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1 YEAR LATER

Rising from the recall wreckage
Changes in China
Improvements in traceability

A fresh idea

Cathal Walsh of Freshpet, p. 18



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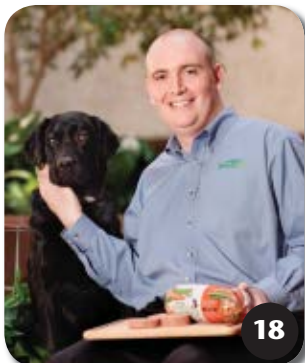
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On the cover: Cathal Walsh of Freshpet with Fintan. *Photo by Jeffrey Vock*

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Global trends to 2012

Market research David Lummis of Packaged Facts asserts that there are three primary trends driving growth in the global petfood market: humanization, convenience and health.

A report from Euromonitor predicts petfood's future, based on the top global trends from the present to 2012.

- 1. Upscale private label.** Private label petfood products are encroaching upon premium and mid-priced segments in developed markets. Petfood superstores are particularly well placed to exploit this trend. In the developed world, this may be facilitated by the shadow cast over branded products by the recalls, as well as growing economic insecurity.
- 2. Origin and traceability.** Now in the forefront, due to the recalls, are issues such as the quality and tractability of ingredients. Many consumers now suspect that branded petfood products are not markedly superior to their private label counterparts. The key to restoring or

Many consumers now suspect that branded petfood products are not markedly superior to their private label counterparts.— Tim Phillips

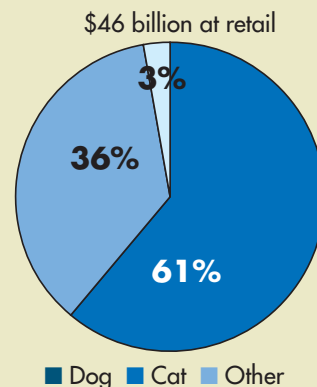


maintaining consumer faith in the branded segment will lie in successfully communicating product quality to consumers.

- 3. Economy products thrive.** In developing economies, the premium segment accounts for a much smaller proportion of total petfood sales than in developed economies. Much of the growth that will be experienced over the 2007-2012 period is likely to come from the economy segment, as increasing numbers of people are lifted out of poverty in markets such as Brazil and China and chain retailers expand and deepen their distribution to reach these consumers.
- 4. Premium opportunities.** As a result of the limited affordability of premium products in developing markets, the ability of petfood producers to increase sales volumes will be limited. While there will be some potential for premium products in locations with concentrations of affluent consumers, including Moscow, Beijing, Shanghai, Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, these will be niche, rather than mass, markets.
- 5. Freshness advantage.** One strategy that indigenous firms in developing markets can use to gain an advantage over foreign rivals at the very top end of the premium segment is

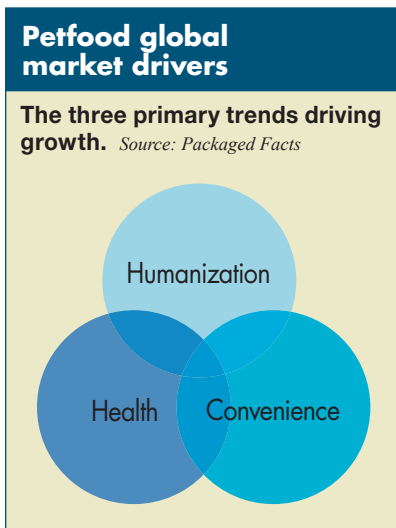
Petfood global market value 2007

Petfood global market value 2007. *Source: Packaged Facts*



to market their products in terms of their freshness, rather than in terms of the quality and functional properties of their ingredients. In order to counter this, foreign players will have to either invest in local production facilities through either joint ventures or acquisitions or utilize the kind of innovative packaging solutions (vacuum packing, refrigeration, etc.). ●

Dr. Phillips is the editor of Petfood Industry magazine. He can be reached at Tel: +1.815.734.5644, E-mail: tphillips@wattnet.net.



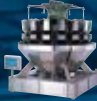
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Quick hits

- ▶ Halo, Purely For Pets announces talk show host Ellen DeGeneres has become an owner of the company. The announcement comes as Halo is expanding its product line and retail presence in the US.
- ▶ Nestlé Purina PetCare and the International Kennel Club of Chicago raised a record US\$322,863 for the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation to be used for continuing canine health research.
- ▶ The German Association for the Certification of Quality Management Systems has certified Nordenia Deutschland's Steinfeld plant in accordance with the prEN 15593 standard. Nordenia says it's the first company worldwide to earn the certification.
- ▶ Nature's Logic has hired Barbara Gunther as an East Coast region sales staff manager.

Asian precursor to US petfood recalls

Veterinary pathologists have recently determined that the US outbreak of contaminated petfood in 2007 wasn't the first chemical-related incident to occur this decade. A 2004 outbreak that also involved petfoods contaminated with industrial chemicals sickened more than 6,000 dogs and a smaller number of cats across Asia, according to Asian press reports at the time. Kidney failure in the animals was linked to Pedigree dog foods and Whiskas cat foods manufactured in Thailand by Mars Inc. Veterinarians in Asia initially blamed the 2004 pet deaths on fungal toxins, which also was one of the first suspicions when the US recalls occurred last year.

A comment by a Korean graduate student amid the 2007 outbreak led Cathy Brown, a specialist in renal pathology at Georgia's Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, to suspect this had happened before. Brown tracked down tissue samples from the pets that died in 2004 at the Kyungpook National University in Korea. The samples contained the same type of insoluble crystals found in US pets during the 2007 outbreak. The Georgia paper was published last fall in the *Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation*, but largely went unnoticed until it was picked up by a pet blog.

The Georgia researchers weren't the first to link the two outbreaks. In March 2007 Mars scientists made the link. "As a responsible company, Mars immediately shared this information with the veterinary community and regulators in Asia and the US," says Mars spokeswoman Alice Nathanson.

The Food and Drug Administration acknowledges

it was informed, but major veterinary and petfood organizations—including the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, the Pet Food Institute and the Association of American Feed Control Officials—say they were never told by Mars of any link between the two outbreaks.

FACTS&FIGURES

Where US pet stores make money

Dog food and supplies made the largest contributions to average dollar volume in 2006. Totals do not add up to 100% because averages are based on responses for each separate category.

Source: "Pet Age Retailer report," January 2008.

