

## Cause of Dog Illnesses Unknown in Dog Food Recall

**Class-action lawsuits are being filed against Menu Foods in response to the dog food recall.**

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The pet food that's been linked to the deaths of at least 16 cats and dogs in the United States and caused a massive North American product recall has shown no signs of contamination, its manufacturer says.

Meanwhile, a woman in Chicago whose cat died after eating presumably tainted food recalled by Menu Foods has filed a lawsuit against the company.

Dawn Majerczyk, 43, said her orange tabby, Phoenix, fell sick last week, two days after he ate a single package of Special Kitty, one of 95 pet foods recalled by Menu. Majerczyk filed suit in Chicago on March 20.

"I want my vet bills and I want some compensation for what they did to my kids and for the company's neglect," she said.

As of March 22, two class-action lawsuits have been filed in Canada, seeking compensation for anyone who purchased the contaminated pet food. The suit alleges that Menu Foods failed to adequately test the food or implement quality assurance procedures, according to Canadian Press.

The company, Ontario, Canada-based Menu Foods, also says it is still unable to explain why the affected dogs and cats developed acute kidney failure and died.

In a brief telephone interview with the media on March 21 to update the status of the recall and investigation, Menu Foods chief executive and President Paul Henderson said the company hypothesizes that one ingredient, believed to be wheat gluten, represents the highest probability as to the cause.

"But we have been unable to prove that through scientific information," Henderson said.

The Food and Drug Administration has sent investigators to Menu Foods' Kansas manufacturing plant, where the contagion is believed to have originated. Because wheat gluten is not usually a problematic source, the FDA says, it's looking at the possibility that a mold or chemical toxin contaminated the wheat gluten.

So far, the affected foods have only come from the Kansas plant.

On March 16, due to animal deaths, Menu Foods Inc. launched a recall of 95 brands of wet dog food and cat food produced between Dec. 3, 2006 and March 6, 2007. An estimated 60 million packages were recalled.

Nine of the initial reported deaths were of cats that fell ill during a quarterly taste test Menu Foods conducted to test the products' palatability, the FDA said.

According to the FDA, the affliction seems to be affecting cats more than dogs, and that animals usually show signs of contamination within a few days of consuming tainted food. The FDA also said it expects additional cat and dog deaths as the investigation unfolds, but would not speculate on the number.

Among the symptoms of kidney failure in animals are loss of appetite, nausea and more frequent urination.

The recall includes about 90 brands across the entire manufacturing spectrum. A complete list of recalled dog foods is available at <http://www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/recalled-dog-food-brands.aspx>.

Owners of pets affected by the recalled pet foods who wish to report the incident should contact the Food and Drug Administration through its website, <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/backgrounders/complain.html> to find the FDA complaint coordinator in their state.

More information on the Menu Foods dog food recall can be read at [http://www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/2007\\_03/2007\\_03-20news001.aspx](http://www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/2007_03/2007_03-20news001.aspx).