VEA Wins Grand Prize at Annual Pitch Competition to Secure 2025 Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize

Virginia-Based Startup Takes Home Additional $25,000 Cash Prize and Mentorship from Leading Pet Care Company

ST. LOUIS, March 27, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Five innovative pet care startups from across the U.S. came together today to pitch their businesses to top pet industry executives and investors to win the $25,000 grand prize from the 2025 Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize. VEA, an AI-driven intelligent veterinary exam assistant, was chosen as the grand prize winner after the pitch competition during Global Pet Expo, the biggest pet care industry trade show in the country. The Alexandria, Virginia-based startup, which uses AI to help veterinarians better predict disease, generate diagnostic plans and support nutrition for longevity, already received $25,000 in non-dilutive funding and mentorship from the Pet Care Innovation team at Purina and Active Capital during the first round of the Pet Care Innovation Prize competition and beat out four other pet-focused startups to secure the grand prize: a cash prize of an additional $25,000.

"Winning the 2025 Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize is an incredible honor and deeply meaningful for VEA. Our journey started with a mission to bridge the gap in veterinary care through AI-driven innovation, and this recognition reinforces the impact we're making," said Patricia Porter, VEA CEO. "Seeing VEA help veterinarians provide smarter, more efficient and more compassionate care is what drives us every day. We are so grateful for Purina championing innovation in pet health and supporting companies like ours that are shaping the future of veterinary medicine."

Four other 2025 Pet Care Innovation Prize winners each received $25,000, mentorship from Purina and Active Capital, and the opportunity to participate in an accelerator boot camp at Purina's St. Louis, MO headquarters. The 2025 winners include:

- **Maven: New York-based** Maven is the first vet-recommended health sensor capable of continuously monitoring pets' well-being and identifying early, clinically relevant changes. With these insights, pet owners and clinic teams can diagnose issues sooner and treat more effectively, helping pets live healthier, happier lives.
- **Ten Lives: San Francisco-based** Ten Lives produces the cleanest animal proteins for cats. Using microbes to convert sugar to protein, Ten Lives develops the same proteins naturally found in prey such as rabbit, fish and lamb, made without animals in human-grade precision fermentation facilities.
- **ShopDot Pet:** Based in **Missoula, Mont.**, ShopDot Pet is a platform that allows neighborhood pet care providers such as groomers, trainers and vets to generate additional revenue by easily selling pet essentials without the heavy costs of inventory or shipping. ShopDot Pet enables pet service businesses and great pet brands to collaborate and sell more together.
- **Yak9 Chews:** Based in **Austin, Tex.**, Yak9 Chews is an award-winning premium pet brand dedicated to crafting all-natural, long-lasting cheese chews for dogs, made from simple, real and ethically sourced ingredients.

"The panel of judges who selected VEA as our 2025 PetCare Innovation Prize grand prize winner saw immense potential in the business. We are proud to be a part of VEA's growth journey and look forward to seeing the many ways each of our incredible finalists will continue to grow, innovate and make their mark on the pet care industry," said Patrick Mullen, co-lead of Purina's 9 Square Ventures group and vice president of strategic planning at Purina. "Each year, this collaboration with forward-thinking startups like VEA and our impressive 2025 cohort inspires us to push harder every day to find new ways to enrich the lives of pets and their people."

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This is the ninth year of the Pet Care Innovation Prize, which Purina, through its 9 Square Ventures corporate venturing group, created in partnership with the investing leaders at Active Capital. The prize competition provides financial support and mentorship opportunities for early-stage companies working to redefine the future of pet care through innovative products or services that provide meaningful solutions in the areas of pet health and wellness, services, technology, food, treats and litter.

Purina's corporate venturing group, 9 Square Ventures, which was founded in 2014, works to help emerging pet care startups scale their businesses and positively impact the lives of as many pets and pet owners as possible by leveraging Purina's knowledge, experience and financial resources.

For more information about the Pet Care Innovation Prize powered by Purina, visit PetCareInnovation.net.

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, Friskies and Tidy Cats. Our more than 11,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 46 million dogs and 68 million cats every year. Nearly 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

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** or **subscribe here** to get the latest Purina news.

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.

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