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Dogs, cats serve as practice babies for millennials

Pets serve as practice children for millennials, and that contributes to that generation's willingness to fuel the fur baby economy.

Millennials pet owners are more willing to coddle their cats and indulge their dogs, than previous generations, reported [Adweek](#). Pets serve as practice children for millennials, and that contributes to that generation's willingness to fuel the fur baby economy.

For example, 44 percent of millennials reported viewing their pets as practice for having children in a study by Gale, a business solutions agency, reported [Adweek](#).

To take advantage of this trend, pet food companies needs to be customizable, convenient and connected to social media, according to [Adweek](#). The article included numerous quotes from millennials about their pets.

US millennials are replacing babies with cats, dogs

The [Adweek](#) article echoed similar reporting by [Petfood Industry](#). The largest pet-owning group in the United States, the millennial generation, seems to be [replacing babies with cats and dogs](#), which potentially sets up the US to follow trends seen in Japan, said Maria Lange, [business group director for market research firm GfK](#), at [Petfood Forum 2017](#) on April 4 in Kansas City, Missouri, USA.

"Millenials are 77 percent more likely to have a pet when they are unmarried and not a parent," she said. "If that trend continues, we may see a similar trend to what we're seeing in Japan...Japan has more pets than they have children. Maybe that is a trend that the U.S. may follow in the future."

More than 35 percent of millennials in the US now own pets, up from approximately 20 percent in 2007, and that figure [seems likely to continue rising](#), she said. Over the same past decade, baby boomers' pet ownership rate has dropped from more than 40 percent to near 30 percent. Generation X continues to be the [pet food industry's lost generation](#) with a stagnant pet ownership rate of less than 25 percent.

What consumers want to feed fur babies

Lange's research also discovered that many millennials think of pets as practice for having a child. Just as parents often care more about the quality of their children's food than their own, millennial pet owners share strong concern for the well-being and health of their pets, she said. Millennials demand transparency, quality and nutrition in their own food; likewise, they prefer to buy healthy, sustainable pet food.

Thinking of pets as children creates opportunities for the pet food industry to produce premium products, especially those marketed as natural, she said. At the same time, it raises the stakes on demands for safe, nutritious pet foods.

44% of Millennials See Their Pets as Starter Children, and That's a Big Opportunity for Brands



Millennials are putting off marriage and starting families later in life, but there's one big milestone they're right on track for: their first pet. To many adults ages 20-36, these furry creatures are much more than cute companions—they're starter children.