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1ST FREEZE - DRIED PET FOOD IN AUSTRALIA.

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FREEZE - DRY. AUSTRALIA.

BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

Freeze-dried pet treats

By Casey Neill

Two chefs are freeze-drying quality emu, kangaroo, beef, lamb and seafood in Dandenong - and feeding it to dogs.

Freeze Dry Australia opened this month, and is struggling to keep up with demand for its healthy pet treats.

"We're the first freeze-dried pet food in Australia," director Daniel Schuetz said.

He and fellow director Tony Phelan got the business idea from a game of golf.

"Tony's friend owns FuzzYard pet products. He has a lot of overseas distributors," Mr Schuetz said.

"They've asked him about freeze-dried food.

"Then me and Tony played golf, and he asked me about freeze dried food.

"Tony and I are both chefs by background, that's why FuzzYard asked Tony and Tony asked me.

"We went to trade school together 20 years ago.

"But I had no idea about freeze-dried food."

So they did some research and decided to give it a go.

"We already had the sales, the clientele and the orders," Mr Schuetz said.

"They were placing orders before we even had the facility."

Freeze Dry Australia has five different product ranges - emu, kangaroo, beef, lamb and seafood - for dogs and cats.

"We did our research and found out kangaroo and emu are high in protein - the highest protein of all meats," Mr Schuetz said.

"Everything we put in is to benefit the dog or the cat.

"Lots of snacks are not very good for the pets.

"Everything we use is natural."

There are no preservatives, artificial flavours or fillers involved.

"Our products are 95 per cent meat," Mr



Freeze Dry Australia directors Tony Phelan and Daniel Schuetz with quality assurance officer Lomu.

Schuetz said.

"Because we freeze dry it, in theory it's supposed to last 20 years.

"It freezes the product then sucks all the liquid out of it then turns it into a wafer.

"It's like astronaut food.

"If you add hot water to it, it constitutes back to normal mincemeat."

The products are treats rather than meals, but more substantial offerings could be around the corner.

"We go through a tonne and a half a week of meat at the moment," Mr Schuetz said.

"We need to get up to at least three in the next couple of months.

"We've got the buyers; we just can't keep up with production.

"We're waiting for machinery to streamline the process.

"Hopefully, by the end of February it will be all here and set up."

For now, Mr Schuetz, Mr Phelan and a few family members are doing the hard work by hand.

"Once we streamline the process, we'll go out and we might even start a second label for supermarkets and stuff like that," Mr Schuetz said.

"At the moment, it's just for premium pet shops.

"We've just sent out our first two orders for Australia and we're packing for China now.

"It'll be in China, hopefully Japan, and Korea."

Freeze Dry Australia received a Greater Dandenong Business Grant at Dandenong Civic Centre on 6 December alongside four other businesses.

It included up to \$8000 plus business mentoring and marketing valued at about \$2000.

The Journal will profile each of the recipients.