

New San Rafael pet food store caters to health-conscious owners

[Nancy Isles Nation](#)

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PET LOVERS who want to be sure their dogs, cats and rabbits are eating the most nutritious organic diets available have a new destination for shopping at the Northgate One shopping center.

Pet Food Express opens Saturday next door to the Terra Linda neighborhood Safeway with a selection of canned, dried and frozen food for health-conscious pet owners.

In addition to food, the 6,200-square-foot store stocks pet accessories, toys, training items, sanitation supplies and carriers.

The store includes a five-station self-service pet wash. For \$15, caregivers can wash their dogs with natural shampoo, pat them down with provided towels and blow-dry the fur.

The Terra Linda outlet is the 32nd store opened by the San Leandro-based Bay Area chain. A second Marin location is at 912 Diablo Ave. in Novato.

Founder Michael Levy of Mill Valley said he began selling dog food as part of his dog training business in San Francisco in 1976. By 1986, he opened a retail store, specializing in high-quality food.

Earlier this week, workers were busy stocking shelves with Dogswell Happy Hips Premium Dog Treats that promote healthy joints and Zuke's Z-Ridge Edible Dental Chews for healthy teeth.

For cats, there's Kitty Kaviar for \$7.99 an ounce. It is used as a garnish to tempt finicky eaters. There's also Natural Balance venison and green pea dried food to aid cats with allergies.

Raw diet foods are available for pet owners who believe it is healthier for their pets to eat

meat and vegetables that have not been cooked.

Employees go through a week of training before starting to work, and managers frequently attend educational programs at company headquarters.

"Our customer service is at a very high level - we make a lot of recommendations," Levy said. "People are really concerned now with where their pet food is manufactured and what ingredients are in it."

Veterinarian Dr. Fred Frye, who owns the Pet-Agree food and supply shop at 1920 Fourth St. in San Rafael, said all nearby pet shops are competitors.

"They all have food, they all have items," said Frye, who also sells specialty pet foods. "I don't worry about it because my staff is very well versed on what's good for the animals."

Pet Food Express displays photos of the pets of customers who donate a minimum of \$250 to nonprofit shelters and rescue operations.

AT A GLANCE

Pet Food Express

- Address: 280 Northgate One, San Rafael

- Employees: Seven

- Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday; and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday.