

## Tips to Avoid Contaminated Dog Foods

**A veterinary specialist gives advice to owners concerned about the dog food recall.**

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In the wake of the recent ongoing dog food recall, many dog owners have been worried and confused about what to feed their pets and toxicologists are still investigating how the food became contaminated and with what.

“The dilemma is targeting the exact ingredient and the source, so that we can determine which products are safe and which ones are not,” according to Sonja Olson of Florida Veterinary Specialists & Cancer Treatment Center, in Tampa, Florida.

So, while scientists work to pinpoint the problems, how exactly is a pet owner supposed to feed their pet? Olson offers some tips: Stick with the dry foods, since fewer of them have been recalled, she said. Pay attention to the labels on all these foods and consider selecting a type of food without wheat gluten. Many semi-moist and canned foods contain wheat gluten, while most dry foods do not. Consider your pet’s lifestyle and medical issues. Pay attention to the other ingredients on each bag of food. Note the amount of sodium, especially if your dog has a heart or kidney problem, as too much sodium could be. Peek at the percentage of protein versus the carbohydrates, etc. Protein-carbohydrate ratios are important for pets that may be diabetic. Be aware of what’s in pet food treats and apply the same principal to the treats as to the food. Home cooking is another option. Although home cooking is often easier for feeding dogs than cats. Dogs are often less finicky, making it easier to change foods. You can find pet food cookbooks online or at bookstores. Prescription diets have tighter guidelines and controls on their ingredients than other pet food. They are still considered safe. As of now, one prescription diet has voluntarily been recalled as a precaution, while experts determine if the product’s wheat gluten, which contains melamine, is contributing to the problem. All natural foods are not necessarily better than other ones. People should pay attention to every bag of food they look at. Talk with your veterinarian, rather than the salespeople at the food store. Your veterinarian knows your dog’s history and lifestyle and the vet will be up to date with the latest on the recall and the ingredients of concern.

“This is a huge wake up call to the pet food industry, to veterinarians and to pet owners. The problem can only make us better,” Olson said.

“In the vet community, we’ll be more educated about pet nutrition. In the pet food industry, you know there are going to be new standards. Unfortunately, it took tragedy to bring us here,” she said.