

# The Grocer

## PetDen has potential, but dogs in store could cause a slip-up for Tesco

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Dogs' position as man's best friend is something Tesco has been clever in looking to leverage with its plans to trial dog pampering at its Extra hypermarket at Culverhouse Cross, Cardiff.

PetDen is, on the face of it, a brilliant idea. As a lifelong dog owner, I try to take my dog everywhere with me. I only go to dog-friendly pubs and I decline invitations from friends who are precious about their furniture.

My wife and I do our food shopping together but we don't like leaving our beloved behind. We would definitely switch from shopping at Sainsbury's, Waitrose and Lidl and become loyal Tesco customers if our nearest Tesco Extra (Borehamwood) were to offer a pet pampering service.

Tesco needs to be cautious, however. People put their dogs on a pedestal – just ask divorce solicitors.

Now, I appreciate it is early days, but there are a few alarm bells ringing: PetDen is being launched by a construction and maintenance company called Gilmore Consultancy, which has contracts for nearly 200 hand car washes in the UK.

Gilmore is the official construction and maintenance partner to Tesco Hand Car Wash.

But, take my word for it, grooming a dog is not the same as waxing a Morris Minor. I'd hope this is not lost on Tesco chief executive Dave Lewis and his UK CEO Matt Davies.

Davies more than doubled the size of Pets at Home when he became its chief executive in 2004 at the tender age of 33 and introduced in-store vets and grooming partners.

So he is eminently qualified to make this work. And he, more than most, will understand customers need supreme confidence that their dogs will be in good hands.

Various logistical issues will need ironing out. Where will PetDen be located? Presumably not too near the food area... What about hygiene issues? People expect the odd toileting accident at Pets at Home but dog poo anywhere in the vicinity of a supermarket where trolleys and children are circulating is a no-no.

Another issue is how long the service takes. When people have a trolley-load of chilled and frozen food they need to get home, they don't want to be hanging around too long waiting for their dog's shampoo and set to be finished.

PetDen has the potential to be a triumph – but it has potential, too, to be a disaster. Hopefully the trial will prove the former.