



Pet care franchises combine business with a little animal magic, reports Domini Stuart

IT'S A DOG'S WORLD

Not all pet care franchises are hands-on; some franchisees in the sector may never even see an animal in the course of their work. However, whether you're shampooing a poodle, discussing the diet for a kitten or organising holiday care for a budgie you will be immersed in a world of pets and their owners.

If that's something you would enjoy, you have a wide range of options in terms of the services you provide and the cost of entry. Find the right one for

you and building a successful business is sure to be satisfying as well as rewarding.

DON'T FRET PET

When dogs are used to being part of the family, leaving them in a boarding kennel can be very traumatic - for the owners if not the pets. By placing dogs in the homes of carefully matched minders, Don't Fret Pet minimises the stress.

Jenny Brearley was inspired to start the business

PETstock

Two types of people are attracted to a PETstock franchise. "Most are pet owners who are customers of our stores," says Andrew Gibbs, general manager, retail operations. "It's incredibly pleasing to see people have a wonderful experience in store, not on just one occasion but over a period of time, and therefore want to be part of that business as a franchisee."

The others are business people and entrepreneurs.

"They often come to know about PETstock through their pets but it's their view about the quality of the business and the opportunity it presents that drives their interest in being a franchisee," he says.

Since franchising the first store in 2002, PETstock has grown steadily and



deliberately to a national chain of more than 60 outlets.

"The biggest challenge is attracting quality franchisees - people who have a passion for pets but who are also passionate about being business owners," says Gibbs. "We look for people who are realistic about the challenges of running their own business, excited by the opportunities and committed to being successful. We may be in the pet industry but we're also a people business; anyone coming in must be able to deliver a great



customer experience."

Cost of entry starts at \$350,000 and includes a full set-up and fit-out of the store, including stock, as well as ongoing training, support and mentoring. Other services include marketing, accounting, IT and human resources.

"The pet industry has been strengthening over the past 10 years, and the market has definitely continued to evolve," says Gibbs. "The overall trend is still value for money - not spending less but spending more carefully."



17 years ago when she found herself avoiding a holiday rather than boarding her beloved Rhodesian Ridgeback. Seven years later she was ready to franchise; today there are 13 franchisees based in Sydney, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Newcastle.

"Part of the reason why we're so far flung is that our territories need to be larger than others in the

industry," says Brearley. "While people are likely to have their dogs washed once or twice a month, they generally only go on holiday once or twice a year."

Don't Fret Pet has been growing at a consistent 27 per cent a year since its inception. Now Brearley and her business partner Kathleen Mansfield are ready for more active expansion including a move into regional areas.

"In the past we've turned down inquiries from people who are looking for a part-time green change business but our research has shown there's a great need for quality pet care out of the city," Brearley says.

Depending on the area, cost of entry ranges from \$9,900 to \$19,500 including GST. Along with the territory, this secures a start-up supply of stationery, uniform, car signage, tailored software, MYOB and three once-a-month visits from a book-keeper. Don't Fret Pet also provides ongoing and high-level training and telephone support, an important factor in giving

Aussie Mobile Grooming

FOR HOW LONG HAS THE BUSINESS OPERATED AS A FRANCHISE SYSTEM?

Established in the US in 1999, launched in Australia in October 2010.

HOW MANY FRANCHISEES?

In the US 280 franchise territories; the business is established in 10 countries. Australia's first franchise will launch in February.

DO FRANCHISEES BUY AN EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY?

Yes, we guarantee a minimum of 40,000 households but in general it is around 60,000. In most territories, this equates to about 10,000 dogs and a total estimated annual market for grooming and clipping of \$500,000. These territories are mapped out and the franchisees are able to choose their preferred territory.

HOW MUCH ADMIN DOES A FRANCHISEE DO WEEKLY?

There is a software system (Aussie Customer Management System) already developed to handle bookings, appointments, the customer and pet database, analyse business drivers such as the average groom price and to interface with head office. This should be done daily but only takes about two hours a week in total.



HOW ARE CUSTOMER LEADS GENERATED?

Local Area Marketing assistance is given to franchisees including letterbox drops and event sponsorship.

In addition, the vans are like mobile billboards with the website displayed and the national 1300 number (1300 M GROOM) directed to the national call centre.

IS THIS A ONE-MAN BUSINESS?

Generally, an Aussie Mobile Grooming franchise is a one person operation. However when the business matures after one year, there could be enough dogs on the

books to add in a part time additional groomer or partner. Also there may be scope to run two vans in a territory or to take on adjoining territories.

WHAT IS THE UPFRONT COST OF A FRANCHISE?

A payment of \$59,000 plus GST covers the initial franchise fee, use of the software, initial training, the 12 week Action Acceleration package and the initial grooming kit. In addition, a fully fitted out Mercedes Sprinter van is required at a price of \$90,000 plus GST but this is usually leased. For more information, visit www.aussiemobilegrooming.com.au



Aussie Pooch Mobile

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people the confidence they need to start their own business.
 "Our franchisees find it very reassuring to know they can pick up the phone and talk or ask about anything at any time," says Brearley.

AUSSIE POOCH MOBILE

When Chris Taylor started her business, many people couldn't imagine why you'd bother washing a dog at all, much less get someone to do it for you. That was 20 years ago - and how things have changed!

"Modern owners expect their dog to smell great all the time," says operations manager Mark Welham. "We have a new generation of customers who know no other way than using a service such as ours."

Today there are nearly 200 Aussie Pooch Mobile franchisees in six countries. Existing franchises cost between \$30,000 and \$60,000 including GST and new territories are available for \$38,170. Flexible and tailored franchise packages help the right people get started in their own business.

"We look for self-motivated, outgoing dog-lovers who enjoy the outdoors," says Welham. "This is not the job for someone who is lazy, unmotivated or non-caring."

A team of master franchisees and managers trains and supports franchisees on a one-to-one basis as well as in groups at regular focus meetings and annual conferences. The group's branding and advertising program is ongoing and under continuous review - recent changes brought about a 20 per cent increase in the number of inquiries. And the service is also continually