

UPDATED: Diamond Pet Foods Announces Recall in 23 States

At least 100 dogs reported dead due to aflatoxin contamination.

UPDATE #1: Customers can contact the information center at 866-214-6945 between 8a.m. and 12a.m. EST seven days a week with questions about the recall and pet health concerns.

UPDATE #2: The FDA has found that some of the recalled products were exported to 29 other countries, and has notified international officials.

Twenty-three dogs have died after eating contaminated food, and another 18 became ill.

UPDATE #3: Scope of Diamond Recall Narrowed

UPDATE #4: Diamond Did Not Test Properly for Toxin, Report Says-----

Meta, Mo.-based Diamond Pet Foods has voluntarily recalled dog and cat food made at its Gaston, S.C. plant due to the discovery of aflatoxin, which can be deadly to animals, in some food products.

Chris Ryder, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, says the contaminated products have already been cited in the deaths of six dogs in New York and five in North Carolina, as of Dec. 21. He says 22 other dogs are sick in these two states.

He says Diamond has been leading efforts in the recall and cooperating with state officials.

Diamond, a leading maker of dog and cat food, says products in the recall contain a capital G in the 11th or 12th position in the date codes, along with best-buy dates between March 1 and June 10, 2007, the company says. Product codes are located on the back of the bag.

Pennsylvania officials warn pet owners to consult a veterinarian immediately if pets show any symptoms of illness, sluggishness or lethargy combined with a reluctance to eat; a yellowish tint to the eyes and/or gums, and bloody diarrhea.

Kelly Smith, DVM, at the VCA West L.A. Hospital, says the aflatoxin is a very serious toxin, which damages an animals liver and, in excess amounts, can kill. Smaller dogs might become sick quicker than larger breeds, depending how much toxin is in their bodies.

Smith says there is no medicine to counteract the toxins, which is commonly found in animal food that is left around the house and gets moldy. Cases of aflatoxin ingestion are uncommon, however.

Animals that eat excess doses of aflatoxin are treated by maintaining caloric intake and intravenous feeding of supplements and vitamins, according to Smith, who says if the dog is going to recover it does so in about a week. She says everything depends on how much of the toxin is in the animals system, meaning that higher levels are more fatal.

Smith says that animals that have eaten aflatoxin could begin to show symptoms of weakness or vomiting right away. Not all animals that eat these toxins die. The toxins are generally more likely to be fatal in dogs and cats with pre-existing liver damage.

Diamond Pet Food has notified distributors and recommended they hold the sale of all products that could be contaminated while samples are tested.