Dog food	18%
Dog supplies & accessories	18%
All live animals	13%
Services	12%
Fish food & aquarium supplies	8%
Cat food	6%
Bird food & supplies	6%
Reptile food & supplies	5%
Cat supplies & accessories	4%
Small animal food & supplies	4%
Gifts & specialty items	3%
Pond supplies & accessories	2%
Other	1%

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IIPTF focuses on both B2B and B2C. The second annual India International Pet Trade Fair (IIPTF) was held from February 29-March 2, 2008, at the NSIC Exhibition Complex in the Okhla Industrial State of New Delhi, India. The event attracted exhibitors from countries all over the world, including India, Poland, Singapore and China.

Based on feedback from this year's and last year's events, the convening body of the IIPTF is planning to bring an enhanced business to consumer (B2C) component to the 2009 event. Although business to business (B2B) networking will still be a focus, the prospect of selling products directly to customers at the pet fair was met with great enthusiasm by many exhibitors.

The inaugural edition of an India Pet Directory was also launched in an attempt to consolidate members of the Indian pet industry and related service providers into a comprehensive reference guide. The directory can be ordered at www.creaturecompanions.com.

BHJ A/S acquires Spanish petfood manufacturer. Danish supplier of ingredients and meat raw materials BHJ A/S has announced the acquisition of Corsa Petfood S.L., a Spanish leader in the petfood market with factories in Cardona (near Barcelona) and Avila (close to Madrid). The acquisition also includes the subsidiary Adax S.A.S, located in France, which produces and imports dried snacks for pets.

Vilhelm Hald-Christensen, CEO of BHJ A/S, stated: "Spain is a strategic market for all our business areas. We consider the acquisition a boost to our petfood business." Corsa Petfood will be integrated as an independent BHJ subsidiary. The business activities will be coordinated with BHJ Pet Food in Denmark.



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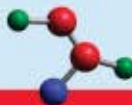
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THIS MONTH ON PetfoodIndustry.com

Make sure to check out www.petfoodindustry.com and take a look at this month's collection of Online Extras and our regularly updated content:

- ▶ Listen to this month's cover story interview with Cathal Walsh and Scott Morris of Freshpet at www.petfoodindustry.com/Freshpet.aspx.
- ▶ For engaging audio and to read the Q&A with Tiffany Bierer and Debra Fair of Mars Petcare US from the article "Whole new way to feed" (p.36), check out www.petfoodindustry.com/wholenewway.aspx.
- ▶ Check out what's been happening since the recalls in our index page of recall-related articles, news, interviews and websites at www.petfoodindustry.com/recall.aspx.
- ▶ To view the latest issue of *The Extru-Technician*, a digital newsletter from Extru-Tech Inc., go to www.petfoodindustry.com/extru-technician.aspx.

EU: New rules for animal feed labeling

The European Commission (EU) recently proposed simpler rules for the marketing of animal feeds and petfood. The proposal simplifies the existing procedures for labeling and marketing animal feed and petfood, making the overall system more efficient while maintaining the same level of protection of animal health, animal welfare and public health, the commission stated.

The proposal also aims to greatly reduce red tape for feed operators by removing unnecessary administrative burdens and technical requirements. Pre-market authorizations are to be made proportionate to risks and no longer be

based on pre-defined feed groups, such as products acting as protein sources.

The draft regulation sets out certain general provisions for the labeling of all feed, such as the need to indicate the type of feed, the name and address of the operator, the list of feed additives and the net weight. On top of this, specific mandatory labeling requirements are laid down for feed materials, compound feed (including petfood) and "dietetic" feed.

With regard to petfood, the labeling requirements are tailored to the needs of pet owners. Labels on petfood must carry a telephone number that customers can call for more information.

INDUSTRY CALENDAR

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

A complete listing of 2008 events is available at www.petfoodindustry.com

H.H. Backer Spring Trade Show, May 4-6, 2008, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Contact: H.H. Backer Associates Inc., Tel: +1.312.663.4040, Fax: +1.312.663.5676, hhbacker@hhbacker.com, www.hhbacker.com.

Interzoo, May 22-25, 2008, Exhibition Centre Nuremberg, Nürnberg, Germany. Contact: WZF Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft, Zoologischer Fachbetriebe GmbH, Tel: +49.911.86.068646, Fax: +49.911.86.068640, interzoo@nuernbergmesse.de, www.interzoo.com.

April

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27	28	29	30			

UK Pet Care Forum 2008, April 13, 2008, the Belfry, Wishaw, Sutton Coldfield, United Kingdom. Contact: Marie Petsis, Pet Care Trust, Tel: +01.234.273933, Fax: +01.234.273550, petevents@petcare.org.uk, www.petcare.org.uk.

Petfood Forum, April 14-16, 2008, Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Contact: Nancy Grossnickle, Watt Publishing Co., Tel: +1.815.734.5674, ngrossnickle@wattnet.net, www.petfoodindustry.com.

Petfood Focus on Safety, April 16-17, 2008, Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Contact: Nancy Grossnickle, Watt Publishing Co., Tel: +1.815.734.5674, ngrossnickle@wattnet.net, www.petfoodindustry.com.

Alltech's International Feed Industry Symposium, April 20-23, 2008, Lexington, Kentucky, USA. Contact: Alltech, symposium@alltech.com, www.alltech.com.

The 4th International ZooVet-Expo, April 22-24, 2008, International Exhibition Center, 15 Brovarskyi Ave., Kyiv, Ukraine. Tel: +38.044.258.2732, info@troyan.kiev.ua, www.troyan.kiev.ua/en/exhibition/zoovet.

June

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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

International Forum for Transmissible Animal Diseases and Food Safety (TAFS) Conference, June 4-6, 2008, San Antonio, Texas, USA. Contact: TAFS Scientific Secretariat, Dr. Ulrich Sperling, Tel: +41.31.631.2931, Fax: +41.31.631.2932, contact@tafsforum.org, www.tafsforum.org.

AFIA Feed Industry Institute, June 16-19, 2008, Crowne Plaza Chicago O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois, USA. Contact: Judy Pilgrim, Tel: +1.703.524.0810, afia@afia.org, www.afia.org.

IFT Annual Meeting and Food Expo, June 26-30, 2008, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. Contact: Institute of Food Technologists, Tel: +1.312.782.8424, Fax: +1.312.782.0045, info@ift.org, www.ift.org.

