



Broadway Pet Stores in Muswell Hill, London, is a good example of a pet shop that is keeping things in the family – husband and wife team Nigel and Sue are now joined by their son Tim. Not only that, but Nigel has lived here all his life...



Nigel, Sue and Tim



Top: The Wheatleys have noticed rising demand for natural and high-meat content food; Above left: Bagging machine on counter – they bag all their own food; Above right: Good selection of health supplements and products

A changing world

WHEN you've been in the business for close to 40 years, you will no doubt have seen a lot of change. Nigel Wheatley, of Broadway Pet Stores in Muswell Hill, London, says the change in pet food and nutrition is especially noticeable. "Things are so much more specialised now," he said. The sheer variety of pet foods now available is incredible, and the changing feeding patterns are also interesting – from frozen food to tins, then dry, and now freeze-dried/frozen raw food is making a comeback.

A pet store has been at this location in Muswell Hill for pretty much forever. Nigel has lived here all his life, and remembers there being three pet stores in the area when he was a child. "But we lived at the other end of Muswell

Hill, so we tended to use those instead. They later closed down, leaving just this one."

Muswell Hill boasts a thriving community and high street – there is an organic grocer, a 115-year-old family-run tea and coffee specialist, a music shop, clothes stores, ice-cream parlour, nail and beauty parlours alongside the ubiquitous charity shops, restaurants, cafes and supermarkets.

Having a "good local trade association" helps – apart from providing general business support, it also organises special events such as a treasure hunt for shoppers around participating shops and Christmas events.

He said: "Many of our customers are people whom I have known all my life, or we went to school together. People who came in as children are now bringing their children!"

His wife Sue adds: "Many people who grew up here and moved away come back as adults to live because it's such a nice area."

Nigel and Sue were school sweethearts and eventually married, with Sue joining Nigel in the shop in about 1985. "Customers like the fact that we are a true family business," he says. Son Tim also started helping out in the shop part-time while at school and is now also full-time at the store. Each has their speciality – for Tim, it's the on-line ordering and accounts and looking after the fish (the pet shop's website is a good guide to the pet shop, and can accept requests for home delivery), while Sue handles most of the banking and keeps things running smoothly. "People are amused that we are husband and wife, and we work together!" grins Sue.

The shop is busy with a steady flow

of customers, so much so that they have not looked into providing alternative services to encourage further footfall – so no claw clipping or weigh-in clinics. "We cannot take time out for these," says Nigel. "We would not be able to serve our normal customers otherwise!"

Bursting at the seams

The trio did a refit in January this year, and had a good re-think about stock. They are also working on zoning their products, so that customers can find products more easily. Now, ten months or so on, the shop is already bursting at the seams. "We are trying to be really good about stock," says Nigel, almost sheepishly, "and I have to be realistic. We just cannot stock everything – and now, with some products we wait until customers ask for it before we bring it in."

Nigel likes going to trade shows and has visited most UK pet trade shows over the years as well as being a regular at Interzoo. New products are the lifeblood of any pet shop, he says, and Broadway always makes sure its new arrivals get pride of place.

At the counter is a display of the Gimdog Shake and Bake dog muffins, which he picked up at the Pedigree Wholesale trade show earlier this year. There is also a selection of Arden Grange liver treat pastes, and a freezer of Billy + Margot iced dog treats – "Pity we've not really had the weather for

them," reflects Sue. When they got a new counter-top display unit for Pet Head, the shampoos went up front and sales went through the roof.

Dry dog food is a good seller. Royal Canin, Hill's Pet Nutrition and James Wellbeloved are big sellers, while Applaws and Lily's Kitchen are growing a loyal following. Supermarket brands have been moved to the end of the store, and some brands are in the process of being de-listed.

"We have to look very closely at what we are selling," explained Nigel. "We have to make a profit, and we generally cannot make it out of tins."

The team are loyal stockists of Hill's, Royal Canin, James Wellbeloved and Eukanuba. Eukanuba's loyalty card scheme has helped drive new traffic to the store, and they look forward to Royal Canin and James Wellbeloved starting their own loyalty scheme. Royal Canin and James Wellbeloved also helped with the refit undertaken at the beginning of this year. To further promote the business, they have had their

delivery van sign-written and diaries produced which was done with the help of the manufacturers.

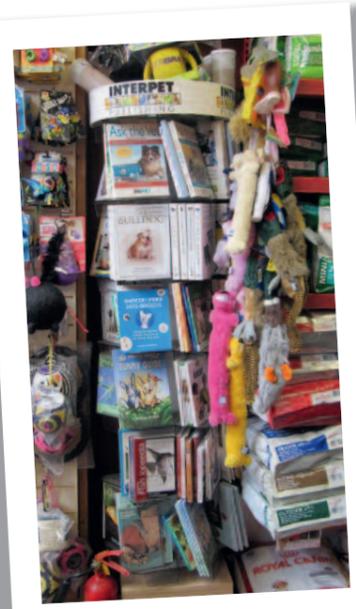
Nigel said: "If you get a customer on a breed-specific food, they stick with it. I had someone once

who said what 'a con' those prices are. But I said to her: how can you con the dog into eating it, and then looking good and being healthy?"

Treats are very popular among customers, and are sold loose as they've found people prefer to pick and



Moving Pet Head up front triggered strong interest



Sue has a soft spot for her books