

Dog Food Recall Expands to Wheat-Free Products

While wheat-free dog foods are now included in the dog food recall, melamine is still the prime suspect.

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Melamine, the toxin suspected in causing potentially hundreds of pet deaths during the last few months, might be present in raw ingredients other than wheat, according to the latest dog food recall.

California-based pet food company Natural Balance is recalling all of its wheat-free Venison dog products and its dry Venison cat food, regardless of code dates due to melamine contamination, the toxin suspected in the multi-brand Menu Foods recall last month, the company said April 17.

Natural Balance says that laboratory tests confirm the presence of melamine in its recalled Venison products, and it suspects the source of the melamine is its rice protein concentrate.

Previously the company had recalled only two of its Venison diets – Venison and Brown Rice dry dog food and Venison and Green Pea dry cat food.

All Natural Balance diets are wheat-free, unlike the other diets that were recalled in relation to the Menu Foods recall.

Melamine attached to wheat gluten is the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's prime suspect in the month's previous pet food recall, but the agency continues to investigate.

"FDA is not 100 percent certain that melamine, a relatively nontoxic substance, is the cause of the spate of pet illnesses and deaths," it said in a statement. "Although some studies have shown a toxic effect of melamine in rodents, research is scarce on melamine's effect on cats and dogs."

Natural Balance says it initiated the recall when a small number of pet owners complained that their cats and dogs developed kidney failure after eating the affected product.

Its recalled products are sold in Petco and pet specialty stores nationwide. The recalled products, including Venison and Brown Rice canned and bagged dog foods, Venison and Brown Rice dog treats and Venison and Green Pea dry cat food, come in bags, cans and sealed treat bags.

None of Natural Balance's other dry formulas, canned or roll products or treats are involved in the recall, the company said.

The animal illnesses seem to be related to only one production period of its Venison products, but over the last four days the company began notifying its distributors and retailers by phone and e-mail to stop selling and return the recalled products, Natural Balance said.

A full list of recalled dog food products can be seen at http://www.menufoods.com/recall/product_dog.html.

For all DogChannel coverage of the ongoing dog food recall, visit www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/dog-food-recall-updates.aspx.