

The State of the ChatGPT Shelf: Dog Supplements

We asked ChatGPT to shop for dog supplements a few thousand times, kept every product card and every seller offer behind it, and looked at what the shelf is actually made of. Here's **who's on the shelf** — and how the shelf really works.

5,453 brand-free category questions	50,000+ individual seller offers captured	327 brands surfaced	813 sellers behind the cards
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Ask ChatGPT for the best joint chew for your dog and it hands you a few product cards, each with a price and a store. Ask again tomorrow and the cards move. Run that question five times and you'll form a theory about how it picks. Run it a few thousand times and you find out your theory was noise.

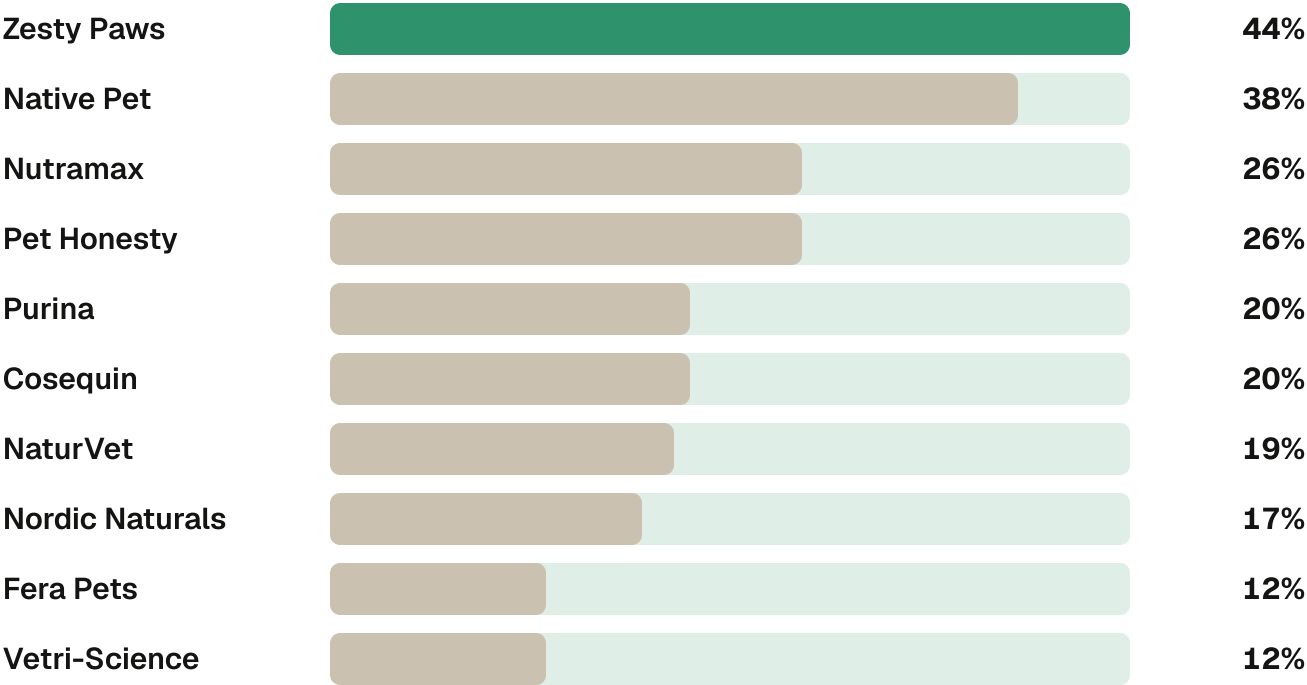
That's the problem with how people talk about AI shopping right now. Everyone's working off a handful of searches. We ran the category flat-out — hundreds of brand-free questions the way a real owner types them, repeated enough times to trust the pattern — and kept everything ChatGPT returned. Not the one price you see. All of them.

Dog supplements is the category we pulled apart. But almost nothing below is really about dogs. It's about how the shelf gets built, and it holds anywhere ChatGPT sells.

WHO'S ON THE SHELF

Two brands run the category

Start with the question every brand wants answered: when a shopper asks a brand-free question, which names come back? Here's the shelf, ranked by how often each brand shows up across 5,453 category questions.



Share of ChatGPT shopping shelves each brand appears on, across 5,453 brand-free dog-supplement questions. 327 brands surfaced in total; the tail past the top ten drops below one shelf in eight.

Zesty Paws shows up on nearly half of every shelf ChatGPT builds here; Native Pet on more than a third. After that it falls off fast, and 327 brands appeared at least once — most flickering in on a single question and vanishing. Presence is concentrated at the very top and thin everywhere else.

Purina outspends the category by orders of magnitude and sits at #5 — behind two DTC brands.

