but 3 pets. This could be anything from fish or parakeets to tarantulas or ferrets. Cats and dogs are still the most popular, with 1 in 3 families in Belgium (31%) owning a cat, and almost a quarter (23.6%) owning a dog.

### The COVID effect on pet ownership

In the Benelux countries, as in other regions, there has been a rise in the total number of pets since the start

of the pandemic. Pets provide comfort, support and companionship in difficult times, and people have been able to spend more time caring for them while working and staying at home.

Dutch studies show that attitudes to pet ownership have changed positively for 1 in 5 consumers as a result of the COVID pandemic. For example, 8% of Dutch households acquired a pet during the first year of the pandemic (in 2019 this was just 6.4%). Although lack of time remains the most frequently mentioned reason for not having pets, this has been said less since the COVID crisis began.

The pandemic has also had a positive effect on pet ownership in Belgium: 11.6% of Belgian households welcomed a new pet during the first year of the pandemic, and a quarter of them (25%) did so very much because of the pandemic.

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### Pets in the office?

While the NVG and BEPEFA trade associations are delighted about the increase in pet ownership, they wonder what will happen after the pandemic, and urge pet owners to continue caring for their faithful companions as everything gradually returns to normal. While 7 out of 10 pet owners in the Benelux would like to take their pets to the office, only 1 in 10 companies allows this currently.

### COVID challenges for Benelux companies

The pandemic has also affected the pet food industry in the Benelux, as in other parts of the world. Despite some early challenges with the availability of ingredients, as well as the need to keep employees healthy and safe, the sector successfully stayed on top of its game during hectic times. Thankfully, there were no major issues, and pets in the Benelux were able to enjoy their pet food as usual.

### Trends in the sector

The field of nutrition is moving at a fast pace, and pet food products are constantly evolving. There have been dramatic changes over the years, progressing from basic pet food that provides the right nutrients in the right quantities to more sophisticated food with functional ingredients that have special nutritional benefits.

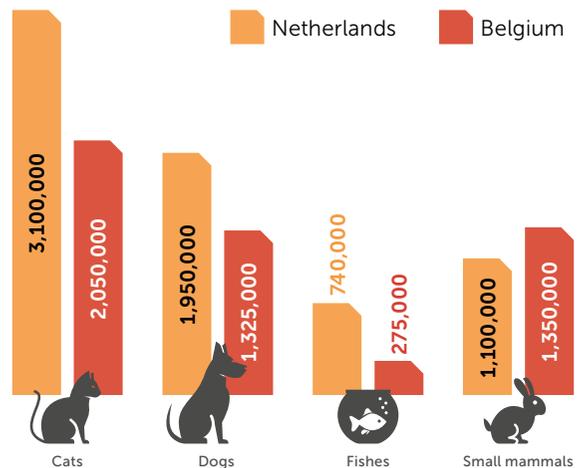
When it comes to caring for pets, a survey conducted for BEPEFA by Ivox shows that choosing pet food keeps 86% of pet owners busy, and almost three-quarters (74%) of them agree that 'only the best is good enough'.

80% of dog and cat owners consider the quality of pet food to be just as important as the quality of their own food, and 51% say they're often more concerned about the health of their pet than about their own health.

The humanization of pets is a key trend driving the Benelux pet food market. Many pet owners seek pet

food that not only reflects their own tastes, but also fits with their own lifestyle choices. Owners also want to feed their pets in an environmentally friendly way, so sustainable raw materials, environmentally friendly production, and recyclable packaging materials are important factors when choosing pet food. ♦

### Pet population in the Netherlands and Belgium



Source: Fediaf



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