

# MEDIA & MARKETING

## ADVERTISING

# 'Dog Whisperer' Hopes to Lead Pack at Newsstand

*With New Magazine, IMG and Cesar Millan Join Chase for Ad Dollars From Recession-Resistant Pet-Care Industry*

BY SUZANNE VRANICA

IMG Worldwide and TV's "Dog Whisperer," Cesar Millan, are looking to take a bite out of the growing pet-care market.

In the face of a harsh advertising climate, the New York sports management and entertainment firm is launching a magazine dedicated to dog owners and their pets. The new publication, Cesar's Way, is a joint venture between IMG and Mr. Millan, a dog trainer used by celebrities like Oprah Winfrey. The partners declined to discuss the project's finances.

Cesar's Way, which hits newsstands next week, is filled with sleek photos of celebrities such as Mariah Carey, Paris Hilton and Jennifer Aniston with pets in tow. Articles include "Can Your Dog Fix Your Marriage? Just Ask Jada Pinkett Smith" and "7-Day Doggie Detox." IMG says it plans to publish two issues this year and six in 2010.

The magazine is the latest example of TV personalities trying to parlay their popularity into

newsstand sales. Mr. Millan, who will be editorial director of the magazine, has starred in National Geographic's popular canine reality series—think "Super Nanny" for dogs—since 2004.

Some of the magazine industry's biggest hits have been celebrity-edited, says Lee Rosenbaum, vice president of IMG's publishing arm. "Just look at Oprah and Rachael Ray," he says.

But it's a you-know-what world out there. The new magazine joins about 60 other dog-related titles in the U.S., including Dog Fancy, Doggie Aficionado and Urban Dog, according to the National Directory of Magazines.

"Like all publications, it's been a little slow for the past two years," says Norman Ridker, founder and president of BowTie, a privately held publisher of dozens of pet magazines, including Dog Fancy and Dog World.

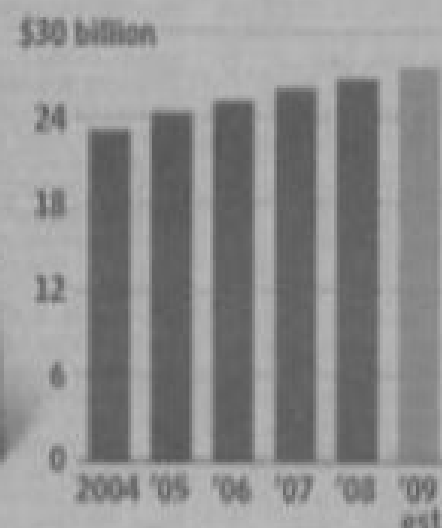
In addition its many rivals, Cesar's Way faces the worst ad climate in decades—one that has forced the closure of such magazines as CosmoGirl, House & Garden and Domino. In the first half



Inaugural issue of Cesar's Way. A second issue is planned this year and six in 2010.

### Fetching Growth

Total U.S. retail sales of pet food and supplies



Source: Mintel

of 2009, magazine ad revenue plunged 21% from a year earlier to \$9 billion, according to the Publishers Information Bureau.

Celebrity-edited magazines, too, have been stung by the downturn. Ad pages in Every Day With Rachael Ray fell 14% for the first six months of the year, while ad pages in O, The Oprah Magazine, slid 29%.

IMG knows firsthand how

tough the recession has been. Earlier this year it closed down Tennis Week, which had been around for decades.

Still, IMG and Mr. Millan think they can profit from the 75 million dog owners in the U.S. and the pet industry, which has proved to be somewhat resistant to the recession. Sales of pet food and supplies are expected to increase 2.9% to \$27.5 billion

in 2009, according to research group Mintel International.

"People have continued to spend on their pets," Mr. Millan says. "You always want to make sure your family is taken care of, and Americans believe the dog is part of the family."

IMG isn't the only company to see dollar signs in the pet market. Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia added a pet destination to its Web site this year. Honda Motor introduced an Element with features such as a cushioned pet bed in the cargo area and a pet-restraint system.

Media buyers says it's a tough time to start a new title, but some of them say having a narrow audience can be appealing to advertisers.

"Niche magazines today are more important, because marketers are trying to be more efficient with their ad dollars, and this would be a way for pet food and pet services companies to reach their target audience," says Robin Steinberg, director of print investment at Mediavest, a media-buying firm owned by Publicis Groupe.

The first issue of Cesar's Way includes ads for pet-supplier retailer Petco, Del Monte Foods' dog treats and Halo pet food.

While ad spending on pet food has fallen, it has fared better than other sectors. Ad outlays by pet-food companies slid 5% to \$299.2 million in 2008, less than the declines of 15% and 5.7% seen among auto makers and telecom companies, respectively, according to TNS Media Intelligence. For the first three months of this year, spending on pet food ads rose 24%.

The magazine is part of a marketing effort to turn Mr. Millan into a household name. IMG has represented him since 2007, during which time he has written several books, created a popular Web site and produced several dog-training videos.

Almost half of America's consumers already know who he is, and consumers' awareness of Mr. Millan has grown 12% since May 2008, according to Davie-Brown, an Omnicom Group company that tracks the appeal of celebrities.