

Pet Parenting in a Pandemic

The Sound | 2020

There's been a LOT of talk around how strange and surreal life is in the time of Covid-19.

But what about its impact on our fluffy friends, and the roles they play in our lives?

Around the world, Pet Parents are facing a plethora of new challenges and choices as they strive to keep their pets healthy and happy amid the ongoing crisis; experiencing new and amplified tensions as they try to navigate Pet Parenting in a Pandemic.

We've explored 10 of these tensions; looking at some of the challenges and opportunities they present for you to develop and deepen your relationship with Pet Parents.





10 Tensions During a Pandemic:

1. Accelerated Adoption
2. Disrupted Domain
3. Piling Pounds
4. Relaxed Routines
5. Doggone Discipline
6. Enhanced Emotions
7. Canine Confinement
8. Impacted Inventory
9. Separation Stress
10. Holistic Health

“How do I balance my need to return to normal life (outside of the home), with my new dog’s need for attention, affection and routine after being with me 24/7?”



Accelerated Adoption. ■

Across the world, we’ve seen an unprecedented rise in the number of new Pet Parents and the growth of multi-pet households. Desire for companionship, welcome distraction and the emotional win of doing some good in the world, has created the perfect conditions for people to bring a new furry friend into their homes. As lockdown begins to ease and external distractions creep back in, new Pet Parents may struggle to balance the needs of their new dog with their desire to return to a full life outside the home.

Business: Questions to consider



01

How will demand for puppy/new dog necessities grow over time, and how can businesses retain these Pet Parents over the pet's life?

02

What products and services will be needed to fill the gap once lockdown eases?

03

What opportunities are there to ease the new pet transition for both pet and parent?

04

How can we meet the needs of both a new puppy and a new adult dog?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

What changes are happening in your home with a new puppy/adopted dog?

02

How are you training your new puppy or readjusting an older dog into your lifestyle and what products/services will you need to get a new dog settled at home?

03

Are there gaps in resources you wish you had access to to help acclimate both you and pup to this new companionship?

04

What are you anticipating changing when you return to work outside the home?

“How do I balance my dog’s need to be near me, to distract, comfort and entertain me at all times, with my need for independence and isolation?”



Disrupted Domain.

With Pet Parents now home 24/7, dogs are experiencing significant upheaval when it comes to territorial independence and their home ecosystem; owner-pet interactions are increasing exponentially and safe, quiet spaces are visibly shrinking. While some dogs are adjusting happily to this increased attention and engagement, others are finding this loss of control and alone time unsettling, potentially impacting their health and wellbeing.



Business: Questions to consider

01

Will we see an increased need to compartmentalize the home, including the need for “no dog” spaces for work purposes?

02

Will containment products like gates and/or crates increase in sales? Or will the approach be more pedagogical?

03

On the flipside, will dogs get more freedom post-Covid and products like leashes, fences, crates, etc. become less of a necessity?

Consumer:

Areas to Explore



01

How has the need for you to distinguish “pet spaces” within your home changed?

02

Has alone time gone completely out the window or is it something you enforce? Explain more about how that works (especially in small spaces).

03

Has being at home impacted how, and how often, you interact with your dog? Are you noticing any changes in your dog’s behavior as a result of the constant proximity and increased engagement?

“How do I balance the emotional reward and interaction I get from giving my dog lots of food and treats, with the potential health issues it may cause him?”



Piling Pounds.

Comfort and over-eating isn't limited to Pet Parents, dogs are also getting in on the act. Humans using food as a coping mechanism for anxiety has long been established, however the transference of this need onto their dogs is something altogether newer. The mounting uncertainty about the future has led Pet Parents to not only reach for their own treats, but to regularly hand those treats over to their favourite furry friends. More time at home and occasions for treats coupled with less time and space for exercise is creating a perfect weight-gain storm for both parent and pet.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

Are we going to see a rise in weight management needs and how will product portfolios adjust to it? Will this be a spike in demand or will it continue long-term for fear of returning issues in the future?

02

Will the need for more natural, healthy and hypoallergenic treats increase as Pet Parents see the impact of increased treating?

