



May 05, 2007

Conclusions from the Dog Food Recalls

Almost every day, yet another recall on dog food is announced in the media, and the product assumably pulled from the shelves. It has been going on for over a month now.... And the contaminated dog food has been sold for at least six months, if not longer.

Unfortunately, most people draw the wrong conclusions from this, looking for ways to patch the symptoms, instead of curing the fundamental reasons behind this scandal.

For people who relied on big commercial pet food manufacturers as honest suppliers of healthy food for their pets, this is scary. Very scary.

Of course, mistakes can happen for anyone, even the best. But that is not the point. We all expect that someone, who makes a mistake, will at least learn from it and do something to prevent it from being repeated in the future. It does not make us feel good when the party, who made the mistake, just tries to have it "disappear" from public attention and then pretends to revert to "business as usual", without any explanation, without any apology, and without any demonstrated desire to change procedures or attitudes that effectively could prevent a repetition.

That is the *really* scary part. And that is what we witness.

What are the facts?

The core of the whole scandal is that some supplier of raw material, in this case apparently a Chinese supplier (but it could be anyone), is being paid for "quality", and this is measured by chemical analysis as "protein content". In order to meet the quality specs of the customer (= the pet food manufacturer), this supplier naturally does what he can to have the chemical analysis show the required "protein", without him paying more than absolutely necessary for the ingredients.

This is the fundamental nature of business. Too bad that this supplier, in accordance with all standard Chinese traditions and common practices, chooses to add some cheap vegetable melamine, which certainly will show up in the chemical analyses as "protein" – even though it is completely indigestible and valueless as nutrient for a carnivore.

But the same could also be said about feather meal (there is a whole industry in the USA based on making powder of poultry feathers – and selling it as "raw protein" exclusively to pet food manufacturers...). And it could also be said about leather, antlers, hairs, claws, and many other organic products that have zero nutritional value and yet systematically and consistently find their way into "high quality pet foods" under the category "raw protein", which no pet food manufacturer bothers explaining the contents of to any consumer. So, there is no point in pointing fingers at China – the very same principles rule in US business as well.

If you want references to official facts about this scandal, then you can find them in the first article in my news letter "The Peeing Post" from April 12, 2007. You will find a slightly updated version of the article itself at <http://k9joy.com/dogarticles/DogFoodRecalls.php> - please check it.

And what is the point in the recommendations from many media that people should stick with US-only suppliers? Is feather meal any better than melamine? Both show up as "raw protein" in a chemical analysis, and neither are, in any way whatsoever, of any nutritional value.

And what about all the other contributors to "raw protein", which the pet food manufacturers are more than happy to include, if the price is right? Not to mention the fact that the predominant components of all pet foods are *grain products* – which typically amount to 60-79% of the food and have no place whatsoever in a carnivore diet.

The sad story is that all pet food manufacturers have been buying the very same ingredients, from the very same suppliers. None of them have cared about specifying that the ingredients have to be "natural carnivore food components"; all of them routinely use all kinds of vegetable proteins and indigestible proteins, simply to lower the price and fool the customer, who does not know what "raw protein" actually is. The entire decision process is exclusively driven by *profit*, not health concerns for the dogs.

Why unnatural ingredients are dangerous

The problem with unnatural ingredients is always that they are subject to natural processes, which can cause production of harmful chemicals. Yes, Nature produces many poisons!

In food that is *natural*, you generally find no such harmful chemicals, at least not for a species that have developed through millennia, thriving on such food. The reason is that the species has been adjusted to handle whatever chemicals might be present in the natural food – this has been taken care of by evolution; those who could not handle it are *not* the forefathers of our current pets! They went extinct.

However, when the food is not *naturally* selected by the animal that is forced to ingest it, then the animal will have no protection mechanisms to fight back, when such natural productions of poisons occur. These poisons come as a big surprise to the animal's immune system, which has no defense against them. The natural level of protection through evolutionary selection in the past does not exist when we feed something that is not natural.

When we use unnatural ingredients, it is thus only a matter of time before some bomb will explode. For melamine, it happened a few months ago. For the next unnatural component, it can happen next year, maybe in four years – we simply have no way of knowing! We even have no way of knowing what kind of problem it will be!

Feeding unnatural foods is one big constantly ongoing chemical experiment with our animals' health...

Whom are you buying pet food from?

Maybe it is time for the average intelligent pet owner to wake up and begin to realize what "pet food manufacturing" is all about? In sharp contrast to what we might want to

believe, it is not about taking good care of the health of our pets. It is blatantly naïve to think that big multinational corporations like Purina, Iams, Science Diet, Alpo, and what their names might be, truly have a mission statement in their corporate articles saying that the main purpose for their existence is to ensure that pet owners have access to healthy food for their pets, at reasonable prices. That's what you might expect from a charitable foundation. But certainly not from a commercial corporation that is owned by other multinational corporations (mainly the big human food manufacturers), whose sole purpose of existence is TO MAKE MONEY FOR THEIR SHAREHOLDERS!