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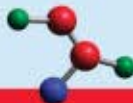
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« Hypoallergenic treats for dogs

Aunt Jeni's Home Made offers Dogitos dehydrated natural dog treats in three varieties: Beef, Lamb and Goat. The crispy chip-like pieces are hypoallergenic, holistic and organic, according to the company. Aunt Jeni's also claims the treats contain no preservatives, yeast, soy, salt, sugar or grains. www.auntjeni.com

Special blend for dogs with cancer »

Birkdale Medicinals has developed a non-grain pet mix formula to provide maximum nutrition to dogs, especially those with cancer, according to the company. Included in the ingredients are herbal supplements intended to prevent cancer and augment traditional treatment. No preservatives, grains or chemical additives exist in this mix, which promotes easier digestion in dogs, according to Birkdale. www.dogcancerinfo.com



« Canine treats, human-grade ingredients

Blue Dog Bakery's Live Well Super Premium Dog Treats contain a full amount of antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids to help ensure health in dogs, according to the company. The ingredient list includes healthy items such as various fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates, eggs and peanuts, as well as flax seeds to offer good health for skin and coat. Blue Dog makes its dog cookies with high-quality human-grade baking ingredients, free of preservatives, additives and artificial flavors. www.bluedogbakery.com



New stew »

Mulligan Stew has added new flavors to its line of petfood for cats and dogs. Cats now have the option of Salmon, Trout, Turkey and Snake River Stew. New flavors for dogs include Duck and Jackson Hole Stew. According to the company, the Mulligan Stew formula offers various health benefits for cats and dogs such as cellular nutrition and tissue detoxification. www.mulliganstewpetfood.com



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Jan Hall, *Logistics Coordinator*

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Freshpet™

With the goal of revolutionizing the way dogs are fed, Freshpet sinks its teeth into a US market ready for something innovative

BY JESSICA TAYLOR BOND



Freshpet trendsetters—Cathal Walsh, John Phelps (with B.E.) and Scott Morris—are radically changing the way we think about petfood.

A fresh idea

Business basics

Headquarters: Secaucus, New Jersey, USA

Key staff: Dick Kassar, CEO; Cathal Walsh, COO, founder; Scott Morris, VP of marketing, founder; John Phelps, VP of R&D, founder; Mike Larney, sales; Sam Noto, sales; Vir Narula, production and logistics; Steve Macchiaverna, VP, controller

Business growth: 2006 finished in 200 stores; 2007 finished in over 2,000 stores—store count expected to more than double again this year

Brands: Freshpet Select slice & serve rolls, Freshpet Select Fresh Bites; Deli Fresh slice & serve rolls, Deli Fresh Fresh Bites

Facilities: Manufacturing plant in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, USA

Distribution: US and Canada

Employees: 50+

Websites: www.freshpet.com, www.freshpetsselect.com, www.delifreshpet.com

The initial scheme for Freshpet came about when Cathal Walsh, COO and co-founder, and John Phelps, VP of R&D and co-founder, both worked for a major petfood manufacturer in Australia. “In Australia the fresh market is 22% of the petfood market,” according to Walsh, “so it’s large, successful and growing. The US market is one of the most advanced markets in the world and consumers were absolutely primed for it. All the trends pointed toward fresh food.”

So, with the goal of revolutionizing the way dogs were being fed, a group of veterinarians, scientists and nutritionists—including Pennsylvania State University’s department of food science—created a human-quality dog food made of meat, vegetables, rice and little else. Or as Walsh puts it, “What

consumers wanted in human food wasn’t getting paralleled in petfood, so we took that opportunity and launched it here.”

Keeping it simple

Nutritionally, Freshpet products, which are currently available in slice & serve rolls and Fresh Bites, are very different from typical wet/canned and dry petfoods. “We process our food a lot less than canned or dry petfoods,” says Walsh. “They are both highly processed foods, that’s what gives them their two year shelf life.” As for Freshpet Select and Deli Fresh, Freshpet’s two brands of dog food, they obviously have a shorter shelf life—13 weeks from date of manufacture to declared packaging, to be exact—since they are preservative free and refrigerated. When consumers call up and ask how

to handle the food, they are simply told to handle it the same way they would their own meat or milk. Once the product is brought home it should be kept in the refrigerator and, once opened, used within a week.

“We use the process of pasteurization and we keep our ingredient statement very simple. It is what you see,” explains Walsh. “It’s chicken, vegetables and rice.” And he isn’t kidding. In a 6 pound package of Freshpet Select slice & serve Adult Chicken, Vegetable & Rice Dinner there are:

- 2½ pounds of chicken;
- 12 ounces of liver;
- 6 eggs;
- 11 ounces of vegetables and brown rice;
- Vitamins; and
- Minerals.

And that’s it.

“Everybody talks about the humanization of pets,” says Scott Morris, VP of marketing and co-founder. “Think about your child for a minute. Would you feel good about giving them a bowl of chicken-flavored cereal and going, ‘Here you go!’?” And as Walsh points out, feeding them that chicken cereal everyday, for virtually their entire lifespan.

“Petfood’s been stuck in extrusion and

retort,” continues Morris. “It’s not because manufacturers couldn’t dream up a better food—it’s because it’s hard. What we did was hard and painful and expensive. There’s been a lot of learning.”

“We’d like to think that if you could start from scratch all over again, with no extruders or canneries, and devel-

Pasteurization just gets that right balance between bioavailability and having a safe food to feed.

op the perfect dog food that was safe to use—a combination of fresh meat, vegetables and some rice is what you’d end up with,” finishes Walsh.

Not raw, not overprocessed

Walsh and Morris are quick to point out that the process of pasteurization is what really sets Freshpet apart from other petfood products in the US market. “What we do is get that balance between pasteurizing it to ensure that it is always safe and high quality, but at the same time not overprocess it so it loses its nutritional value,” Walsh explains. “Pasteurization just gets that right balance between bioavailability and having a safe food to feed that doesn’t rely on consumers handling raw products correctly.”

After last year’s recalls, consumers were hungry for alternatives that were safe and healthy for their animals.

Morris puts it this way, “I think after the petfood recalls, it caused a lot of consumers and retailers to look harder at the products that were in their stores. I think people are a little bit more cautious, a little bit more concerned, and I think consumers probably spend more time looking at ingredient statements.”

Freshpet has seen no cases of bacterial contamination and was unaffected by the recalls, another reason why they attest pasteurizing their products is so important. “We know that the raw food guys have had some problems,” Walsh says. “Certainly, we’ve seen a few reports and we’ve seen the FDA issue two statements saying that raw food may not be safe.” Essentially, according to Walsh, pasteurization removes the bacteria that has plagued the raw food category.

“If you think about very processed here and raw here, we’re kind of in the middle,” says Morris. “It’s a good kind of medium; a safe approach to feeding that’s more natural, but slightly processed to make it safe.”

Riding the wave

For a period after the recalls, a significant spike in natural, organic and holistic petfoods occurred. “We believe there’s an acceleration of certain types of foods,” says Morris. “They were growing anyway and they’ll continue to grow, but they got a little bit of hyper speed for awhile. But I don’t think it’s this radical, overnight change and people are going to completely abandon what they’ve been doing.” That’s why Freshpet is working hard to differentiate itself in the market, virtually creating the fresh category in the US and Canada.

