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Media Release

Sales spike sees Big Dog chase Ireland

REDCLIFFE-based pet food company Big Dog Pet Foods is defying the economic climate and expanding into Ireland.

The local pet food and supplement manufacturer, which was established in 2000, is posting major growth for the past financial year and after recently expanding into Asia is establishing in Ireland.

The emerging company, which has increased turnover in the past year by almost 66 per cent, specialises in high quality specially formulated pet foods and supplements designed for greyhound racing, show dogs and cats, and domestic pets.

Big Dog now has a presence in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore and more recently New Zealand and Ireland.

Big Dog Pet Foods managing director Chris Essex said the company was growing rapidly and showed no signs of slowing.

“The domestic pet food market is thriving, and coupled with our greyhound racing supplements, Big Dog is racing ahead,” said Mr Essex.

“Last year we turned over about \$3 million which we were extremely happy with, but this year we are well on target for \$5 million may be even more,” he said.

Mr Essex said the decision to expand into Ireland was to capitalise on the strong greyhound racing and coursing industry.

“There is a strong racing industry in Ireland and several trainers are already using our products,” he said.

“It seems a logical move to gain a presence where there is demand, but it also helps with exposure and acts as a gateway to the European markets.”

Big Dog Pet Foods was established in 2002 by Mr Essex, who studied Food Science at Gatton Agricultural College, and after completing his Associate Diploma, identified a lack of nutritional food products and supplements on the market for animals.

He soon teamed up with pet evolutionary expert, and New South Wales-based veterinarian, Dr Ian Billingham, to develop the Dr B's Aussie Raw Barf Diets, and more recently their own brand of natural Big Dog minces.



The domestic pet food market now caters for 60 per cent of Big Dog's business, with the remainder made up of elite greyhound racing supplements and products for show dogs.

Mr Essex said the Asian market was still holding extremely strong despite reports of recession in numerous countries.

"Asia is just booming, and we expect this to become a major component of our core business very quickly because of their strong demands for domestic pet foods," he said.

"Our association with racing retail giant Garrards, who boast three stores in New Zealand has also led to a spike in shipments across the Tasman, growing by about 50 per cent within three months."

Marketing of the Big Dog brand has been largely word-of-mouth and sponsorship-based including major sponsorships with the Brisbane Greyhound Racing Club, Angle Park Greyhound Race Track, Casino Race Track and in Tasmania racing circles.

The company recently re-signed with the Brisbane Club to sponsor the 2009 Group Two Big Dog Cup, formerly known as the Queensland Cup.

Mr Essex said the sponsorships were increasing the company's brand recognition, and coupled with efficient distribution channels and a strong reputation, had provided a solid platform for Big Dog's growth.

"When we did our research, we realised that the conventional, and often more pricey methods of marketing were flooded with other pet food companies," he said.

"We wanted to take a more direct and innovative approach because we are very different to the other pet food companies, and this style of marketing has helped establish that.

"At the end of the day, the high quality of our products really speaks for itself and now we have a loyal customer base, so our main focus is to manage the demand with a high level of customer focus, while still getting the brand out there and expanding."

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