Sorry for yelling – but this needs to be screamed out to the world, so loud that it will wake up all those sleeping pet owners; they need to face reality and stop this insane catering to big business exploiting their desire for convenience.

Let's look at how these businesses make money.

What counts in all business is the difference between costs and revenue. That's called profit. If you can make that difference great, you make good profit, and your shareholders earn good dividends. This causes the price of their stock to go up, so they could sell their holdings at an even greater profit. To make this happen is the sole reason for those shareholders to elect directors to hire management to run the business.

Now, there is an upper limit for what the market can bear, in terms of sales prices. Competition is a factor that must be considered. If the pet food is more expensive than human food, for instance, chances are too great that people will revert to doing what they have done before: feed their dogs human food!

Another important factor is the consumer's convenience. If a product is easy to apply and use, people don't need to worry about their time being spent on this – it caters to their laziness. But if it is complicated to use, fewer people will do it.

The bad news (for the consumer) is that there really is no limit downwards for how cheap the ingredients can be... And *waste* costs nothing...

The lesson from history

Since the first wolves were domesticated some 15,000 years ago, feeding of these animals has most likely been very simple for the people who used them as hunting companions. When a prey was killed, it would rarely be close to the camp where the women and children remained while the men and the dogs went hunting. Even if the men were indeed tempted to eat some of the meat raw on the spot, they were still faced with the fact that they could not chew it without first cooking it. Since man has known the use of fire for 750,000 years, this was no problem – it just presented the task of getting the prey back to the camp.

Question: Would you think these hunters would carry the entire prey home? Hint: consider that there are some very heavy parts of any prey, which man would not eat: the head, the guts, etc.

So, what would you think the cave men out there would do, on the kill site, with their hungry dogs around, before they carried the prey home for cooking?

OK – this then answers our next question, "What would they feed their dogs?"....

This was the beginning of what most likely has stuck with man and his way of dealing with his dogs: they were fed with his own waste! Cheap. Convenient. And luckily for

the dogs, this was actually the most valuable part of their natural food! The guts are what a wolf will eat first – and from which he derives the most supreme nutritional value! So this partnership between the cave man and his domesticated wolf seriously benefited both parties.

During the Renaissance, some dog (especially the small breeds) were adopted by women and brought into the noblemen's household as "pets". We know from history that these small dogs, to a very large extent, were treated like small humans and fed like small humans. But they were small, so it did not matter a lot financially for those noblemen to let their wives have this entertainment, while they continued to enjoy their hunting, with their "real" dogs – which still were fed as the cave man would have done! Besides, this is only some 400 years – a very minor peculiarity on the scale of evolution.

When Kibble was invented during the big Depression in the USA in the thirties, the same feeding philosophy applied. But, at this time, the nature of the human waste had changed.... The noblemen, who enjoyed their hunting, were gone. Instead, there were millions of poor dog owners who had trouble feeding their animals, because they did not have money. And there were big stores full of grain that could not be sold at prices that did the farmers any good.

It took some smart *business people* to find out that this was an opportunity of a life time, when they considered that dogs actually would eat processed grain products, a discovery that was made some 70 years earlier, but never commercially exploited...

Natural? Healthy? Who gave a damn?! It was cheap – there was lots of available, there was a huge market ready to buy – so the production was started and the products promoted!

This was the beginning of the pet food industry. Not very flattering, is it? But it was profitable – and that is all that counts for a business.

Unfortunately, for the dogs and their owners, there were no *immediate* ill effects. Most dogs still got at least *some* variation in their food, as many people continued to give their dogs the bones and other kitchen waste they had no other use for, just as they always had done. I say "unfortunately", because this fact seriously masked the problems from feeding these dogs such an unnatural food! Had people just feed this early kibble *exclusively*, it would most likely have caused such a devastating "epidemic" of malnourishment so fast that the truth would have been out: grain products in large quantities are not healthy for dogs. But then the war came into the picture, and people got other things on their minds, so the market was consolidated...

When I grew up in Europe after the war, we knew nothing about "pet food". We fed our dogs as we always had done: the cheapest parts of the food we did not want for ourselves: the bones and guts of the animals we slaughtered. Sometimes also some leftovers from our own meals. And we did not need any vets to look after our dogs – they were healthy.

But then this American phenomenon "pet food" came to Europe in the seventies. It was cheap. It was convenient. And it was well marketed. Distributors made good money – and it was easy for the lazy dog owner.

And now Europe is caught in the same trap. Nobody remembers how to feed a dog anymore. Everything is based on commercial advertising and big corporations making big money – and filling the public with carefully chosen information that lead the consumers believe in a profitable lie.

Of course, they do not tell lies. And yet they do. They tell only those parts of the truth that support their sales – nothing more!

The result is that people are deliberately led to believe in something that is not true. But it all happened indirectly, through smart propaganda.

Examples of “pseudo-truths” that make people believe in lies

“Pet food needs to be nutritionally balanced”. Yes, when you let 2/3 of it (or more) be made up by some completely valueless grain products that never should have been fed to dogs in the first place, and you use cheap waste products for a large part of the balance, then it does indeed become extremely critical that you carefully balance that little, which now is all the dog depends on. If you feed a natural diet for start, this is an irrelevant worry. But the statement is great for inferring that normally intelligent people cannot handle this, on their own...