“It’s this massive change and it takes time because everything has to be rethought,” says Morris. “People have to rethink the approach to everything—the supply chain, manufactur-



Available in slice & serve rolls or Fresh Bites, the Freshpet line includes 11 different formulations, including food for both puppies and adult dogs.

Online extra!

To hear engaging audio from the Freshpet interview, visit www.petfoodindustry.com/Freshpet.aspx.

ing, putting fridges in aisles.”

“Just the sheer operation of it,” continues Walsh. “It’s not like we’re putting another 8 pound bag of dog food on the shelf here—we’re installing a refrigerator. We figured it out, though, and we got it done. It’s working very well.”

Their diligent work is already paying

off, with sales up over 12 times this time last year and more than 17% share of wet dog food where Freshpet is currently distributed. A little over a year ago Freshpet products were in 200 stores. This year they just passed the 2,000 mark with distribution in both independent, specialty stores and mass/grocery

If you think about very processed here, and raw here, we’re kind of in the middle.

channels where they’re expanding with eight out of the top 10 pet retailers in the US like Wal-Mart, PetSmart and Petco.

Acceleration of innovation

“Food really hasn’t matched the development of the rest of the pet category,” states Walsh, when asked about the state of the industry and where he sees it heading. “The gamut of services for pets has moved on and met the humanization trend. Petfood has not, until now.”

“It has been a paradigm shift,” Morris explains. “We’re changing the buying dynamics of consumers. When they’re buying fresh food they’re not buying a 40 pound bag and coming back weeks and weeks later. So they change their shopping frequency. We’re changing how they store it, where they keep the food, how they serve it and cut it up.”

Freshpet plans on launching a new treat in the upcoming year and is developing a whole series of products that the founders hope will widen the appeal of fresh food with consumers. Increased distribution is another place Morris and Walsh see big growth opportunities.

With their recent triumphs, the founders try and stay organized, keep their priorities clear and get things done to keep Freshpet moving in the direction they originally set for it. “We are growing at an accelerated rate,” Walsh says. “Sometimes when you get that level of success and things are growing fast, you have to keep a clear vision and philosophy on what it is we’re trying to do as a company. You can’t compromise or let up.”

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Rising from the recall wreckage

A mysterious toxin is forcing changes in every facet of our industry

BY TIM PHILLIPS, DVM

A year ago, a baffling toxin wreaked havoc on the petfood industry—especially in North America. Millions of petfood packages were recalled and over 100 brands were affected. The toxin, spawned by mixing melamine and cyanuric acid, forced changes in every

facet of our industry: QA, supplier relationships, customer service, regulatory affairs and more. The ramifications will be with us forever.

Enormous scope

The US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) reporting system

was completely overwhelmed by the petfood recalls. The agency received 18,000 complaints about petfood contamination from March 16 to May 31, 2007—15 times more than the usual volume. During the same period, FDA's petfood recall page received more than 6.1 million hits. In addition, most petfood companies, whether affected or not, had to drastically expand their customer service staffs.

Reactions from your customers

Pet owners were confused. They were panicking. They were sad and grieving. They were angry and looking for answers. They felt deceived and became distrustful. Here are some of the four ways they reacted:

1. Customers developed intense interest in product quality and safety.
2. They shifted away from affected brands.
3. They avoided affected product types (i.e. wet to dry).
4. They shifted to alternative foods, such as natural and organic, made in the USA, home prepared and locally grown.



Yes, in general, petfood sales did take a temporary hit—see Figures 1 and 2—but bounced back amazingly well.

Purchasing progress

Since the recalls, most petfood companies are improving their purchasing procedures. Raw material prices have become secondary to safety. Manufacturers are giving preference to domestic suppliers. When possible, they are discontinuing purchasing off-shore ingredients. They are increasing quality assurance staffing.

Many petfood manufacturers are reevaluating and strengthening supplier relationships. They are increasing vendor inspections and adding more formalized approval procedures. Companies with enough resources have their people on the ground watching to see that suppliers are doing what they say they are doing. Manufacturers are inspecting ingredients to the point of origin. Many are doing mock recalls to test their traceability effectiveness.

Third party certification—HACCP, organic certification, ISO 9001, AIB and other programs—are more popular than ever. Also, some in the industry are exploring adverse event reporting systems and preferred vendor programs.

FDA's trial by fire

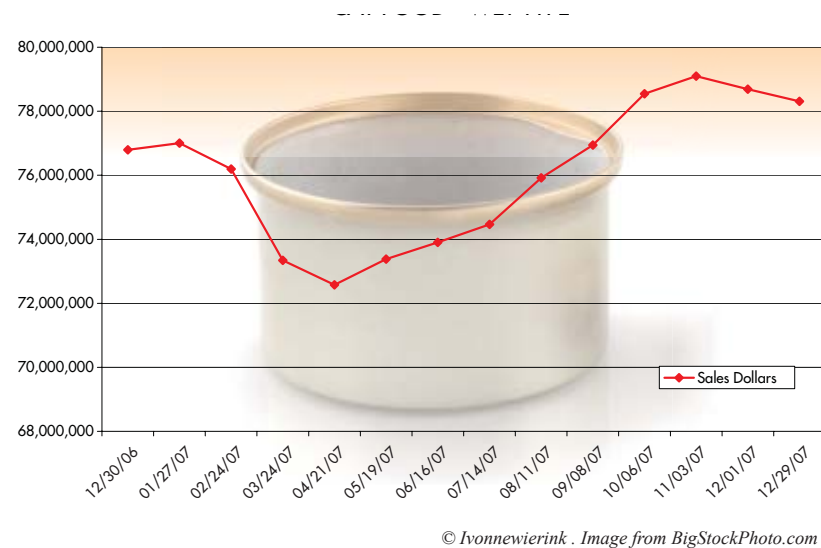
It was trial by fire for the FDA, which was faced with numerous, unique challenges. Here are some of the lessons FDA learned:

- Imports are a significant part of the US food chain. About 15% of the US food supply is imported. FDA-regulated product imports doubled in five years.
- It's important to have a more effective food safety protection system.
- Two suppliers in China shipped melamine contaminated products. The result: 1,100 entries on a spreadsheet of recalled petfood products.

Figure 2. Wet cat food sales

Total US food, drug, mass merchandiser stores (excluding Wal-Mart), US\$.

Source: The Nielsen Co.



© Ivonneierink . Image from BigStockPhoto.com

- Many people expect the same degree of oversight and safety for petfood as for human food.
- The FDA approach must rely on scientific analysis.
- Information from petfood companies aided in analysis.
- It was important for FDA to partner with the media to get the word out as quickly and completely as possible.
- A dialogue is needed between FDA and state health officials and other stakeholders.

