

# Stylishly Functional

*Jaradén's pet-travel-related products combine upmarket design with functionality to appeal to the most discerning of pet owners.*

**By Jennifer Boncy**

**For a while there, things seemed dicey for the travel and luxury segments of the pet market. It just was not clear, given the state of the economy,** if people

would continue to spend disposable income to travel with their pets and to buy the most premium products offered on pet-travel market. It turns out people are spending on travel and pets, and companies such as Jaradén, a manufacturer of higher-end travel-related pet products, have carved a perfect niche in this market.

Jaradén began catering to these consumers a year ago, when it first hit the market with its Getaway Travel Bag, a product that marries subtle designs and neutral colors with practical features, such as pockets perfect for holding leashes, collars and other items. Since then, the company has introduced a few select lines of travel carriers and accessories. Its Mon Ami Collection, for example, is designed for the customer whose fashion sense is more in line with brands like Chanel than Ed Hardy, and is among the company's top sellers.

"Some design themes seem to be enduring, even though there have been dramatic changes around some core principles," says president Gail Girardin. "Being a baby boomer, I have seen fashion go from a more formal look earlier on to the sophisticated, relaxed style of today. The consumer of today looks for quality and luxury in a comfortable style."

Jaradén's products feature classic, understated designs in subdued colors, and the company prides itself

on manufacturing high-quality, durable pieces that won't go out of style at the end of the season. Its strategy of sticking



to designs that are practical and classic, as opposed to fleetingly trendy, has kept Jaradén on track. "Our

approach is to focus on the basics," Girardin says. "We produce safe, functional and timeless designs. It is our contention that if we continue to focus on these attributes, the demand for our products will hold steady."

Style aside, however, Girardin says customers who are attracted to Jaradén's products are likely to be conscientious pet owners who also prioritize their pets' safety

and comfort and place a high premium on quality. Value for these shoppers does not correlate to price, as much as it is does to a brand's ability to demonstrate superior functionality and craftsmanship.

"In these challenging economic times, consumers are looking for products that are well made and that will give them years of service," she says.

The company has responded to the continued trend of pet-friendly travel with products such as its Take Me Along line of carriers and travel bags, and this fall, Jaradén plans to introduce carriers that keep pets cool in the summer and warm in the winter. With its eye trained on innovation, the company is also researching hands-free ways of securing pets to their owners, whether they are shopping in a Paris boutique or running in Central Park.

"We will continue to research and develop products and solutions to make the travel experience safe, comfortable and stylish," Girardin says.

The company is making an effort to be retailer friendly, as well, by catering to the varying needs of the independent shops that vend its products.

"Every market is different—warm weather and urban versus cool weather and rural, and so on," she says, acknowledging that the company's distinct style and product portfolio won't be a perfect match for every retailer's customer base. However, Jaradén seeks to be as accommodating as possible for those shops that do have a clientele fitting for such an assortment.

"We have purposely kept our minimum quantities low so that retailers can afford to bring into their boutiques an assortment of Take Me Along carriers and travel bags," Girardin says. **PB**