“A raw meat diet is not healthy for dogs”. Correct, but raw meat alone was never meant to be a balanced diet for neither wolves nor dogs anyway. *Canis Lupus* and *Canis Lupus Familiaris* need the bones and the organs as well. But when you omit that, the statement becomes true, yet it is creating a false impression in people that there is something wrong with raw meat as dog food. The truth is that **ONLY** raw meat is not good for them...

“Raw food contains bacteria that are dangerous”. For humans, may be. But no carnivores in nature are killed by eating raw food. Those that did are long extinct. Dogs still have that same ability as other carnivores; their gastrointestinal system and immune defenses are excellently equipped to deal with those bacteria, which plain simply are not an issue for them, no matter how troublesome they might be for *people*. But ignoring this is a powerful scare tactics that play on people's emotions and fear of disease – yet it is utterly and completely irrelevant for our dogs!

“Wolves in nature do not live as long as domestic dogs do”. That's true - but that is not because of their diet. The number one reason for a wolf to die is being hit by a bullet from a gun. Number two reason is being killed by its own prey. Number three is starvation (mostly for pups). Number four is poison, laid out by humans. It is not malnourishment that causes wolves to die. But lack of veterinary care to deal with wounds from accidents surely plays a serious role...

The list of these “pseudo-truths” is very long – but I believe I made the point.

Oh – just one more thing that also is important to notice here: the veterinarians! Sure, what about them? Did you know that they learn *nothing* about carnivore nutrition in vet school, except for a volunteer afternoon session with a representative of a pet food manufacturer? But that's the case. Don't get fooled by their "expertise". Their opinions about this are no more qualified than yours. At least, you are making an effort to get to understand this, and you (most likely) do not make money on people believing in something that actually makes their pets *less* healthy...

What is the alternative?

Let me first ask this: if the price of beef would go so far down that it would be cheaper than hay, would you then consider feeding ground beef to your horse?

No? Why not? Would there be other things than money that would matter?

Of course! You know that ground beef is not a natural food for a horse, so chances of it being healthy for it are slim to none. You also would never think about feeding cereal to a snake that lives exclusively on live rodents, would you?

So, why on Earth then do you even *consider* feeding your carnivore companion with a diet that contains 65% carbohydrates from grains, when those carbohydrates do not belong at all on its natural menu? And what about that whole chunk of other unspecified unnatural components that likewise never were meant as food for a carnivore?

And what about all that variation a wolf experiences and thrives on? Where is that for your dog? Would you eat the same food, day in and day out, if it said "Premium people food" on the bag?

Yes, the core of this issue IS this simple! There is no excuse for intelligent people to continue supporting those lies that dogs should be fed carbohydrates as the main ingredient in their diet, no matter which "scientist" gets paid for claiming that it is "good for the dog".

But even a mass murder might speak a word of truth. And, as already mentioned, the pet food manufacturers do have a valid point in indicating that feeding a natural home-made diet is less simple than pouring kibble from a bag. If you think you can substitute monotonous kibble with equally monotonous chicken wings, you will soon be paying your veterinarian handsomely for bringing that dog back to health.

But the truth is that the required education, although not given in general to vets, nevertheless is available. There are plenty of books, online forums, and people with serious experience you can learn the basics from. A good place to start could be <http://k9joy.com/education/feedyourdog.php>.

Feeding raw natural food is *not* "the crazy modern thing we should resist". *Kibble feeding* is!

The relevant conclusion to draw from this scandal

It is also a fact that there are numerous small businesses now that offer frozen raw food for carnivore pets. They can certainly supply a variety and they make it possible for any pet owner to get some "real food" for their companions, if you do not like the prices of raw meat in your local supermarket.

But you will notice that very few of them (if any?) claim that any of their products are "fully balanced" or "all your dog needs". Have you ever found a human food that could say that on the label? Why do you then expect it for dog food? Do you really think that dog nutrition is better understood and better researched than human nutrition?

Dogs rely on variation, just as we do. There does not exist a single source of natural food that covers all nutritional needs. This goes for dogs as well as for humans. We have to seek balance through variation, over a period of time.

The downside, of course, is that it takes a little education and a little extra effort in the planning and shopping phases.

But wouldn't your dog be worth that?

Honestly, if you seriously answered "no", you should not have that dog!

So, let yourself hear your own voice now, reading this mantra loud:

"I will never again buy pre-manufactured, unnatural or processed food for my dog. I will resolve to learn what my canine companion truly needs, in terms of healthy nutrition and feeding, and I will feed my domesticated wolf in accordance with its nature, to the best of my ability, and not in accordance with commercial advertising and exploitation."

Thank you! You drew the right conclusion of this pet food recall scandal, by addressing the true problem and not just the tip of the ice berg.

Just one more thing: Please help other pet owners by passing on the URL for this article or by printing out the PDF version and copying it to them. Their animals deserve it, whether they are cats, ferrets, foxes, reptiles, falcons, or any other carnivore species.

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