

Organic pet food sales on the rise

By Cyndia Zwahlen, Los Angeles Times

Organic, raw and even gluten-free food choices aren't just for people anymore.

These options are showing up at local pet shops that are looking to distinguish themselves from big-box competitors. After a slowdown in sales of premium-priced food during the recession, independent pet shops said the sector was recovering.

At the Modern Dog, a boutique in a Venice bungalow, co-owner Lance Castro was looking to add two new brands of freeze-dried raw food and premium kibble to the seven he already sells.

"It's done wonders for our business," said Castro, who opened the Abbot Kinney Boulevard store with Guy Miracle five years ago.

The store's popular Sojos dehydrated dog food mix of sweet potatoes, turkey, apples and flax meal, among other ingredients, costs \$21.99 for a 2-pound bag, to which water is added to make 10 pounds of food.

Castro said he was looking at sites for a second location where he plans to have a refrigeration unit for fresh and frozen raw-food brands.

Nationwide, annual retail sales of organic and natural pet food are expected to grow three times as fast as pet food sales overall through 2015, according to an industry report to be released this week by the Packaged Facts market research company.

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