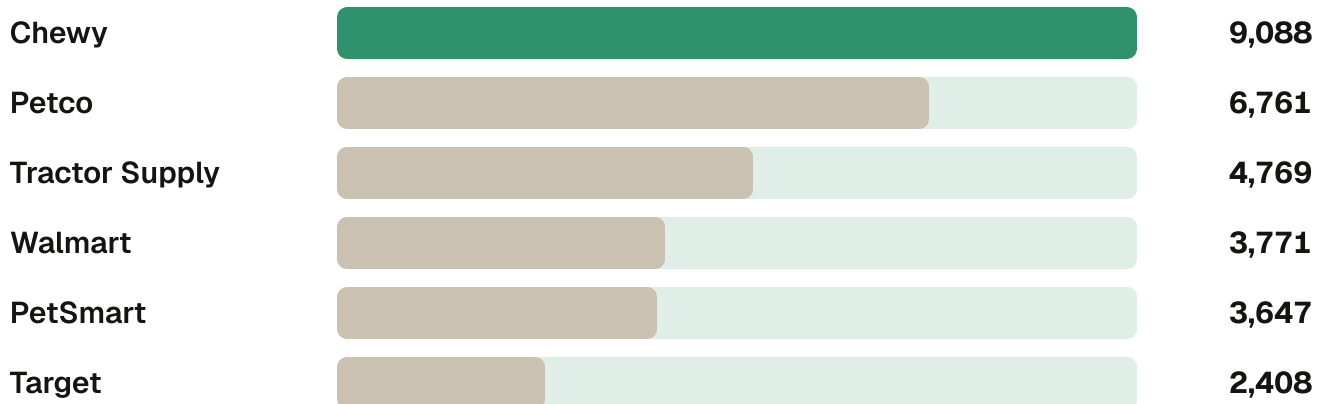
This isn't a ranking of the biggest brands or the best products. Being big in the store doesn't make you big on the AI shelf. Something else decides it. So we went looking for what.

One thing to be straight about: our questions span eight subcategories — joint, calming, skin and coat, digestive, multivitamin, allergy, senior, dental. A brand that makes products across all of them gets more chances to appear than a one-trick specialist, so presence rewards catalog breadth as much as any single hero product. That's not a quirk of the method — it's what owning a category shelf looks like. Even Fera Pets, a brand almost nobody's heard of, cracks the top ten the same way: broad line, deep in Petco, Chewy and PetSmart, plus selling direct.

HOW THE SHELF IS BUILT

It's a retailer index, not a brand ranking

Count up all fifty-thousand-plus offers behind those cards and six stores account for about 61% of them.



Number of offers each retailer contributed to the shelf. A long tail of 807 other sellers splits the rest.

When ChatGPT shows you a "brand," what you're really looking at is a product some big retailer carries and feeds onto the web. The brand isn't in the room — its distribution is.

Look at the very top card, the first product ChatGPT puts in front of you. It's a **Chewy offer 17.6% of the time** and a **Petco offer 14.4% of the time**. The top slot is a big-box retailer's slot before it's anybody's brand. That's most of why two DTC brands beat Purina up top — they're everywhere in the feeds ChatGPT reads.

THE FEED QUESTION

In this category, the feed lane is wide open — that's the opening

Everyone's talking about getting products into ChatGPT's feed. So we checked how much of *this* shelf actually comes through one versus ChatGPT just crawling a web page.

~97%

of offers were crawled off web pages, not fed

~80%

of the thin feed slice is Chewy's enterprise feed — not brands

4

brand-direct feed offers out of 50,000+ — a wide-open lane

That thin feed slice isn't brands — it's Chewy. Even inside Chewy's own offers, only a small fraction ride the feed; the rest are ChatGPT reading Chewy's product pages like anyone else. Every other feed we see belongs to a retailer too — Petco, PetSmart, Walmart, Tractor Supply, Target.

Don't read that as "feeds don't matter." Feed share swings hard by category — broader, cross-category measurements run far higher than dog supplements, and the feed layer is growing everywhere as ChatGPT builds out shopping. The near-term move is getting into the retailer feeds ChatGPT already trusts; the longer play is claiming the brand-direct lane before the rest of your category wakes up. That the lane is nearly empty *here* is the opportunity, not the verdict — get your feed right now and you're grabbing shelf almost no one else is fighting for.