03

How will Pet Parents seek to manage their dogs' weight and will there be an increased demand in calorie-controlled foods?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

How has your relationship with your dog changed when it comes to food and treating?

02

Have you noticed a change in your routines / are you experimenting with different types of food/treats?

03

How have your own behaviors transitioned onto your pup's?

04

What expectations will continue post-pandemic?

“How do I balance my need for fluidity and relaxed routines in a time of disruption and high anxiety, with his need for stability and normalcy?”



Relaxed Routines.

For creatures of habit, both human and canine, everyday routines are their bedrock of emotional security and stability. As the weeks in captivity stretch on and human routines continue to be disrupted (in some cases disappear entirely), canine companions are having to fast adjust to their own new normal with their usual routines around feeding, sleeping, walks and playtime subject to change. As lockdown eases, Pet Parents will face significant emotional and practical challenges as they try to re-establish routines of old.

Business: Questions to consider



01

How can we help with establishing new routines and rituals that support both Pet Parent and dog while in lockdown?

02

How might existing products, platforms and digital assistants be adapted to provide behavioural nudges to support feeding, playing, exercising and sleeping routines?

03

What support can we provide Pet Parents with as they begin to re-establish their old routines once lockdown eases?

Consumer:

Areas to Explore



01

How have your routines changed since lockdown and how is this impacting your health and happiness?

02

Has your dog exhibited any changes in demeanor and personality? Have you seen changes in their energy and activity?

03

Have you created new habits that impact your dog? How do you see these continuing once lockdown eases?

“How do I ensure my dog’s training and discipline continues to evolve when I’m experiencing my very own lack of discipline?”



Doggone Discipline. ■

Training has come to the forefront of many minds as people realize their dogs may be lacking basic training or finding that they now have the time to further train them. Teaching an old dog new tricks is the topic of countless blogs, published studies and more, but there aren't nearly as many directions on how to do it yourself without the benefit of a hands on trainer. When it comes to training and discipline we're seeing a divided parenthood; some eager to use the time to upskill and others who are slacking now more than ever.



Business:

Questions to consider

01

How has lockdown impacted attitudes and behaviours towards discipline? How are Pet Parent's relaxed rules for themselves, influencing their training and discipline strategy?

02

Are Pet Parents creating new opportunities, occasions and rituals for training?

03

Is the responsibility for training now becoming more prevalent for the Pet Parent rather than an outsourced trainer? How might this impact future product and service offerings?

Consumer: Areas to Explore



01

What new behaviors is your dog learning by being at home with you 24/7? How have discipline and training evolved?

02

How has your behavior (both good and bad) changed towards your dog?