The FDA Amendments Act of 2007 places new burdens on FDA to improve

detection of contamination incidents, recall processes and communication. It established a “reportable food registry” for manufacturers. New regulations for ingredient standards, processing and nutritional labeling of petfoods are in the works. More laws for imports and recall authority may also be coming.

Positive outcomes

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) was on the frontlines of the recalls in many ways. In no time, its phones were ringing off the hook and e-mails were coming in by the hundreds. The public and the press were calling AVMA demanding answers.

Looking for some good that came out of the massive recall tragedy, AVMA points to several positive outcomes:

- Increased communication with industry, and industry recognition of the role of veterinarians in animal-related issues.
- Increased communication with the government and governmental acknowledgment of the role of veterinarians in animal-related issues.

Lessons worth learning

- Constantly work on improving relationships with your suppliers.
- Establish a traceability system that will allow you to take appropriate action quickly.
- Audit throughout your supply chain.
- Establish recall communication plans beforehand.

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- Increased cooperation and communication with specialty groups, such as the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, the American College of Veterinary Nutritionists and the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.
- Federal legislation to improve petfood safety and speed recognition of problems.
- Increased industry recognition of the power of the human-animal bond.
- Industry-developed recommendations for increased communication and cooperation.

Humanization pros and cons

The humanization of pets has been enormously positive for the petfood industry. However, there's another side to humanization, as we are seeing in the wake of numerous petfood recalls.

People, especially those who pay for higher-priced petfoods, often think of their pets as "furry kids." So if a pet dies from eating contaminated petfood, many owners tend to think they should be able to collect damages for pain and suffering. Most states in the US see

Many are doing mock recalls to test their traceability effectiveness.

things differently. They treat pets as personal property, just like cars and computers. But that could be changing. Lawsuits filed by owners of dogs and cats that may have died from eating contaminated petfood could press lawmakers and courts to upgrade pets' legal status.

How you respond to this industry-wide challenge will determine if and how you recover. Ancient Japanese wisdom asserts that every crisis carries two elements: danger and opportunity. No matter the difficulty of the circumstances, at the heart of each crisis lies a tremendous opportunity. Good fortune

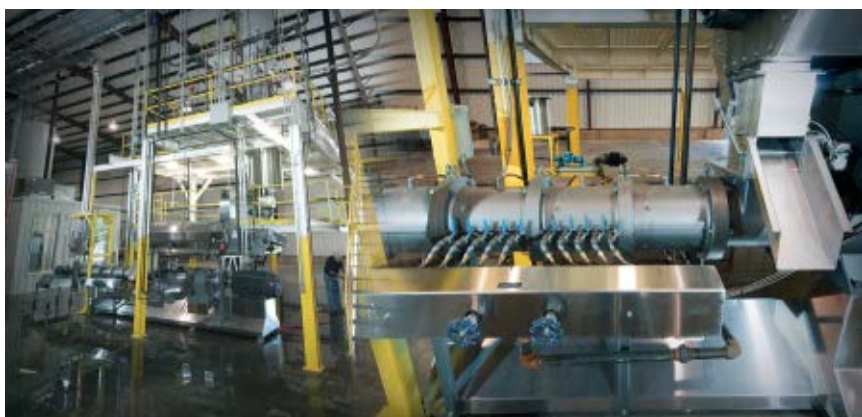
lies ahead for those who find the opportunity within each crisis.

Much more information

For links to several recall-related articles and news items, go to www.petfoodindustry.com/recall.aspx.



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The petfood market in China is very small; many retail outlets for petfood still reside in traditional markets. As the market grows, it will have an impact on ingredient and product quality. Photo: SourceMedia

Changes in China

Contamination fallout leads to more rules, inspections

BY WANG FANGQING

Since the 2007 melamine contamination scandal, Chinese regulators have upped their oversight, run a four-month-long food industry inspection sweep that covered petfood makers and signed a new export agreement with the US that requires Chinese petfood makers to register with the government.

In early 2007, two Chinese suppliers exported toxic material to petfood suppliers in the US, killing more than 300 dogs and cats.

The incident spurred a four-month food industry cleanup in China starting in August and including all petfood manufacturers and exporters. The sweep was initiated by Wu Yi, vice premier of the state council, and involved the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) and all its local officials.

“With the inspection, all govern-

ment approved products now will have to carry a quality mark,” said Li Changjiang, minister with AQSIQ. “We will also present a transparent food quality situation to the international society by issuing a Chinese white book every year.” The first white book, released last August, also covers the petfood industry in China.

New inspections

He Zhongyun, head of Beijing-based China Pet and Pet’s Development Service Center, told *Petfood Industry* that there are no specific regulations governing petfood in China, as the market is still very small.

“Most Chinese petfood manufacturers faced no quality checks within the country, as none of their products are sold on the local market,” He said.

However, on December 11, the governments of China and the US

There are no specific regulations governing petfood in China, as the market is still very small.

signed memorandums for the promotion of export and import in eight business areas, including petfood. Now Chinese food and material suppliers, including petfood makers and suppliers, will have to register with the local government, and the data will be shared with the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Chinese petfood market growing

Michael Wang of Shanghai Bestro Enterprises says the domestic demand for good petfood is growing slowly in China, and he believes this will gradually improve petfood quality.

"The number of knowledgeable high-end pet owners is growing, and they want to buy good quality petfood, rather than cheap feed or even human food," he said. "Currently, around 10% of all pets in China are eating petfood, though they are all foreign brands."

High-end petfood consumption has been rising in recent years. The imported quantity of petfood from the US in 2007 stood at 84 million kilograms, up 13% from 2006, according to China Customs.

By the end of 2009, there will be 2,100 supermarkets selling prepared petfood in China, as opposed to the current 1,500, according to the Nestlé Group, which owns Purina petfood.

He Zhongyun of Beijing-based China Pet and Pet's Development Service Center added that a small market and the high costs of branding have been stopping Chinese makers from developing high-quality petfood under their own brands.

According to He, there is a huge price gap between imported and locally produced petfood. "A 20 kilogram package of Chinese dog food made in Hebei province costs only around 170 yuan (US\$23.80) and is only available in the low-end markets, compared to imported ones such as Pro Plan, a Purina brand, which costs over 600 yuan (US\$84) for the same quantity," He said.



According to Nestlé, by the end of 2009 China will have 2,100 supermarkets selling prepared petfood. Currently only about 1,500 such outlets exist. Photo: SourceMedia

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“The products go through quality inspection twice,” said Lin Xuan-chun, head of production with Xuzhou WeiLong Food Co. Ltd., a petfood maker located in Jiangsu province. “The Chinese government conducts an inspection prior to shipping, and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducts the second one at arrival.”