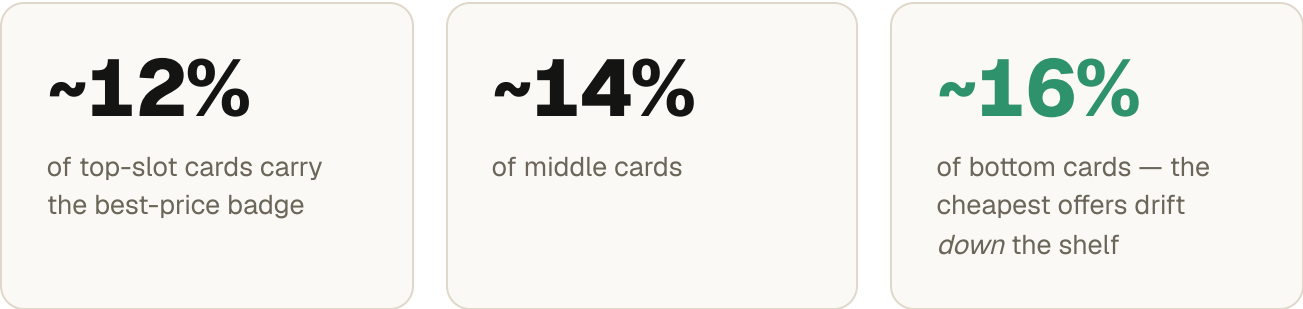
THE PRICE MYTH

Price isn't how you win, and it isn't how you lose

Here's the belief worth killing: that AI shopping is a race to the lowest price. It isn't. Not close.

ChatGPT stamps a "Best price" badge on some offers, and we confirmed it's honest — it landed on the genuine cheapest offer every single time (7,252 of 7,252). So if cheap won,

the badge would cluster at the top. It does the opposite.



Price doesn't buy you rank — if anything, being the low offer nudges you the wrong way. ChatGPT isn't hunting the cheapest seller; it picks a reasonable-looking offer and moves on. Fighting a price war to climb the AI shelf is fighting the wrong war.

This is exactly the kind of thing a handful of searches gets backwards. In a small sample the pattern is noise. At fifty thousand offers it resolves into a clear, mild tilt away from the top. You only see it in the pile.

WHO CONTROLS THE NUMBER

You don't set your own price,
and your discount is invisible

And ChatGPT files all of those sellers under one product card. Pet Honesty's Pumpkin Probiotics came back under a single title with these offers behind it:

SELLER BEHIND THE SAME "PET HONESTY PUMPKIN PROBIOTICS" CARD	PRICE SHOWN
Instacart	\$4.99
Chewy	\$9.99
Petco	\$37.09
Pet Honesty (direct)	\$84.12

Some of that spread is surely pack size — a single tub versus a multipack — but the card doesn't tell you which. That's the point: the shopper sees one product and gets shown one price, with no way to know what they're comparing.

Most sellers sit closer together than this — for the average product the middle band spreads about 17%. But the brand has no say in which offer wins the moment, and the

number a shopper sees is close to arbitrary.

Across 50,000+ offers, ChatGPT's card almost never shows a struck-through "was" price — on the order of a handful.

Every offer carries a field for a compare-at price. It's essentially always empty. We can't prove each seller was running a sale, so we won't — but the "was \$60, now \$40" frame your promos lean on collapses to a flat \$40 with nothing beside it. The discount, as a persuasion tool, doesn't exist on this shelf.

THE HARD GATE

Out of stock means off the shelf

100% of the offers ChatGPT surfaced were in stock. Not most — all of them. An out-of-stock product doesn't rank lower, it disappears. Live inventory is the cover charge for the AI shelf, full stop.

THE BOTTOM LINE

What it adds up to

If you sell anything in this category through ChatGPT, the fifty-thousand-offer version of reality looks like this:

- **Retail distribution decides whether you appear.** Being deep in the feeds ChatGPT already crawls — Chewy, Petco, the big boxes — is most of the game.
- **Price barely moves you.** Racing to the bottom can be pure waste, and can even push you down.
- **Your promotional pricing is invisible.** The discount frame doesn't render.
- **The brand-direct feed lane is wide open here.** A land grab for whoever claims it

first — and other categories already run more feed-driven than this one.

- **Your inventory has to be live** or you're simply not there.

None of that shows up in five searches. It only shows up in the pile.

HOW WE PULLED THIS

More than 50,000 product offers captured from live ChatGPT shopping results, across 97 brand-free dog-supplement questions run repeatedly over roughly a month so the probabilistic shelf averages out. The questions span eight subcategories — joint, calming, skin and coat, digestive, multivitamin, allergy, senior, dental — written the way an owner types them ("best joint chew for active dogs"). None names a brand, so nothing is seeded; a brand's presence reflects how broadly it covers the category and how deep its retail distribution runs. Presence measured across 5,453 of those questions; the offer-level analysis across 50,000-plus offers behind the resulting cards.

Retrieval source (via each offer's feed ID), price, seller, carousel position, and stock read straight off each offer as ChatGPT surfaced it — hard fields, not inferences. Two honest limits: ChatGPT groups multiple sellers, and sometimes multiple pack sizes, under one product card, so a single card's price range can blend seller spread with pack-size differences; and we report what the card renders, so "no compare-at price shown" means exactly that, not that we know a sale was running. We didn't publish a market-size number — the demand signal here is too noisy to stand behind, and a confident wrong number is worse than none. Brand names normalized where ChatGPT returned partials (Native Pet, Vetri-Science).

This is one category. Want to see how yours is actually built?

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