

Recalls protect animals from low-quality and tainted food

March 2 2017, by Dr. Jonathan Stockman



Avoid low-quality and contaminated pet food with information about recalls from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the American Veterinary Medical Association. Credit: Colorado State University

Pet food recalls have made headlines in recent weeks, as the U.S. Food

and Drug Administration has announced that eight brands of cat, dog and rabbit food have been pulled from store shelves since the start of 2017. These foods have been recalled for containing possibly low levels of vitamin B1 and for carrying disease-causing bacteria, pieces of metal, and traces of the animal euthanasia agent pentobarbital.

Pet owners may find information about recalled [pet food](#) by visiting the [FDA website](#). More information about pet food adulterated with pentobarbital is available in this FDA [news release](#). The American Veterinary Medical Association also provides information about pet food recalls and alerts on its [website](#).

Pet food recalls occur for many reasons. In general, the process exists to protect consumers from food that does not meet quality standards or is tainted with pathogens, excess or deficiency in vitamins or minerals, and contamination with toxins.

Contamination with pentobarbital

Two recent pet food recalls have resulted from contamination with pentobarbital, a drug used in veterinary practice for humane euthanasia of sick or injured animals. Five dogs reportedly became ill after eating the food; one died, according to the FDA.

Pentobarbital is not allowed in pet food, and adulterated food should not be legally sold. *"t is not acceptable to use animals euthanized with a chemical substance in pet or animal foods," an FDA spokesperson told Food Safety News.*

The FDA, in coordination with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is investigating the products that tested positive for pentobarbital to determine a possible cause for the drug's presence. The agency is focusing on suppliers of beef ingredients for pet food, it announced.

How do you know if your pet's food is safe?

It is important to choose food from companies that follow supply-chain regulations and enforce quality controls, including testing of products to detect problems before food reaches the marketplace. To know more about a manufacturer's quality control measures, contact the company directly. Manufacturers are expected to test both raw materials and finished products to ensure food safety.

Potential problems with canned pet food

Many recent recalls have involved raw pet food and canned pet food.

Canned food is cooked at [high temperatures](#) to ensure it is free from pathogens. However, this process may also lead to vitamin and amino acid degradation if not done properly or if these nutrients are not supplied in sufficient amounts.

Potential risks with raw pet food

*Raw pet food presents higher risk for pathogen contamination and foodborne illness. Several recent recalls have resulted from [food contamination](#) with the infectious bacteria *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.*

Cooking food at high temperatures is the most effective way to eliminate pathogens, therefore raw pet food – including frozen, fresh and freeze-dried food – presents a higher risk for contamination.

For this reason, the AVMA discourages raw diets for pets and provides more information in its [policy](#) on "Raw or Undercooked Animal-Source Protein in Cat and Dog Diets."

If you are worried that your pet ate a contaminated food, contact your veterinarian or an emergency veterinary clinic.

Provided by Colorado State University

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