

# ClueJay Earns Grand Prize Of 2021 Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize Program

Denver-Based Pet Startup Wins Additional Funding and Support from Purina in Annual Competition

ST. LOUIS, March 25, 2021 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Five pet care startups from across the U.S. virtually pitched their businesses to pet industry influencers and investors in a bid to win the [2021 Pet Care Innovation Prize](#) powered by Purina. ClueJay was selected as the grand prize winner during the Global Pet Expo, the pet care industry's biggest trade show, which took place virtually this year. The Denver-based startup is an innovative, online diagnostic platform that allows pet parents to access lab tests on demand from the comfort and safety of home. ClueJay lets dog and cat owners collect and mail stool (fecal) samples for parasite screening without the hassle and stress of vet visits. As the grand prize winner of the Pet Care Innovation Prize, ClueJay was awarded a cash prize of \$10,000 and support from pet care leader, Purina.

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"Last year, we committed to making ClueJay competitive for this innovation prize," said Dennis Chmiel, veterinarian and cofounder of ClueJay. "It's a great feeling to be here today as a Grand Prize winner. The journey and support of Purina has made ClueJay so much

stronger."

ClueJay was selected by a panel of judges consisting of investors, industry experts, and the leaders from Purina's 9 Square Ventures division. Earlier this year, five startups were selected from more than 100 companies from 43 cities globally to participate in the 2021 class for the Pet Care innovation Prize. Each winner received \$10,000 cash and participated in a virtual bootcamp accelerator experience with business experts, industry leaders, veterinarians, & Purina executives to broaden their network, strengthen their business plan and access knowledge from across the pet care landscape. The 2021 class of Pet Care Innovation Prize winners represents what's new and what's next in the \$104 billion\* pet care industry.

The other 2021 Pet Care Innovation Prize Winners are:

**Eden Prairie, Minnesota-based [Kitty Sift](#)** offers a convenient, healthy, and sustainable alternative to the plastic litter box. Made from 100% post-consumer recycled cardboard, Kitty Sift's disposable sifting litter boxes and liners enable pet owners to ditch plastic alternatives for a more sanitary, eco-friendly solution that protects their kitty and the planet.

**Austin, Texas-based [A Pup Above](#)** makes fresh dog food that's cooked sous-vide, a unique cooking method that makes meat extra tender and moist while also preserving nutrients. Made with 100% human-grade ingredients that are fully traceable back to the

source, A Pup Above delivers on average 72% more protein than other leading gently cooked dog foods.

**Chicago, Illinois-based [Mella Pet Care](#)** builds accessible technology and diagnostic products for veterinarians and pet parents to better understand and track pet health to help their pets live longer, healthier lives. Co-created with veterinarians, Mella Pet Care is launching the first smart axillary thermometer, which measures temperature under the foreleg rather than rectally.

**Florida-based [VetGuardian](#)** is the only zero touch remote telemonitor for veterinarians. The device continuously gathers a patient's vitals like pulse, temperature, and respiration rate from up to five feet away without the need for wires or physical contact—eliminating unnecessary stress to animals.

"We are really impressed by ClueJay and the entire 2021 class for what they are bringing to the industry," said Bill Broun, co-lead of Purina's 9 Square Ventures division, and Vice President of Personalization and Business Development at Purina. "By offering programs like the Pet Care Innovation Prize, we can collaborate with these talented startups, support their growth, and work together to shape the future of pet care."

The [Pet Care Innovation Prize](#) was created to support and connect with early stage pet care startups that are currently in market with an innovative business addressing pet and pet owner needs in the areas of pet health and wellness, services, technology, and food, treats or litter. The Pet Care Innovation Prize is a collaborative effort of [Purina's 9 Square Ventures division](#) and impact investors [Active Capital](#). Previous Pet Care Innovation Prize winners have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in equity and prizes from investors and accelerator programs across the U.S.

As Purina's corporate venturing group, [9 Square Ventures](#) has been focused on connecting with pet care startups since 2014. The team's mission is to leverage Purina's knowledge, experience, and financial resources to help emerging pet care startups scale their businesses and make a positive impact on the lives of as many pets and their owners as possible.

To find out more about the Pet Care Innovation program, visit [PetCareInnovation.net](#).

### **About 9 Square Ventures:**

9-Square Ventures is a corporate venture arm of Nestle Purina PetCare which is focused on investing in emerging pet food and snack brands. It also evaluates other pet care businesses and advanced food technologies.

### **About Active Capital:**

Active Capital is a St. Louis-based impact investing leader, helping startups and investors come together to grow innovative products and initiatives. Active Capital manages the Pet Care Innovation Prize.

### **About Purina**

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 49 million dogs and 66 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit [purina.com](https://www.purina.com) or [subscribe here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

\*American Pet Products Association

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