

# PACIFIC COAST BUSINESS TIMES



Susan Dalton, who created Dr. Dalton's Premium Treats, gives one to Na'a, her black Labrador puppy.



Meat and treat  
Goleta business makes  
healthy dog snacks  
See page 3A

MEGAN MINEIRO PHOTO

## Healthy for business

### Goleta company doubles sales as all-meat dog treats gain popularity

By Megan Mineiro  
Staff Writer

Susan Dalton developed her all-meat treats to tempt dogs in her training center, but discovered an untapped interest among pet owners for the simple product.

Dalton found it necessary over the last year to ramp up production to meet the rising demand for her

healthy alternative treats, which can be purchased in seven stores along the Central Coast and be ordered online through the company's website, grocery delivery service Plough to Porch, and Amazon.

Although she declined to discuss revenue, Dalton said her Goleta-based company has doubled sales this year and its products are in twice as many stores.

Orders came in so fast that Dalton had to hold up sales until she partnered with a new manufacturer in Colton.

"It's being made actually in a factory that makes human food, so everything that goes into the plant has to be USDA approved," she said.

A retired University of California sociology professor, Dalton founded

see **DOG TREATS** on page 22A

## DOG TREATS

Continued from page 3A

the California School of Dogs in 2009 to implement a training program she modeled on positive reinforcement.

Dissatisfied with dog treats available on the market, Dalton began experimenting in 2012 to develop a treat that was fit for all breeds, non-greasy and free of additives. The end result was a 100 percent dehydrated meat treat, available in beef, chicken and pork.

Dr. Dalton's Premium Treats cost \$11.99 for a three-ounce bag and \$19.99 for a six-ounce bag.

"Dogs have been known to chew through the pocket to get to the treat," she said in an interview with the Pacific Coast Business Times, as Na'a, a bouncing black Labrador puppy, nudged a nose into her coat pocket.

Dalton explained that in order to create treats in fun shapes, a design she described as a "human buy-in," producers must retain water to create a malleable prod-

uct. But this requires fillers to keep the treat solid and preservatives to prevent mildew.

"I would rather have the perfect taste and the perfect product than the perfect shape," she said, adding that a bag containing 50 of her treats can be easily broken up into 200 treats for smaller breeds.

After she started using the treats regularly in her training center, pet owners took interest.

"My dog won't eat anything else now" is what I would hear," Dalton said about customers who wanted to buy her treats after their dogs had completed her training program.

Demand from her training center customers to market the treats to the public pushed Dalton to begin selling them in local pet stores. Three years later, they are the best-selling treat at the Pet House in Goleta.

"Once the dogs try them, the repeat sales are out of this world," store owner Wendy Guyer said. "It's just nice to have a treat where I am not scrambling to look at the bag and see if it has a certain preservative or additive."

Like Pet House, the State Street store Healthy-Pet has stocked Dr. Dalton's Premium Treats since they first came on the market.

As Healthy Pet sets its sights on expanding beyond the Central Coast, it plans to carry Dalton's products at new locations.

While she didn't set out to become a force of change in the pet industry, today Dalton aims to create a push toward cleaner products.

"The dog food industry is going toward cleaner food ... but the treat companies are not. They are just as much in the crap as they have ever been."

Dalton, who as the company's sole employee described herself as "the CEO and bottle washer," said she is working with brokers to begin selling the treats in Nevada and Colorado pet stores. But she will not work with corporate suppliers like PetSmart or Petco.

"I like to support the small mom and pop stores," she said. "I like to support the stores where the people working in them actually know what they are selling and have given some thought to what is on the shelves."