



Anyone who's ever seen a 'Tom & Jerry' cartoon will tell you that cats only eat fish, and dogs enjoy nothing better than long strings of sausages, particularly if they've been snaffled from a butcher's shop.

But now a Midlands World Trade Forum member is turning everything on its head after it launched a new range of dog food across Europe.

Worcestershire-based Fish4Dogs was founded by Robert and Jill Angell four years ago. They already had 15 years' experience as seafood consultants and, after carrying out research into the benefits of feeding fish to dogs – particularly their own – they started making dog treats from the fish off-cuts that were not required by the major supermarket chains.



They began making the treats at home, but once friends, neighbours and local pet shops started wanting them, they moved to new premises and set up the business full time.

Robert said: "Before Fish4Dogs there were no fish products available to the UK's eight million dogs. It was a gap in the market that was untapped, and the quality of our product was so high that word soon spread."

UK sales have out-performed all expectations over the past year, with all major pet wholesalers now stocking the range, which now includes treats, mixers and fish oils. So with Britain taken care of, the company looked further afield and is now selling to Belgium, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Cyprus, Poland, Holland, France, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Singapore. Negotiations are well underway with new customers in Russia, USA, South Africa, Australia, and Japan.

Jill added: "Competition is fierce for wholesalers to be first with new and innovative products in the fast-growing treats market. New retail display stands in the shape of a giant fish have been designed for use in every language. Although Fish4Dogs, as a word, is not translatable into other languages, it is so simple and effective as a logo that it can still be used in all countries as it is, with other languages being included on the packaging. We've also translated the strapline 'dogs love fish' into a visually distinctive 'paw heart fish' design, meaning no English words are used on point of sale materials at all."

But the company is not stopping at the world domination of the dog food market. It is also looking at rolling the brand out across other pets and animals.

"Strategic planning has helped keep the company on a tight route to market," Jill said. "Staying focussed on seafood-only manufacturing, but stretching the brand to include Fish4Cats, Fish4Kittens, Fish4Puppies and even Fish4Ferrets gives us the competitive advantage we need to penetrate a highly competitive and well-developed world marketplace."

The company has also taken the seemingly unusual step of sponsoring the Marine Conservation Society. "It may sound strange for a fish company to be doing this, but we care about preserving fish stocks in the oceans, and only use fish from sustainable sources in all our products," she said.

"These environmental concerns even stretch as far as our packaging. Plastic bags kill dolphins and other sea creatures. They think the bags floating in the sea are jellyfish, try to eat them and die. We did some research and found a company that produces biodegradable plastic bags. They proved to be a smash hit on our stand at the Crufts Exhibition this year."