WeiLong produces dry foods for dogs and cats and ships about 19 tons to the US every month, Lin said, adding that all of Weilong's products follow a strict quality control process and have a 100% pass rate with inspections.

According to He, since the 2007 incidents a strong quality control sense has gripped the management of 166 registered Chinese petfood exporters.

Supplier evaluations

Michael Wang, export manager with Shanghai Bestro Enterprises Inc., a privately owned petfood manufacturer, said the company has its own evaluation system to supervise the suppliers. Bestro makes chews and pet snacks that are exported to the US and Europe, with annual sales of about US\$20 million, according to Wang.

“We have many suppliers and the evaluation system helps us keep the good ones,” he said. “All suppliers are required to send us a copy of upgraded licenses, including the business license and the food sanitation license.” The company also does sampling inspection at its laboratory and sends a lot of material for testing to the US.

“After the incident last March, it takes longer for the FDA inspection, but no matter how strict the process is, our pass rate is 100%,” Wang added. ●

Wang Fangqing is a business writer with Trombly Ltd. (www.tromblytd.com), a Shanghai-based freelance news bureau.

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cesses. You can start by refining your HACCP or GMP plans, reviewing and tightening product security programs and reviewing the quality of suppliers (see Figure 1, p. 34). To keep track of incoming ingredients, construct an ingredient tracking sheet that includes:

- ▶ Date of ingredient receipt;
- ▶ Bill of lading number;
- ▶ Ingredient name (common and scientific);
- ▶ Quantity received; and
- ▶ Manufacturer lot number or date

Traceability as an innovation clearly results from the globalization of food.

code.

Strengthening relationships with suppliers, establishing documentation and systems to detect outliers, auditing throughout the supply chains, always tracing backward and forward, and establishing communication plans will all be instrumental in assuring quality.

Traceability technology

According to Julie Lenzer Kirk of Interstates Cos., there is already a wide range of traceability systems in place today, from manually recorded information in paper-based systems to data gathered electronically through IT enabled systems. Handwritten or printed labels are being replaced or supplemented by more effective systems that use machine-readable identification (e.g., bar codes and radio frequency ID tags).

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uct and place the image in a database of products, organized by date and lot code, barcode or any other criterion the user chooses. According to the company, Q-Spec automatically compares all the printed copy, as well as reads barcodes, including the two-dimensional data matrix, allowing products to be searched and sorted with a minimum of manual input.

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A chain with many links

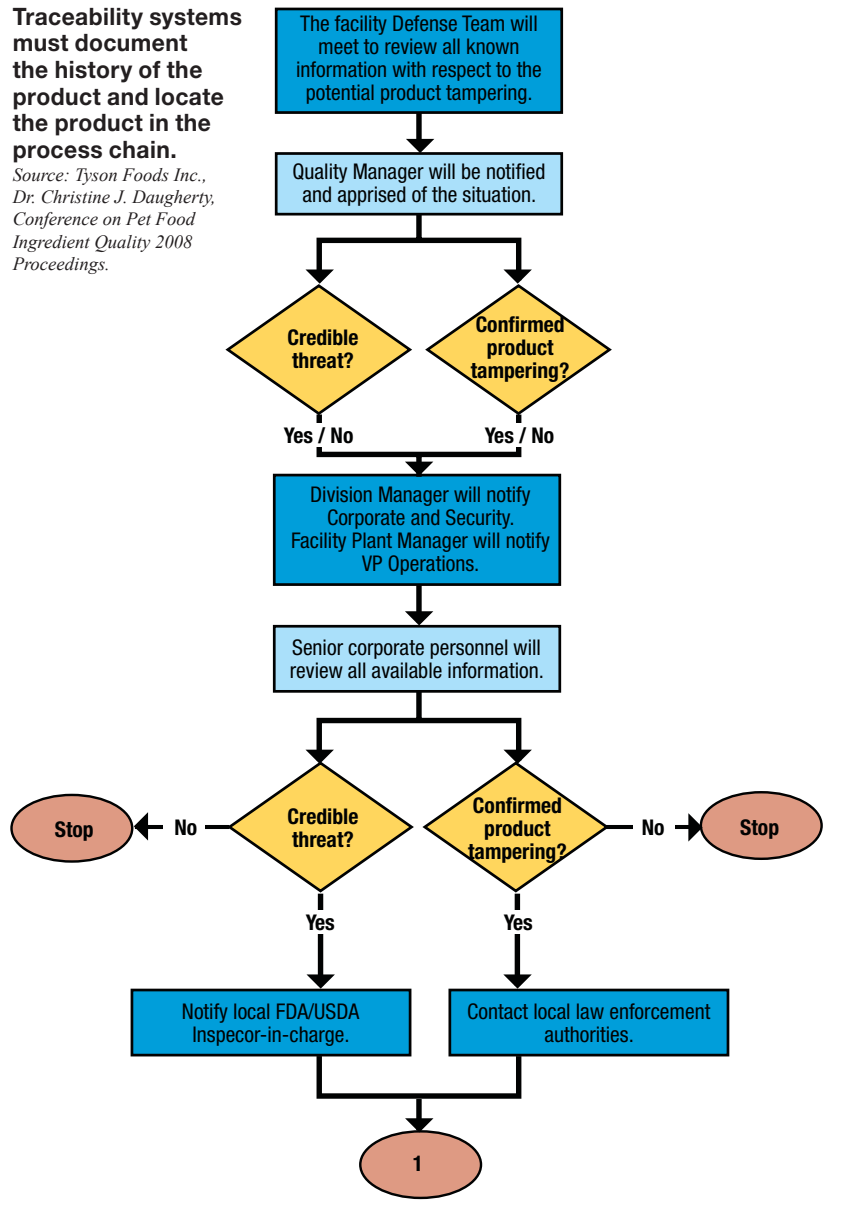
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Traceability offers the promise that the consumer can know the full story—the places, people, processes and practices—of items raised and routed all over the world to end up in their pet's mouth.

Figure 1: Crisis management flow chart

Traceability systems must document the history of the product and locate the product in the process chain.

Source: Tyson Foods Inc., Dr. Christine J. Daugherty, Conference on Pet Food Ingredient Quality 2008 Proceedings.



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Whole new way to feed



Mars' WholeMeals might just start a brand new petfood category

BY DEBBIE PHILLIPS-DONALDSON

Innovation and product development have fueled industry growth for several years now, to the point that you might think we've seen it all in terms of truly new petfood products. Conventional wisdom also says that much of this innovation happens in smaller companies.

With the launch of its WholeMeals line of dog food (www.wholemeals.com) in US pet specialty stores, Mars Inc. is challenging both assumptions.

