

The Growth of Pet Toys, Supplies and Durables – And What It Means for Packaging

By Eric Faber, Founder & CEO of Packaging Resources July 2025

Walk down any mass, club, or specialty pet aisle today and it's obvious: pets aren't "just animals" anymore—they're family. That shift has driven explosive growth in pet toys, supplies, and durable products, and packaging is right in the middle of the story.

For packaging professionals, this category has gone from "nice niche" to strategic priority.

A Fast-Growing Hard-Goods Business

Non-food pet supplies (toys, beds, carriers, grooming tools, litter systems, bowls, leashes, etc.) have become a massive global business. Estimates put the worldwide pet supplies market at more than **\$320 billion in 2024**, with forecasts pushing it toward **\$540+ billion by 2034**—a CAGR of roughly **5%+**.

Within that, "hard goods" and accessories are particularly dynamic:

- **Pet hard goods** (toys, beds, crates, litter boxes, carriers, aquariums, etc.) are expected to grow around **5–6% annually** through 2030.
- **Pet toys** alone are projected to climb from about **\$9 billion in 2024 to \$15+ billion by 2032**, growing around **7% annually**.
- **Pet accessories** (collars, leashes, apparel, bowls, grooming tools and more) are forecast to grow roughly **7% a year**, more than doubling in value between 2024 and 2034.

This growth is being driven by "pet humanization," premiumization, and an always-on DTC and marketplace ecosystem that constantly launches new SKUs and micro-brands.

For a packaging consultant, that means more complexity, more change, and more opportunity.

Why Pet Durables Are Different From Pet Food

Pet food often behaves like a classic consumables category: high velocity, heavy, and price-sensitive, with packaging designed for protection and efficiency first.

Pet durables and toys behave more like **lifestyle and gift** categories:

- **Impulse-driven:** Toys, collars, treats-plus-toy bundles and seasonal items are highly impulse sensitive.
- **Highly visual:** Shoppers pick up based on color, texture, and personality—packaging has to show that off.
- **Gifting mindset:** Pet parents “gift” toys, beds, apparel and accessories for holidays and special occasions, which raises expectations for presentation.
- **Longer lifecycle:** Durables are meant to last, so packaging must communicate quality and safety, not just price.

This changes what the brand needs from packaging: it must sell the story, not just contain the product.

Key Packaging Trends in Pet Toys & Supplies

1. Shelf-Ready Storytelling

Pet aisles are overcrowded. Winning packs:

- Use **clear windows or minimal framing** so consumers can see and touch toys, leashes, or chew textures while still preventing damage or theft.
- Lean on **bold iconography** to quickly communicate species, size, and use case (“Power Chewer,” “Indoor Cat Enrichment,” “Senior Dog Comfort,” “Travel-Ready”).
- Include **education panels** for new categories (enrichment toys, “educational” puzzles, harness fitting, orthopedic beds, anxiety-relief products).

This is particularly important as the category fragments into ever-more specialized SKUs.

2. E-Commerce-First Formats

Online retailers and marketplaces now own a large slice of pet spending, with platforms like Chewy and Amazon leaning heavily into autoship and DTC brands.

For packaging, that means:

- **Right-size and right-weight:** Minimize dimensional weight while still protecting irregular, fragile shapes (interactive toys, plastic housings, dispensing mechanisms).
- **ISTA-ready:** Packaging needs to survive small-parcel shipping, not just palletized loads.
- **Reduced unboxing friction:** Pet owners don’t want tools, twist-tie surgery or plastic shrapnel—especially for products bought every few months.
- **E-com imagery alignment:** Structural/graphic design should match the product’s thumbnail and hero images; color calls, scale, and benefit language need to carry from pack to screen.

A packaging consultancy that understands parcel shipping and e-commerce content requirements can save brands real money and reduce returns.

3. Sustainability... With Teeth Marks

Pet parents say they care about sustainability, but they also own aggressive chewers and scratchers. That tension shows up in packaging:

- Brands are pushing **fiber-based solutions**—replacing clamshells with carded backers, folding cartons, or corrugated displays.
- Plastic is being **downgauged or eliminated** where possible, but some high-abuse items still need robust containment and theft deterrence.
- “Green” claims are shifting from generic (“eco-friendly”) to **specific proof points** (FSC-certified board, recycled content, curbside-recyclable, soy inks).

Our role as a consultant is to keep brands honest: avoid “greenwash” while delivering real improvements in material usage, recyclability, and logistics efficiency.

4. Premium & Lifestyle Positioning

The growth in pet beds, carriers, strollers, apparel, and “home décor-compatible” accessories is pushing packaging into lifestyle territory:

- **Home & fashion cues:** Neutral color palettes, matte finishes, and photography that looks like home furnishings or outdoor gear rather than commodity pet supplies.
- **Multi-language and global compliance:** As brands chase global growth, packs must handle multiple languages, safety marks, and regulatory icons without looking cluttered.
- **Gift-able formats:** Rigid boxes, reusable bags, and upgraded graphics for limited-edition collections and seasonal capsules (Halloween costumes, holiday toys, sports licensed products).

Packaging is no longer a cost center in these segments—it’s part of the brand experience.

5. Information-Dense, Trust-Building Packs

As spend increases, so does scrutiny. Pet owners are asking hard questions about materials, safety and durability:

- **Material transparency:** “BPA-free,” “food-grade silicone,” “non-toxic dyes,” and specific polymer call-outs where relevant.
- **Safety & testing claims:** References to standardized testing, chew-resistance protocols, or third-party certifications.
- **Clear sizing systems:** Weight and breed guidance, visuals for fitting harnesses and apparel, crate sizing charts, and recommended uses (indoor vs. outdoor).

Structuring this information clearly—and compliantly—has become a niche skill set that many brands need external help with.

Operational and Supply-Chain Implications

The explosion in SKUs and formats across toys and durables also impacts the upstream side of packaging:

- **Shorter runs, more complexity:** Many pet brands rely on rapid launch cycles and limited editions, which stresses traditional MOQs and tooling assumptions.
- **Global sourcing:** Toys, carriers, and accessories are often sourced in Asia, while packaging is specified by U.S. or European brand teams—creating gaps in standardization, material specs, and QA.
- **Retail vs. DTC variants:** The same product may require different packaging formats for mass retail, specialty, club, and direct-to-consumer.

As a packaging consultancy we can rationalize structures and materials across channels, while still giving marketing the flexibility they want, and that is a strong position.

Where a Packaging Consultant Adds Real Value

For our packaging consulting practice, the pet toy/supplies/durables category offers several high-value engagement areas:

1. **Portfolio audits**
 - Map current packaging formats by channel, region, and product type.
 - Identify opportunities to standardize structures, substrates, and print processes.
2. **E-commerce optimization**
 - Redesign for parcel durability, lower damage rates, and fewer returns.
 - Align packaging with online content and unboxing expectations.
3. **Sustainability roadmaps**
 - Transition away from legacy clamshells where feasible.
 - Introduce recyclable/renewable materials and credible environmental claims.
4. **Cost-to-serve and logistics efficiency**
 - Reduce cube and weight across carriers, crates, beds, and large toys.
 - Rationalize inner packs, PDQs, and shelf-ready displays for big-box and club.
5. **Regulatory and safety communication**
 - Ensure global labeling and safety icons are complete, compliant, and easy to understand.
 - Help brands communicate testing, durability and material safety without overwhelming the shopper.