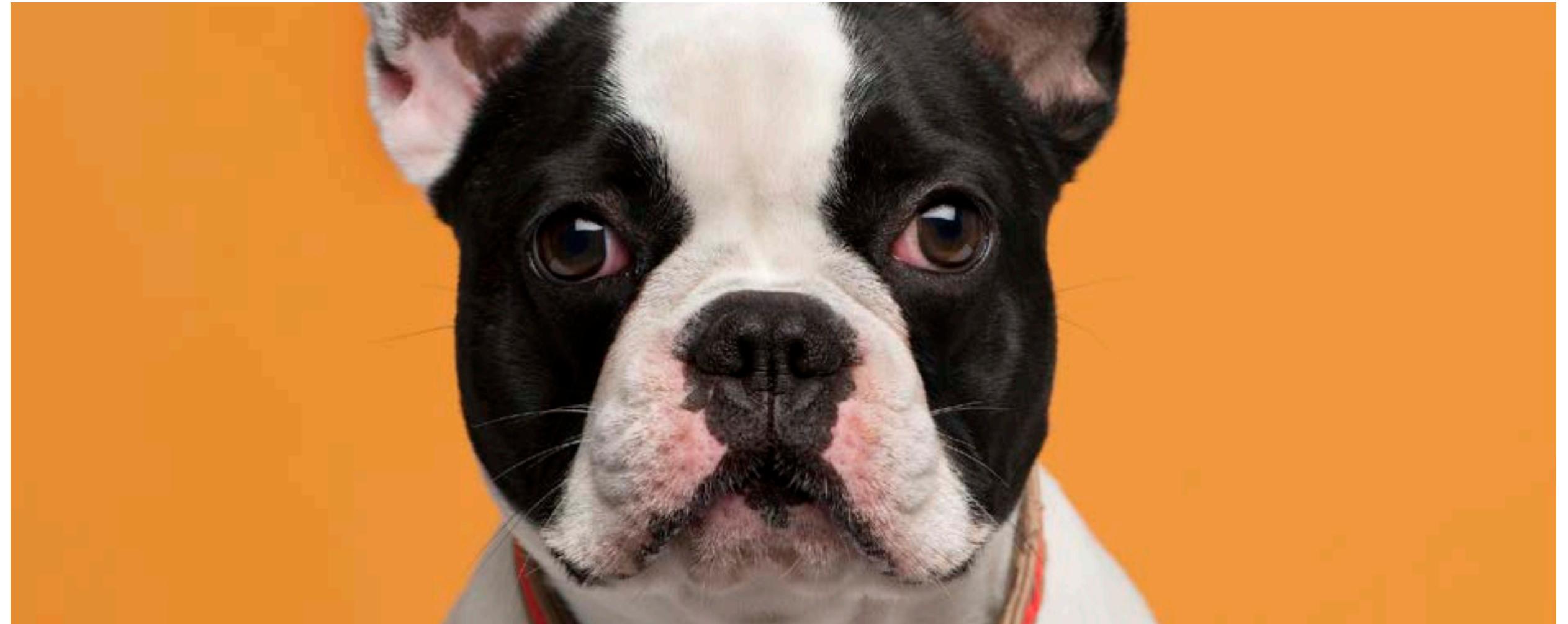
03

How much responsibility do you take for your dog's training and discipline? Is it a source of enjoyment and reward or frustration and disappointment? How are these emotions influencing your training strategy?

03

Are you surprised by your pet parenting style? Has it evolved during isolation or stayed the same?

“How do I balance my current emotional volatility with my dog’s need for calm and emotional constancy?”



Enhanced Emotions.

At a time when human emotions are running high, it’s inevitable for dogs (already highly sensitive and attuned to the moods of their human housemates) to feel the impact. The longer Pet Parents are dealing with the emotional roller coaster of life in a pandemic, the greater the stress felt by their dogs, potentially triggering a whole range of negative emotional and physical responses. Right now, many Pet Parents are struggling to find ways to balance their own emotional needs with those of their dog.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

How can we help Pet Parents understand (and mitigate) the impact their emotional volatility is having on their dogs?

02

Will the demand for anti-anxiety medication increase or are Pet Parents looking to more natural products to alleviate their dog's anxiety?

03

Is there an increasing role and demand for calming foods and treats?

04

How can we help Pet Parents diagnose and treat mild anxiety in their dogs?

Consumer: Areas to Explore



01

Has your need for contact, comfort and support from your dog increased during this time? How has this need changed your behavior towards them?

02

Have you noticed your dog react to your changing emotional state? Does their behavior or demeanor change? Does the way you interact change depending on your mood/emotions?

03

Has your dog shown signs of anxiety? If so, what are they and how have you attempted to address it? Given the choice between natural methods and medication, which appeals most?

“How do I balance my need for social distancing and isolation from others, with my dog’s need for socialization?”



Canine Confinement.

As Pet Parents the world over are confined to their homes, their dogs are suffering from a huge reduction in the amount of time outdoors, and opportunities to engage and socialize with other dogs and humans usually present in their lives. Prevented from their regular interactions, many dogs are experiencing withdrawal symptoms leading to noticeable behavioral changes; from increased demands for attention, affection and engagement, to the display of regressive and aggressive behaviour.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

Is there an opportunity for our brand to help and support Pet Parents as they witness changes in their dog's behaviour due to the lockdown?

02

With lockdown due to ease but social distancing to extend for some time, what does this mean for Pet Services (e.g. dog walking, dog grooming and dog sitting)?

