

New Toxin Found in Recalled Dog Food

FDA and Menu Foods say a plastic, not rat poison, was in tainted ingredient in recalled dog food.

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Adding more confusion to a case already filled with mystery, the Food and Drug Administration now says it was a substance used in fertilizer and Formica that has been found as a source of contamination of dog food that was recalled earlier this month.

The FDA and pet food maker Menu Foods are now both saying that amounts of the synthetic plastic melamine is the only contaminant found so far in the wheat gluten ingredient of tainted "cuts and gravy" style pet food that's been recalled.

Their statements directly contradict findings by the New York State Department of Agriculture, which says that it found the rat poison aminopterin during tests of the tainted food.

On March 23, the N.Y. State Department of Agriculture said that state laboratory tests this week had turned up aminopterin, an ingredient used in rat poison outside the United States, in some recalled food. However, no other agency has reported the same findings.

Stephen Sundlof, the director of the Center for Veterinary Medicine at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Menu Foods President and CEO Paul Henderson both said in separate announcements March 30 that melamine is the sole toxin that's been found so far in the wheat gluten during tests of the recalled pet food.

"At this time, we do not know how melamine got into the wheat gluten," Sundlof said.

Melamine, in addition to being used as an ingredient in fertilizer and Formica, is used in making whiteboards, floor tiles, kitchenware and various other products. The tainted wheat gluten came to Menu Foods from a supplier in China, but that supplier is no longer used by Menu, Henderson said.

"One supplier's product was adulterated. The source of that adulteration was identified and removed from our system," Henderson said. He also stated that all pet food manufactured since the recall announcement has been tested and verified to be "safe and healthy."

Henderson also said that Menu Foods as a company was "angry" that the supplier – which Menu and the FDA have both refused to name at this point – allowed the contamination to occur.

Also, Menu Foods has announced that it will pay the veterinary bills of dogs and cats that became sick and/or died due to tainted product.

"Yes, Menu will take responsibility," Henderson said.

To date, Menu says it has received in excess of 300,000 phone calls from people seeking information about the recall, but has confirmed the deaths of only 16 dogs and cats due to tainted food.

However, using mostly anecdotal evidence, Veterinary Information Network, a website of 30,000 veterinarians and veterinary students, has estimated at least 471 cases of kidney failure in dogs and cats during the first 10 days of the recall.

Menu Foods announced the recall of the "cuts and gravy" style wet dog and cat foods it manufactures on March 16, saying it voluntarily recalled the products after learning of complaints of vomiting and renal failure in dogs and cats following their consumption.

Following feedings of the product, some cats and dogs exhibited loss of appetite, lethargy and vomiting, while others died from renal failure.

A list of the recalled dog food brands is available at www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/recalled-dog-food-brands.aspx.



Owners of pets sickened by the recalled pet foods who wish to file a report can find the FDA complaint coordinator in their state at the FDA website, www.fda.gov/opacom/backgrounders/complain.html.

To read more about the dog food recall, visit www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/dog-food-recall-updates.aspx.