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## **COMPLEX OF ANTI-CRISIS MEASURES FOR ENTERPRISE TRADING IN PET CARE PRODUCTS**

Modern economic conditions demand that businesses remain flexible and proactive, developing strategies before turbulence arises. An enterprise specialising in pet care products operates in a resilient niche, yet macroeconomic instability and declining disposable income can still cause stagnation. A comprehensive anti-crisis plan, grounded in competitive analysis, demand structure, consumer behaviour, and product specifics, is essential for sustaining profitability and strengthening market position.

The Ukrainian pet care market is highly competitive, with national chains, local shops, e-commerce platforms, and marketplaces. To avoid destructive price wars, enterprises should pursue differentiation rather than margin reduction. Building expertise, offering niche products, and fostering emotional connections with clients create added value. Free consultations, subscription models for consumables, and exclusive brands help establish loyalty and protect against larger competitors. Accurate demand forecasting prevents capital from being frozen in illiquid inventory. Cats and dogs dominate Ukrainian households, accounting for about 80% of purchases. Thus, the product range should prioritise their needs, shampoos, ear and paw care, and oral hygiene, while maintaining a limited high-margin line for rodents and birds. Flexible inventory management based on these insights ensures liquidity during crises.

Economic instability reduces household budgets, but pet owners typically prioritise their animals' well-being over personal luxuries. Enterprises must therefore adopt nuanced pricing strategies and assortment segmentation. Introducing “middle plus” and affordable “mass-masstige” lines achieved through logistics optimisation, domestic ingredients, or eco-friendly packaging provides quality at accessible prices. Transparent loyalty programmes, cashback systems, and discounts for bulk purchases further secure stable sales, even in contracting markets.

Urban and rural populations exhibit distinct demand patterns. In cities, apartment living drives demand for hygiene products, grooming cosmetics, and paw-care products. In rural areas, pets often live outdoors, requiring protection against ectoparasites, antiseptics, and deep-cleaning shampoos. To minimise risks, enterprises must embrace omni-channel strategies: combining physical presence in cities with strong e-commerce, ensuring postal delivery to remote villages, and tailoring advertising to regional needs.

Consumers under financial strain seek maximum value. Multifunctional products, such as antibacterial shampoos that clean, deodorise, and prevent dermatitis, or protective paw sprays that both shield and heal, shift perception from “optional cosmetics” to “health essentials.” Spending on health and safety is the last to be cut, making such products a cornerstone of resilience.

Studying international experience is an integral part of developing a comprehensive anti-crisis strategy, as it helps avoid common mistakes and adapt proven solutions to local realities. The global pet products market has repeatedly endured serious economic upheavals (the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, and numerous regional recessions), and each of these trials has left valuable lessons for industry participants.

The American experience is perhaps the most illustrative in terms of the pet product market's resilience during a general economic downturn. During the financial crisis of 2008-2009, when most US consumer markets suffered a sharp collapse, the pet products segment demonstrated remarkable resilience, contracting only slightly amid the catastrophic decline in other industries. American researchers documented the so-called “pet humanisation effect”: even when significantly limiting their own expenses, households refused to cut pet care budgets, perceiving it as an inviolable duty. Major players, such as Petco and PetSmart, responded to the crisis not by reducing their assortment, but by strategically regrouping it: they significantly expanded “smart economy” lines, high-quality but affordable alternatives to premium products, while maintaining flagship positions for the most loyal buyers. Simultaneously, the development of online channels with delivery was sharply accelerated, enabling a broader geographic reach for customers without a significant increase in operating costs.

British experience during the 2008-2012 recession revealed another effective tactic: the active implementation of subscription models for regular consumables. The company "Pets at Home" introduced club programmes with a fixed monthly fee, which included regular supplies of care products, veterinary discounts, and personalised recommendations. This solution enabled the enterprise to significantly stabilise its cash flow during the most turbulent period, as subscribers demonstrated a much higher level of retention than regular buyers. Furthermore, British pet cosmetic manufacturers were the first in Europe to move en masse to eco-friendly, minimalist packaging, reducing product costs without sacrificing quality and presenting it as a socially responsible step, thereby improving brand perception among an environmentally conscious audience.

Summarising international experience, several universal anti-crisis principles can be identified that have been confirmed across different countries and cultural contexts. First, the market for cat and dog care products is one of the most resilient consumer segments during an economic downturn, driven by strong emotional factors. Second, the strategic expansion of affordable price lines without compromising quality is the most effective way to retain customers during a crisis. Third, the development of e-commerce and subscription models fundamentally increases the stability of the enterprise cash flow. Fourth, positioning care products in the "healthcare" category rather than "cosmetics" is a powerful tool for protection against price pressure. And finally, turning a retail outlet or brand into a community centre for pet owners fosters a loyalty that is virtually indestructible in the face of economic shocks. The implementation of these proven international solutions, combined with the specificities of the local market, will become a solid foundation for the enterprise's long-term anti-crisis resilience.

In summary, it can be confidently stated that the complex of anti-crisis measures for an enterprise selling pet care products must be deeply considered, systemic, and proactive. Successful crisis avoidance is achieved not through chaotic budget cuts or blind dumping, but exclusively through a deep understanding of the client's psychology and the constant optimisation of the value proposition. Focusing primary efforts on the most popular animals (cats and dogs) avoids tying up working capital in illiquid assets. Adapting to changing purchasing power through flexible pricing and the introduction of high-quality substitute products helps to retain the existing customer base.

A strong appeal to national cultural codes and the modern attitude toward pets as family members ensures a solid, unbreakable emotional bond with the brand. Sophisticated differentiation between urban and rural demand expands the geography of effective sales. Bringing innovative products with a dual preventive and antibacterial effect to the market perfectly meets the acute need of the crisis consumer for savings without compromising the pet's quality of life or health. Finally, the international experience of leading world markets, the USA, the UK, Poland, Japan, and others, undeniably confirms that enterprises that timely adapt their assortment, develop digital sales channels, and build emotionally charged communities around the brand not only survive a crisis but emerge from it significantly stronger than their competitors. The consistent implementation of these steps will create a powerful margin of safety for the enterprise, allowing it not only to confidently bypass any economic storms but also to emerge from them as the undisputed leader in its segment.

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