

CANINE CORNER

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And so to bed...



There are many products for dogs made in New Zealand which go beyond the mainstream dog foods and treats sold internationally by well-known brands like Addiction, K9 Natural and Ziwi.

Dog shampoos and grooming products, supplements (in particular, those made from green-lipped mussel), toys, collars and coats are also produced in this country and often to a higher standard than their imported counterparts.

The global pandemic that started in March 2020 has had spin-off benefits for companies producing goods in New Zealand. As a country of small and medium businesses with a high rate of self-employment, Kiwi consumers have rallied around NZ-made products to support their own at a time when global supply chains have been weak and, in some cases, broken.

One such business is Life of Riley and I sat down recently with Georgia and Steen who are the new owners of the business. Established in 2015, the company makes high-quality wool dog beds which are cut, sewn and assembled in Auckland using a double layer of recycled wool yarn and waste wool from the textile industry.

"The company was started by Alison (Hollier) because she struggled to find a dog bed that would last. Having lived on an alpaca farm, she knew that natural fibres are durable and hygienic", says Georgia.

The couple was looking for an online business when Life of Riley was put up for sale. "It was the perfect fit for us, being NZ made, sustainable and with our love of dogs."

Many readers will know that wool is a wonder fabric. Offering warmth in winter and wicking away moisture in summer to keep the body cool, these qualities also benefit dogs. A supportive dog bed is ideal for dogs of all ages but is particularly important for an older arthritic dog and those dogs who are recovering from orthopaedic surgeries.

Wool is also quintessentially New Zealand.

"People think memory foam is good and, while it is supportive, it doesn't breathe and is hot, which is not helpful to dogs in the warmer weather months."

"Dogs love the smell of wool", adds Steen, while the material also controls the growth of bacteria and naturally repels dust mites.

With a superior product, Life of Riley is now focused on growing its NZ customer base by adding new products and ranges. It also has aspirations to sell internationally and has recently started shipping beds to Australia and the United States.

"We get enquiries often through the website from international customers who are attracted by the natural wool. NZ is highly regarded by consumers overseas for its clean and green image; we vacuum pack the beds to reduce size and shipping costs."

With busy times ahead, Georgia and Steen promise that their two-year old Husky, Layla, will feature prominently in Life of Riley's publicity. 🐾