

Survey: Consumer Confidence in Dog Food High

Despite the widespread dog food recall, survey shows owners have favorable opinions toward pet food.

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Pet Food Institute President Duane Ekedahl testifying before the Senate on April 12. Courtesy Pet Food Institute
Despite a dog food recall that has dragged on for over two months, consumers remain confident about pet food and its brands, according to a new survey commissioned by the Pet Food Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based association that represents pet food manufacturers.

Seventy percent of cat and dog owners responding to the poll said their opinion toward pet food at this time is “favorable” or “very favorable,” Pet Food Institute President Duane Ekedahl told Pet Product News International.

In addition, a similarly high number of pet owners said they are sticking with their original brand of cat or dog food, Ekedahl noted.

And although hundreds of brands were affected by the pet food recall and several media reports indicated many owners turned to cooking for their pets, sales of pet food declined by only three to four percent during the last four weeks, he added, citing statistics from Information Resources Inc.

“Those numbers indicate that we have a recovery here and that in fact the consumer has maintained their confidence through this and in the product,” Ekedahl said.

The recall, which continued as recently as May 17 with Chenango Valley Pet Foods’ expanded recall of dry items including a ferret diet, has caused significant confusion among pet owners and the industry, which the institute aimed to combat.

“In those early weeks, it was difficult for everyone,” Ekedahl said. “The difficulty of identifying the contaminant added to the confusion.”

At this point, the recall is “basically complete and considered successful,” he said, but now the industry must turn to preventing and identifying future problems.

To that end, the Pet Food Institute created the National Pet Food Commission, which plans to issue recommendations to the industry and government regarding future safety and quality standards for pet food.

“It really is in everybody’s interest that this be done in way that doesn’t stifle trade,” he said.

Ekedahl, who on April 12 testified before a Senate hearing on the recall, said what’s interesting is that the pet food industry’s recall caught the attention of the world and of the food industry as a whole.

“I think we’re going to learn from this,” he said. “Pet food is kind of the example for the food process.”

With those in Congress calling for an overhaul of the Food and Drug Administration, and additional testing now in place for food imports from China and elsewhere, the U.S. food system seems poised for a shake up.

“What’s going to come from this is better survey of food that crosses international borders,” Ekedahl said.

For more information on the dog food recall, visit www.dogchannel.com/dog-news/dog-food-recall-updates.aspx.