

# Friends of Nature: Where the Wilde things are

Doug and Lynn Wilde followed their passion for feathered, finned and furry creatures and catering to their needs with healthy food and unique supplies since 1991.

The couple opened their first Friends of Nature store in Menomonee Falls, where Doug grew up. From there, they opened Friends of Nature in Slinger and took over Landmark Feed, Seed and Supply in Cedarburg.

Starting a pet supply business during the growing stages of the industry was a good fit for the Wildes.

Lifelong pet owners, Doug said they count two golden retrievers, Brandy and Bailey, among their current pets. When visiting the store in Menomonee Falls, the couple is greeted by a pair of "house cockatiels" and, at Landmark Feed, Seed and Supply, which they acquired in 2004, their cat Tigger rules the roost.

"Everybody comes in to see him -he's our house cat," says Doug.

Tropical fish lend a serene atmosphere to the Wildes' home at the end of a long

work day.

At the Menomonee Falls store, a well-rounded variety of pet foods, books and supplies are stocked, along with other items for outdoor birds and wildlife.

"We pride ourselves on variety," Doug said. "We have things you won't find in chain stores or box stores."

Since opening the first Friends of Nature 18 years ago, the Wildes have acquired more space, growing from a 1,000-square-foot storefront to 12,000 square feet on Main Street in Menomonee Falls.

They opened a second store in Slinger at the request of their customers in 2000. The Dove Plaza was home to the store for five years. Like the Menomonee Falls store, the popularity of its pet and wild bird offerings required more space and the business moved to an 8,000-square-foot building at 433 E. Washington St.

The Slinger and Menomonee Falls stores are similar in layout and offerings, Doug said.

"We carry food and supplies for every type of pet - dogs, cats, small animals, reptiles, birds and fish. You name it and we stock it," Doug said.

The hallmark of their dog and cat foods, treats and supplements is quality, Lynn said.

"We're focused on the higher-quality, holistic and natural food approach," she said. "Like people, you are what you eat. The better nutrition you give your pet, the longer it will be with you."

"The pet food industry has grown so fast and the quality of foods has gotten so good," said Doug. "We pride ourselves on educating people about good quality food. It can make a difference in quality and length of life of your pet."

Lynn said they keep up on research and are willing to pass that knowledge on to their customers.

"You can't always believe what you

read online. Go to Web sites of foods we sell and read the ingredient list. Food for animals is like food for people. The ingredient list pretty much tells you everything you need to know," Lynn said.

And like human food, empty calories and fillers are useless when it comes to a proper diet.

"Like people, dogs and cats can get diabetes. Look for food high in meat protein and low in carbs. There are good grains and bad grains, good meats and bad meats," Lynn said.

With pet food, buyers get what they pay for, but that doesn't mean she advises customers to automatically buy the most expensive food.

"I tell people to buy the best they can afford," she said.

Doug said dogs can have sensitivities to some foods.

"We're able to help people with choosing food that will take care of a dog's needs. Every dog is different and we will work with customers to find the right food," Doug said.

The top-selling brand the Wildes' stores carry is Fromm pet food, a Wisconsin made product.

"It's a great food and its priced right," said Doug.

The Slinger and Menomonee Falls stores also carry hamsters, fish, bearded dragons and hermit crabs. Lynn said the smaller animals are ideal for apartment dwellers that can't have a dog or cat. "They are relatively easy to care for and relatively easy to maintain," Lynn said.

Store employees are also pet owners and many are experts that can advise prospective pet owners in the areas of reptile and fish care. The only reptiles the store carries are bearded dragons. Although their name sounds fierce, with regular handling, they are very docile pets,

Lynn said.

"The more you interact with them, the better they are," she said.

Lynn recommends that those interested in becoming a dog or cat owner buy from a breeder or shelter. One way to become versed in the needs and personality of a potential pet is to attend one of the stores' "meet and greets." The Slinger store has brought in various rescue groups to inform customers and showcase their breeds. One recent event hosted by the store brought in members of a golden retriever rescue group.

"We try to get word out that there are dogs that need good homes," Lynn said.

Applications for homeless pets can be obtained at the meet-and-greets and, although the process may start at the store, the actual adoption between the group and new pet owner takes place off site.

"People love to come in and see the dogs," Lynn said.

And the Wildes commitment to animals goes past dollars and cents. They donate pet food to the Ozaukee and Washington county humane societies and offer support in the form of sponsorships for various fundraisers. Lynn is also on the board of directors of Wildlife in Need, a Waukesha-based organization that provides rehabilitation to Wisconsin wildlife with the intent of releasing animals back to their native habitat. The organization also conducts research designed to further the positive impact of rehabilitation and provide quality community education programs and services.

At Friends of Nature and Landmark, pets are only one half of the equation. The Wildes also look at the other side of the glass - to care for wild birds and other wildlife.

The Menomonee Falls and Slinger stores have balanced sections devoted to outdoor animals, but at Landmark indoor pets take a back seat to the variety of wild bird custom mixes, feed for squirrels, shelled and cracked corn and bird feeders.

Landmark is the oldest retail establishment in Cedarburg and is located in a historical landmark, hence the name.

"Cedarburg has more of wild bird presence and the focus is more into feed - whether it's feed for horses, livestock or wild birds," says Doug. "People there are fanatics about feeding the birds."

Carrying a commitment to providing high-quality food to outdoor creatures, the Wildes hold a popular wild bird food sale each October, a tradition that started with the Wildes first Friends of Nature 18 years ago. The sale is timed to coincide with the black oil sunflower seed harvest and is held when commodity prices are at their lowest, Doug said.

Offering 100 different mixes at the lowest prices of the year has customers from near and far calling in as early as September to find out the sale dates.

"Customers love it," says Doug. "They look forward to it every year."

For more information, visit [www.landmarksupply.com](http://www.landmarksupply.com) or [www.friendsofnature3.com](http://www.friendsofnature3.com).



## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Black Oil Sunflower Seed**

Save \$4.00

**\$12.99**

40 # Bag

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Thistle Seed**

**\$10.99**

Finch Favorite 10# Bag Save \$4.00

Best Price Anywhere

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Doug's Supreme Wild Bird Seed Blend**

Customer Favorite

**\$18.99**

Save \$6.00

"A-1 Time Savings"

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Roasted Peanut Pic-Outs**

Save \$3.00

**\$9.99**

10# Bag

Cardinal/Bluejay Favorite

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**FROMM Family**

**Gold Dog Food**

Wisconsin's #1 Pet Food **\$3 off**

Puppy, Adult, Senior 33# Bags

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Canidae All Life Stage Dog Food**

**\$29.99** 35# Bag

NOBODY BEATS OUR PRICE

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers. Limit 4 with coupon.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**Water Softener Solar Salt**

**\$3.99** 40# Bag

SHURE SOFT STOCK UP PRICE

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers. NO LIMIT.

## FRIENDS OF NATURE

**40% OFF**

**Any Tropical Fish Huge Selection Excludes Feeder Fish**

Expires 10-11-09. Not valid with other offers.