03

How can our brand help Pet Parents to integrate their dogs back into a routine?

04

Is there a growing need for pet therapy or dog calming products and services?

Consumer:

Areas to Explore



01

How has your dog-walking behavior changed? Has the frequency, length and environment significantly changed and has this had any impact on your dog's attitudes or behaviors?

02

How has your dog's interaction with other people and other dogs changed during this time? Are you seeing any changes in demeanour or behavior?

03

How are you coping with the (normally outsourced) needs of your dog during lockdown? How do you see yourself fulfilling these needs as lockdown eases?

04

Have you seen a rise in aggressive or regressive behaviors in your pet and if so, what are the triggers?

“How do I maintain my dog’s diet and nutritional needs when I’m faced with empty shelves, delayed deliveries and concern about my own family’s food?”



Impacted Inventory.

The disruption to manufacturing, the global supply chain and distribution channels is presenting both a challenge and opportunity for Pet Parents when it comes to their dog’s diets. While some have turned towards over-stocking and creating an at-home inventory to stretch into the many months ahead, lack of availability is forcing a rapidly growing number of Pet Parents to explore and experiment. From switching brands to trials of new D2C products and services, the pandemic has created an inflection point for many when it comes to their dog’s diet.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

How has the pandemic affected pet food availability, has panic-buying and stocking up impacted the supply chain?

02

Are Pet Parents seeking alternative food options (switching brands and food sources) and how can you protect your relationship with them to ensure they return to your brand once supply chain issues are resolved?

03

How can you prevent Pet Parents from switching back to their original brand?

04

Will the economic uncertainty impact Pet Parent's ability to purchase their preferred brands over the long term?



Business: Questions to consider

01

Has economic uncertainty impacted the way you think about and the amount you spend on your dog's food? Are you having to make trade-offs?

02

Has your dog's food supply been affected by the pandemic? Have you seen a temporary restriction in availability and, if so, how have you coped? Has this impacted how you purchase your food (volume/frequency/where you purchase)?

03

If you've had to substitute your dog's usual food for another brand, how did you choose which one to try; what criteria were you basing your choice on? Do you see any of these switches continuing into the future?

“How can I transition back to a more normal life outside the home while protecting my dog’s health, happiness and expectation that I will now always be around?”

