

Purina Spotlights Next Generation of Pet Care Innovation with 2026 Pet Care Innovation Prize Winners

Purina awards five startups advancing pet health, wellness and veterinary care with mentorship, \$25,000 in funding and the chance to win an additional \$25,000 Grand Prize in March

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 8, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Purina – a global leader in pet care – announced the five startups selected as winners of its tenth annual [Pet Care Innovation Prize](#), recognizing emerging companies that are shaping the future of pet health, wellness, nutrition and veterinary care. Each prize winner will receive \$25,000 in non-dilutive funding, along with mentorship and access to industry expertise from Purina, as they continue building solutions for today's evolving pet care landscape.

Chosen from nearly 200 applicants worldwide, the 2026 cohort reflects a growing focus on data-driven insights, accessible wellness solutions and technologies designed to support both pets and the people who care for them. This year's Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize winners include:

- [Innovative Pet Lab, Inc. \(Norcross, Ga.\)](#): A certified women-owned, science-led pet health company, Innovative Pet Lab is redefining how pet parents understand their pets' wellbeing through simple, at-home testing. By translating large-scale biomarker data into clear, actionable insights, the company is challenging long-held assumptions about pet health and making veterinary science more accessible through non-invasive testing designed for modern pet families.
- [CoVetAI Inc. \(Toronto, Ontario\)](#): Built by veterinary professionals for veterinary professionals, CoVet is an AI-powered clinical co-pilot designed to reduce administrative workload and help prevent burnout. The platform automates SOAP notes, transcribes consultations and streamlines client communication, saving veterinary professionals and students more than two hours per day while enabling teams to focus on patient care.
- [PetPax Co. \(Boston, Mass.\)](#): Founded by two dog dads, PetPax Co.® is redefining everyday pet wellness for modern pet parents. The company's flagship product line, SupplaMelts™, uses a proprietary, fast-dissolving oral thin-film delivery method to provide veterinarian-approved supplementation that is easy to administer and gentle on dogs. With targeted solutions like ZenMelts® for calming and DentalMelts™ for oral health, PetPax Co.'s patent-pending delivery method is designed to improve absorption by bypassing the stomach acid while reducing stress for both pets and their humans.
- [Pawsitive Inc. \(Austin, Texas\)](#): PawsitiveTouch blends technology and neuroscience into wellness to address stress and behavioral challenges in dogs. Its patented TouchOne smart wearable and SaaS platform is designed to understand and regulate dogs' emotions and behavior – taking the industry a step forward from simply monitoring to acting in real time to help, ushering in a new era of canine wellbeing, connectivity and peace of mind for dogs and their owners.
- [ChefPaw \(Los Angeles, Calif.\)](#): ChefPaw is revolutionizing pet food with personalized nutrition that saves pet parents time and money via streamlining every aspect of homemade feeding. The ChefPaw Pet Food Maker cooks, weighs and mixes fresh ingredients while working hand-in-hand with the ChefPaw nutrition app, which guides users through recipe creation, portioning, and step-by-step cooking for consistent meals balanced to the unique needs of each pet.

Beyond funding, each prize winner will participate in a hands-on accelerator experience at Purina's headquarters in St. Louis, where they will engage with Purina's pet care experts, business leaders and external industry mentors. The program is designed to help founders refine their strategies, strengthen their operations and accelerate growth.

"The Pet Care Innovation Prize continues to spotlight entrepreneurs who are solving real problems for pets, pet owners and the professionals who support them," said Patrick Mullen, co-lead of Purina's 9 Square Ventures group and vice president of strategic planning at Purina. "As the pet care industry evolves, these founders are bringing forward fresh thinking, new technologies and practical solutions that can make a meaningful difference. We're proud to support these innovative businesses as they take their next steps."

The five prize winners will advance to a live pitch competition this spring at [Global Pet Expo](#) in Orlando, Florida, where they will present their businesses to Purina leaders, investors and industry influencers. One

company will be selected to receive an additional \$25,000 Grand Prize.

Founded in 2016 through [Purina's 9 Square Ventures](#) corporate venturing group in partnership with [Active Capital](#), the Pet Care Innovation Prize was created to support early-stage companies bringing new ideas to market across pet health, nutrition, services and technology. The program combines funding, mentorship and industry access to help founders scale their businesses and expand their impact.

9 Square Ventures draws on Purina's deep expertise, resources and industry relationships to invest in and support emerging pet care startups. Since its founding in 2014, the group has invested millions of dollars in early-stage companies focused on improving the lives of pets and the people who care for them.

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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