

# AN ANALYSIS OF AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD OWNERS PREFERENCES FOR DOG FOOD PURCHASES

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## INTRODUCTION

- ❖ 14,000 years ago, man began domesticating wild dogs making canines the first domesticated species (Giemsch, et al., 2015).
- ❖ Canines have been transformed from predators to creatures that are completely dependent on their human owners.
- ❖ The commercial pet food industry was born with the invention of “Spratt’s Dog Cakes” and has grown to be a \$28 billion dollar industry.
- ❖ Today, 36% of U.S. households own dogs, which occupy an increasingly important role in people’s lives (Foundation, 2018).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Evolution

Mitochondrial DNA tells us dogs originated from a single species of wolf.

Modern wolves are more closely related to each other than modern dogs, leading scientists to believe that the earliest dogs may have in fact lived amid hunter-gatherer societies before acclimating to an agrarian lifestyle (Staff, 2014).

### Escalated Roles

63% of U.S. households own at least one pet. Dogs are the most common type of pet.

In addition to the increase in dog ownership, dogs have also moved up in status with many owners viewing their dogs, not simply as a pet but a part of the family (Wall, 2017).

### Industry Expansion

The more important people view their pets, the more they are willing to spend money on them. The industry continues to see growth even in times of recession.

### History of Dog Food

In the late 1800s, the first commercially produced dog food was created when James Spratt noticed that dogs living around the shipyard in England were fed leftover biscuits.

### Current Dog Food Trends

Today, the dog food industry is an ever-expanding market as new knowledge about canine nutrition is discovered and more varieties of dog food become available to the general public.

Dry kibble, canned food, freeze dried, commercially or home prepared raw and lightly processed refrigerated food.

Consumers are insisting on pet food that has a similar quality as they expect in their own food (Nielsen, 2016).

### Marketing Techniques of Dog Food

As the industry becomes increasingly competitive, marketing techniques play a large role in successful sales of the product.

## METHODOLOGY

### Survey

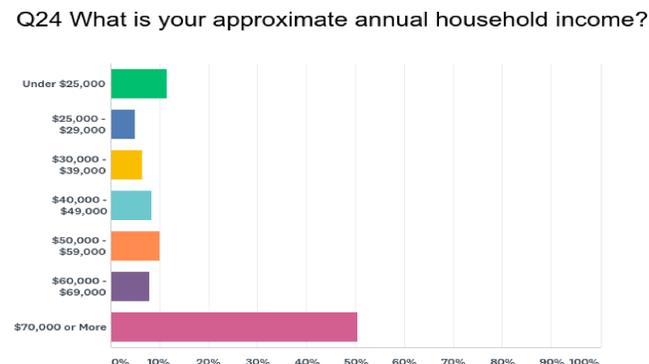
Data was gathered through a 24-question survey that addresses motives for purchases of dog food, as well as demographic information. The survey link was posted and available to take for 18 days.

Listed below are the names of the Facebook groups as well as their viewing status and number of members.

- The “Little” Aussie (closed) 7,900 members
- Mini and Toy Aussies (closed) 10,100 members
- Mini Aussie Texas (public) 8,700 members
- AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD (closed) 19,100 members
- AussiesBigandSmall (closed) 6,700 members

## RESULTS

FIGURE 4.1 AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME OF SUREVY RESPONDENTS (N=355)



## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

TABLE 4.1 ANOVA TABLE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ACROSS GROCERY AND PET STORES

Anova: Single Factor

### SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Grocery	34	1649000	48500	352696969.7
Pet Store	34	2048000	60235.2941	261639928.7

### ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2341191176	1	2341191176	7.621847825	0.007459	3.986269
Within Groups	20273117647	66	307168449			
Total	22614308824	67				

TABLE 4.2 ANOVA TABLE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ACROSS ALL 6 PURCHASE LOCATIONS

Anova: Single Factor

### SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Grocery	34	1649000	48500	352696970
Pet Store	130	7396000	56892.30769	306988312
Vet Clinic	5	309000	61800	138575000
Online	104	5920500	56927.88462	299764166
Feed (Livestock) Sto	90	4935500	54838.88889	248229370
Other	45	2520000	56000	347215909

### ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2360957218	5	472191443.6	1.5813088	0.164184	2.236439
Within Groups	1.2004E+11	402	298607998.3			
Total	1.22401E+11	407				

## CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ The survey received 466 total responses, however only 355 respondents answered every question.
- ❖ The responses from the completed surveys revealed that approximately 95% of participants were women while only 5% were men.
- ❖ The highest responding age group, which totaled 31% of respondents, were those 20-29 years of age.
- ❖ There was a notable difference between the race and ethnicity of respondents. The breakdown is as follows:  
Asian/Pacific Islander 1%, Black/African American less than 1%, Hispanic/Latino 3%, Native American/American Indian 3%, Other 2% and White/Caucasian 94%
- ❖ Regarding household income, 50% of respondents earn approximately \$70,000 or more annually.

Based on 365 participant responses, the top 5 brands of dog food purchased are:

- Purina (n=31)
- Fromm (n=29)
- Victor (n=28)
- Taste of the Wild (n=23)
- Naturals (n=19)

Those same participants indicated that the top 5 preferred brands of dog food are:

- Fromm (n=31)
- Victor (n=30)
- Purina (28)
- Taste of the Wild (n=24)
- Naturals (21)

In summary, based on the answers of the individuals who participated in the survey, Australian shepherd owners are taking into account the quality of their dog’s food before purchasing.

The majority of participants(96%) research their dog’s food and read the ingredients list before purchasing.

Quality of ingredients was selected most commonly by participants, as the top factor when selecting a dog food.

More than 98% of respondents felt that their dog food choice does impact their dog’s health.

*\*Responses for this study were limited to members of specified Australian shepherd breed groups on Facebook and should not be inferred to represent Australian shepherd owners or dog owners as a whole, although some similarities may exist.\**

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