How dogs want to eat

Tiffany Bierer, PhD, director of health sciences and nutrition for Mars Petcare US, describes the new product as revolutionary. "We're trying to give something more in tune with a dog's natural feeding behaviors—something that gives dogs a lot more enjoyment

but is also much healthier for them."

Bierer adds that the traditional way of feeding dogs—giving kibble in a bowl—may not be the way they want to eat. "We've done a lot of work with behaviorists. At the Center for Nonverbal Studies in Spokane, Washington, USA, they study body movements, facial movements and what those really mean. They helped us compare how dogs eat regular dry kibble vs. WholeMeals," she says.

Measuring 30 body language cues on videotapes of the dogs eating, the studies showed a drastic difference, Bierer says. "When you feed dry food, normally the dog doesn't look up, it will just lean over and inhale a big bowl of food and that's it. There's not much interaction with the food.

"With WholeMeals, you see dogs

pick it up," she continues. "They carry it around, they can decide where they eat, they can decide how fast they eat. It amazes me every time I watch dogs play with the product. They toss it in the air, they play around with it, they show it off to their family." Mars says the mean feeding time with WholeMeals is 300-400% longer than that with kibble.

Complete and balanced

Though WholeMeals is shaped like a treat or chew, it's designed to be a complete and balanced premium diet. Besides high-quality protein, Mars says, the product has natural glucosamine and chondroitin to support joint health, omega-6 fatty acids for coat and skin health and antioxidants (vitamins E and C) to boost the immune system.

WholeMeals comes in four sizes—for toy, small, medium or large dogs—and 24 pieces to a bag, providing six or more days' worth of food depending on the size. For example, a large dog would need to eat two of the large WholeMeals a day if that's the only food provided. The retail price ranges from US\$9.99 a bag for the toy size to US\$24.99 for the large. (A trial bag for each size is also available.)

The packaging and promotional materials explain the number of Whole-



Mars' new WholeMeals looks like a treat or chew but is designed to be a complete and balanced dog diet.

Meals to feed. “Our feeding guidelines tell exactly what the equivalency is: This WholeMeals equals this much dry food equals this much canned food,” Bierer says. “We’re trying to drive home the point that this is meant to be fed in place of a dog’s normal food. One of the nice things, too, is because it prolongs the eating experience, it makes the dog chew a lot more and get more satisfaction vs. inhaling a bunch of food and still being hungry.”

For those pearly whites

Bierer says the product also provides dental benefits. “We based the four sizes on some biometric work looking at bite force (how hard dogs can bite down) and how much they can open their mouths. We’ve designed the product to make sure it can fit back in the dogs’ mouths, so for example, the toy size is specifically for toy dogs and their tiny little mouths.”

The product is designed to brush over a dog’s teeth as it chews. Mars has conducted oral care studies showing WholeMeals reduces plaque accumulation by 43% and tartar by 83%, compared with traditional dry dog food. “As a nutritionist, the big thing for me is gum health,” Bierer adds. “The product causes a significant reduction in gingivitis, too.” (See Figure 1.)

A real revolution?

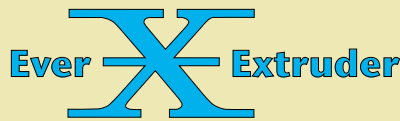
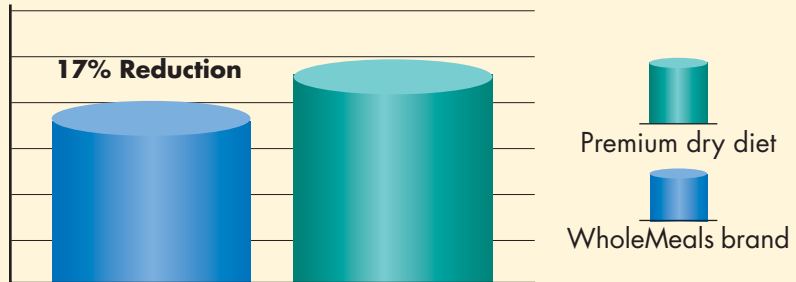
Bierer is a key member of a team—including experts at the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition in Melton Mowbray, UK—who have been developing WholeMeals since 2001. She says she’s excited to see it finally on the market. “It means the world to me to make something that not only makes a dog healthier, but also a lot happier. I hope it’s going to be a real revolution in the way people feed their dogs.” ●

Online extra!

Listen to a conversation with Tiffany Bierer of Mars, or read the complete interview about WholeMeals. Go to www.petfoodindustry.com/wholenewway.aspx.

Figure 1: WholeMeals’ effect on gingivitis

Dental studies conducted by Mars show a 17% reduction in gingivitis among dogs eating WholeMeals vs. those eating a premium dry diet.



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Petfood safety: US state legislatures chime in

In addition to new federal laws such as the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007, a number of state legislative bodies have reacted to last year's petfood recalls. They have introduced several new proposals, primarily concerned with recovery of damages by persons whose pets are injured by adulterated petfoods. A few of the proposals add new responsibilities for petfood companies in terms of manufacturing or labeling requirements.

Legal damages for pet loss

Historically, the courts have treated pets similarly to farm animals: as legal property. Hence, recovery of damages from loss or injury to an animal has mostly been limited to the animal's market value—purchase price or replacement cost—and, in some cases, other measurable costs, such as veterinary care, training and breeding costs or loss of breeding, performance or other income. This is usually straightforward in the case of livestock, where economic losses can be more easily calculated.

Loss of a dog or cat, however, generally has relatively little direct economic effect. Even a valuable show dog doesn't come close in monetary value to a dairy bull with good genes or a prize-winning Thoroughbred racehorse. As a result, lawsuits related to loss of a pet usually have not been associated with sizable awards.

However, the legal paradigm appears to be shifting. As our society increasingly recognizes pets as part of

The legal paradigm relating to pet loss appears to be shifting.

— David Dzanis



the family and more than mere property, more lawsuits related to pet loss have sought non-economic damages (infliction of emotional distress, loss of companionship) and/or punitive damages (to punish the wrongdoer as well as deter others). As one would surmise, these types of damages generally exceed by manifold typical economic damages for pet loss or injury.

Non-economic/punitive damages

Lawsuits seeking awards beyond economic damages have been facilitated in recent years by a number of states that have enacted or proposed laws allowing for non-economic or punitive damages stemming from loss of or injury to pets. Most are directed toward intentional or negligent acts of individuals or businesses such as veterinary offices. Depending on the statutory language, however, at least some of these laws could also apply to manufacturers or distributors of petfood. The authorized limit of the non-economic/punitive award varies with each state, ranging from US\$1,000 to as much as US\$500,000.