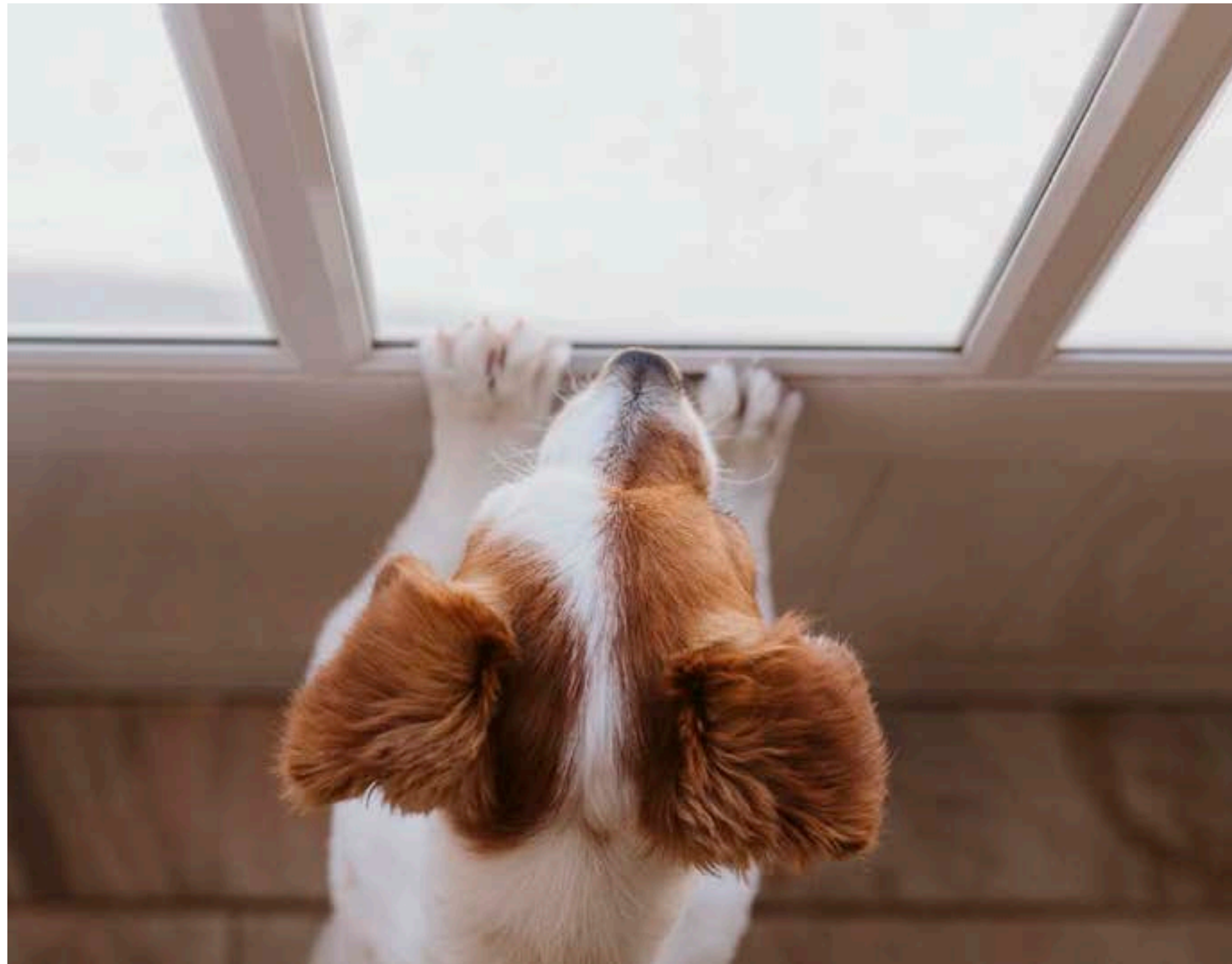


Separation Stress.

As lockdown has continued around the world, most Pet Parents have grown accustomed to having their dogs around 24/7. New habits, routines and rituals have been formed as a result of this increased together-time, delighting their canine companions; however as lockdown begins to ease, Pet Parents face a mounting challenge in trying to manage these new rituals and routines with increased pressure and time away from the home.

Business:

Questions to consider



01

What does the new routine for pets and their parent's look like and how can we help Pet Parents transition into their new routine?

02

How might the prospect of separation anxiety from lockdown liberation drive innovation pipelines of the (new) future? Will there be a spike in new-to-pet products like white noise machines, or in-home surveillance monitors/ interaction technology?

03

Will there be a larger market share for holistic pet approaches, like CBD, to combat this anxiety?

Consumer: Areas to Explore



01

How has your relationship with your pet changed during this time? What is something that you'll try to maintain even after stay-at-home orders are lifted?

02

What do you plan to do to ease the transition for your pet, or for yourself leaving them?

03

How will routines change and will there be a re-focus?

04

What will create comfort? Will there be a larger desire for pet-friendly workplaces/spaces?

**“How do I maintain
and protect his health
and wellbeing needs,
with a reduced budget
and limited time?”**



Holistic Health.

As Pet Parents have become more invested in protecting their own health and wellbeing during this time, they’ve also put more energy into exploring ways to keep their dogs healthy and happy. From health clubs, insurance, and canine activity monitoring apps to nutraceutical and protective treatment subscriptions, many are going all in on ensuring their companions’ health remains constant. As money becomes tighter, some Pet Parents may need to make choices balancing their own health needs with those of their dogs.

