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New Zealand King Salmon shifts to more sustainable business

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The essential fatty acids found in fish oil are said to boost skin and coat health, joint mobility and intestinal health.

The world's largest king salmon manufacturer has launched its first pet food range.

Omega Innovations, a division of New Zealand King Salmon, have created the pet food range Omega Plus, using sustainably sourced king salmon.

"I never thought I'd be so excited about pet food," said Omega Innovations manager Simon Thomas.

The pet food range includes freeze-dried 100 per cent salmon treats as well as wet and dry food for cats and dogs.

The company has been looking for ways to shift their use of byproducts to higher value products. The natural pet food contains salmon oil and few preservatives and is high in omega-3 fatty acids and protein.

"We'd been working with pet food manufacturers, but no one wanted to take more raw materials. So we looked at launching our own pet food range," he said.

Omega pet food uses byproducts from New Zealand king salmon, which reduces waste from salmon farming.

There are some parts of the salmon that had limited use.

"For example, we produce around 100 tonnes of gut a year, and we wanted to take these items that were going into things like offal, and use those for our pet food range.

"Sustainability is ensuring the future use of all products and species, so we're wanting to ensure the products we generate are best utilised. It's ensuring all parts of the animal are used."

Pet food, he said, was a high value use of a product that would otherwise be disposed.

Omega Innovations teamed up with scientists from Massey University and Bioresource Processing Alliance (BPA) to figure out the right combination of ingredients for optimum palatability for cats and dogs.

"Cats in particular can be quite fussy and particular about their food," Thomas said.

"So it was a very good way to take away any risk we had about acceptance by cats."

The pet food products included a freeze-dried treat range and salmon oil supplement that were 100 per cent king salmon.

The wet and dry products contained king salmon as the primary ingredient but were formulated with other ingredients so animals got everything they need, he said.

"Everyone turns the packet over now to check the ingredients list, even of pet food.

"Pets are part of the family unit and [families] want to make sure what they are feeding their animals is high quality."

The BPA is a Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment funded research and development programme that funds companies in the primary sector to find better uses for their biological waste to reduce the amount of waste currently going to landfill.

BPA general manager Anna Yallop said the programme used researchers and animal trials at Massey University to make sure the product was liked by animals.

"We always work with waste streams that are being sold for low value or thrown away," she said.

"Animal nutritionists provided technical assistance for what the pet food needed to have in it."

Yallop also said increasing the value of by products was a growing area for New Zealand.

"We work with all sorts of waste streams that can be hundreds of thousands of tons of waste. There's an economic benefits to this as well. It used to be easy to get rid of waste but now

councils charge more for waste water and customers don't like it. So the more people can use their waste or sell it to someone who wants it the better."

Omega Plus has launched in the South Island at New World and Pak 'n Save and plans to go nationwide early next year.

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