Business: Questions to consider



01

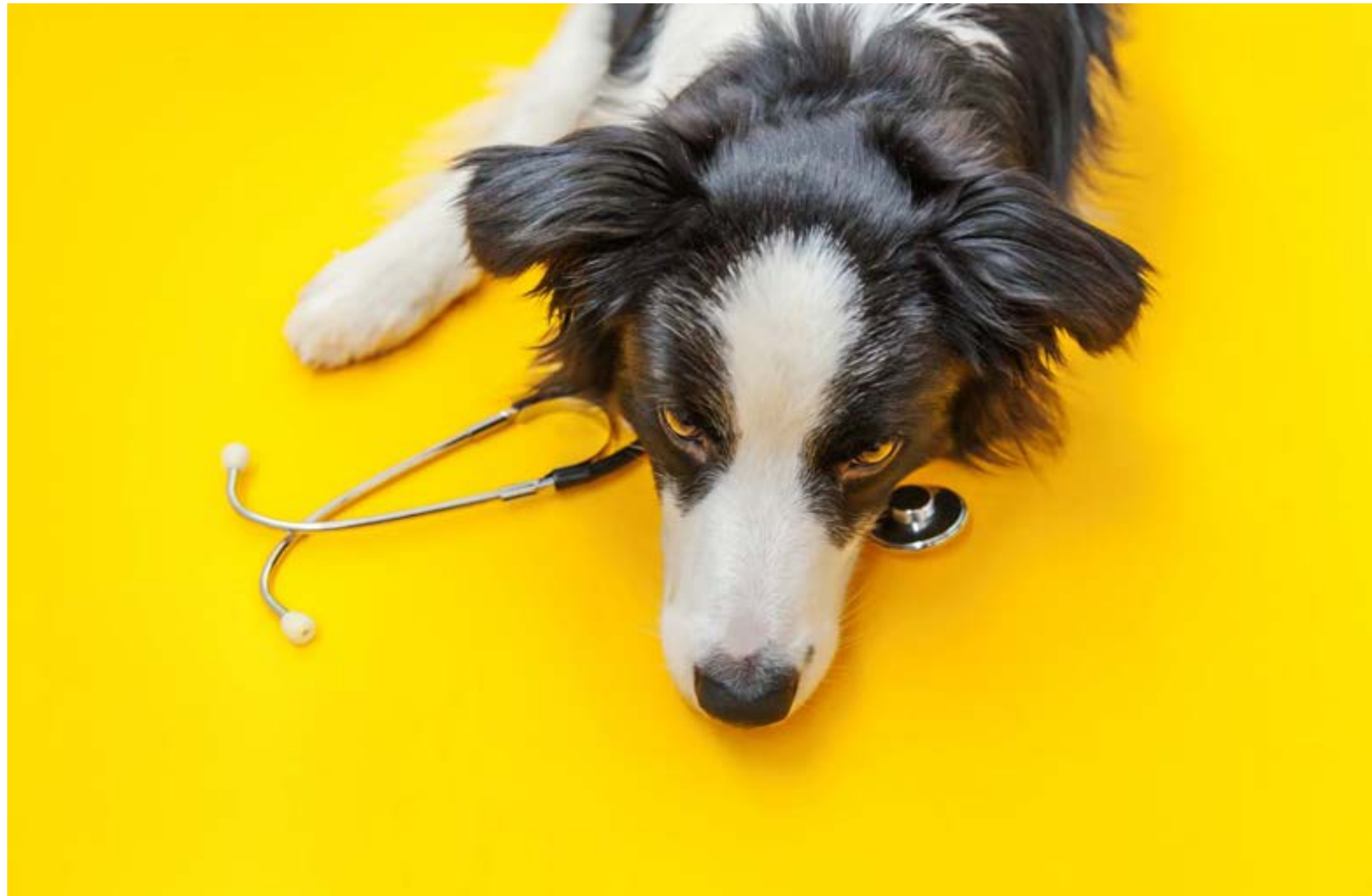
health insurance for humans drive renewed consideration and adoption of pet health insurance?

02

How might the use of behavioral nudges and interventions by your brand support a pet parent's efforts to improve their pet health?

03

With the increase in community engagement around pets, how might you create a network effect with your pet tech to keep users engaged post-pandemic?



Consumer:

Areas to Explore

01

Have you changed the amount of money you've spent on health related products for your dog during lockdown?

02

How has awareness and concern for your own health impacted your attitude towards protecting your dog's health? Have you considered or purchased pet insurance or signed up to pet health programs?

03

What new health and wellbeing products/services, including preventive treatments have you recently considered, and do you see yourself continuing as lockdown eases?

We get Pets.

Our passion for pets is deep rooted.

Our team of researchers, strategists and innovators are also adoring Pet Parents.

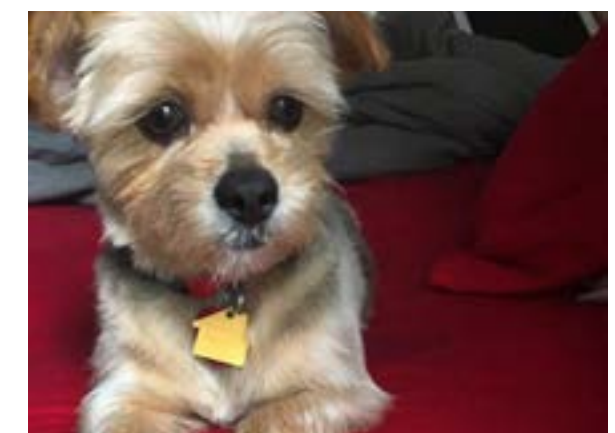
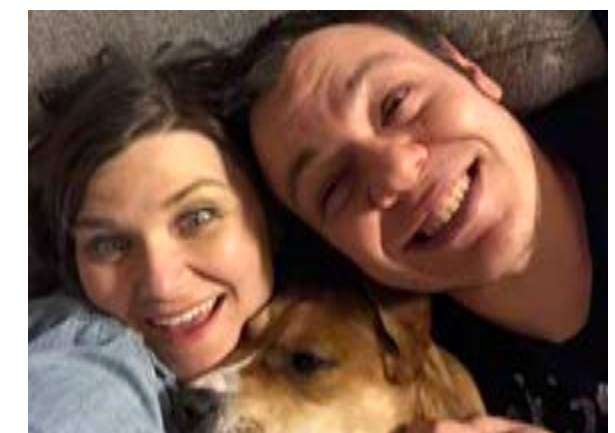
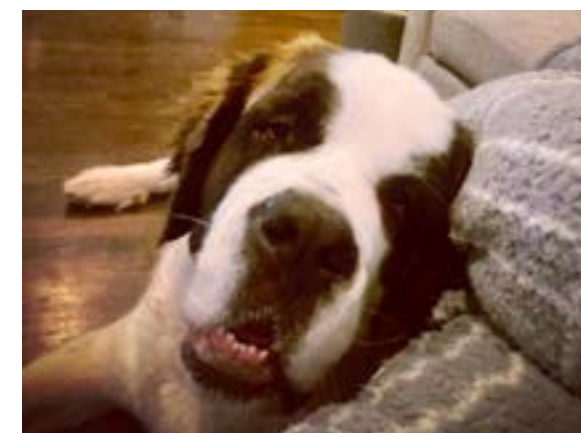
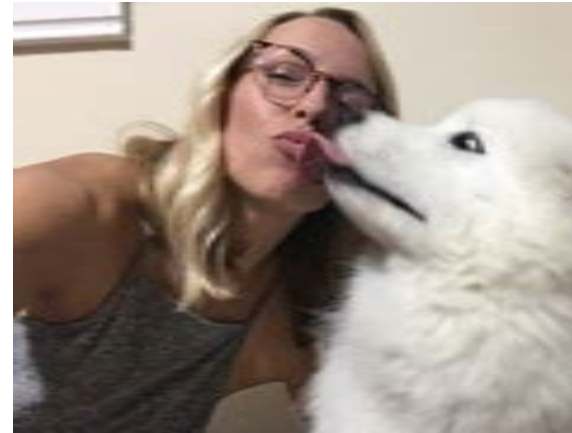
Which means when it comes to exploring the attitudes and behaviors of other Pet Parents, we see what others don't.

We're able to spot hidden patterns and instinctively know where to dig deeper, finding genuine opportunities for brands to develop and deepen the role they play in Pet Parents' lives.

Possibilities. Potential.

We're all things Pet.

We'd love to talk pets with you.



THE SOUND

We get Pets

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