In apparent response to the 2007 recalls, some of the recently proposed state laws are expressly directed to-

ward damages caused by consumption of petfood. For example, New Jersey Assembly Bill 1965 allows for civil damages when a pet becomes ill or dies from adulterated food. In addition to economic damages, including vet-

Historically, the courts have treated pets similarly to farm animals: as legal property.

erinary care and burial fees, the New Jersey bill authorizes recovery for loss of companionship up to US\$15,000.

Washington State Senate Bill 6258 doesn't expressly allow for non-economic damages but does authorize treble damages for unspecified losses stemming from the knowing manufacture or sale of adulterated

petfood. This would be considered a deceptive act and violation of Washington's consumer protection act, and the treble damages a form of punitive award.

Other proposed state laws

In addition to the bill regarding damage awards, New Jersey has proposed a bill entitled the Pet Food Safety Act (Assembly Bill 1915). This would require manufacturers to certify to the state that petfoods do not contain "harmful byproducts or chemicals" prior to distribution in that state. Other quality standards may be put in place as well. Besides possible state action, the law would allow any aggrieved person to bring a civil action against a company that violated these provisions.

Hawaii House Bill 2529, which affects human foods as well as petfoods, authorizes the state to require action by companies that manufacture, import, distribute or sell a product that may pose a significant health risk. This could include mandatory recall of affected product. Penalties for violation of these provisions could be as high as US\$10,000 per day per act.

California to require inspections?

California Senate Bill 1773 requires inspection of an in-state petfood manufacturing facility to ensure proper equipment and sanitary operation prior to registration. With an out-of-state manufacturer, the registration is contingent on certification by a federal, state or local health agency that the petfood conforms to California requirements.

The bill would also require the label to bear the brand owner's telephone number and the petfood's country of origin (presumably even for do-

mestically produced products). While some petfood labels already bear this information, many others would have to be revised for the products to be distributed in California.

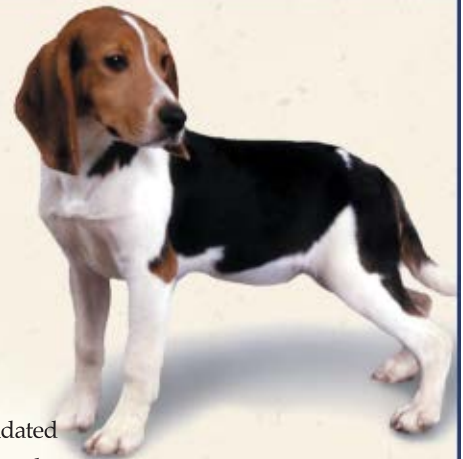
It must be remembered that as of this writing, these bills are not currently law but rather in various stages of deliberation within the respective state legislature. They may be subject to change or even dropped from consideration in the future. However,

it behooves you to keep apprised of these matters as they develop. ●

Dr. Dzanis is a writer and independent consultant for the petfood and animal feed industries on veterinary nutrition, labeling and regulation. He can be reached at Tel: +1.661.251.3543, Fax: +1.661.251.3203, E-mail: dzanis@aol.com.

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Does MOS work for petfoods?

Mannan oligosaccharide—also called mannans or, more commonly, MOS—is a naturally occurring component of yeast cell walls. MOS has been researched extensively for use in livestock nutrition and more recently for humans and pets, mainly in Europe and Asia. While most of the nutrition-related discovery has occurred in the past few years, references on mannans appear in literature dating back a half century.

Despite being investigated for a long time, MOS hasn't become mainstream. Does it have the potential to do so?

What is MOS?

MOS is a sugar. It is an oligo (many) saccharide (sugar) containing the monosaccharides glucose and mannose. MOS is harvested from yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) in which the cell contents have been removed for other purposes, such as dough conditioning. The remaining cell wall fraction may be further processed, then dried and ground for packaging. The result is typically a light brown to tan powder with a yeasty aroma.

From a review by Swanson & Fahey (2004) in which MOS from five different suppliers was analyzed, its composition

It may support gut health, but is it essential for healthy dogs and cats?

— Greg Aldrich



averaged 6.5% moisture, 38.4% protein, 7.8% fat, 8.3% ash and 33% total dietary fiber. A breakdown of the sugar composition was 260 mg/g glucose and 102 mg/g mannose. While most are familiar with glucose, mannose is less commonly encountered. Yet, the single hydroxyl (-OH) difference between mannose and its isomer glucose is all important as it relates to functionality.

Structurally, MOS has some similarity to starch with its chains and branches: It is composed of short glucose chains of alpha 1,2 and alpha 1,3 glycosidic linkages and long glucose chains of alpha 1,6 glycosidic linkages with alpha 1,2 and alpha 1,3 linked branches.

How does MOS work?

Because of special properties of mannose, MOS has been reported to interfere

with pathogen (e.g., *Salmonella*, *E.coli*) colonization of the intestines by filling the binding sites, or adhesions, that bacteria use to anchor themselves to the gut wall. There are also indications that MOS can directly alter intestinal morphology—for example, increasing *villus* crypt depth, which is an indicator of intestinal health.

MOS has also been reported to stimulate immunoglobulin (IgA, IgG and gut associated lymphoid tissue) production. Finally, research in mice and rats suggests MOS imparts some protection against mutagenesis.

For these reasons, MOS has been promoted as an alternative to sub-therapeutic growth-promoting antibiotics in livestock. This means animals held in high-density stocking environments in which disease transmission is a common issue. An ar-



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gument as to whether this is relevant for our house pets has not been forthcoming, although the gastrointestinal health and immune support might help companion animals that are compromised in some way or group housed in stressful environments like a kennel or shelter.

But does it work for pets?

MOS may benefit dogs, but the jury is still out on cats. That is because most of the published literature is on dogs. Research results among the various labs are mixed, possibly because of the wide range of doses: 0.2% to 6% of the dog's daily diet has been evaluated. The most common dose in which treatment affects were noted was 0.5% to 1% of the diet (in a dry kibble or tablet delivery).

Similar to results with other species,

charides, like fructo oligosaccharide, that enhance these functions.

MOS appears to survive the extrusion process and would likely be viable in a canned food—though no such information has appeared in the literature. No reports of adverse effects were noted in any of the dog studies, nor was there any mention whether MOS had an impact on palatability. However, given it is derived from yeast, it is likely to have a neutral to positive effect.

The challenges ahead ...

One of the big challenges facing the use of MOS in petfoods is communicating the benefit to consumers in terms that are meaningful but that don't overstep the structure-function hurdle that makes it a drug claim. Yet this is where the value of MOS is found: not in supplying a nutrient that maintains health but rather in creating a barrier to pathogenic bacterial colonization associated with enteric and systemic diseases.

Further, the ingredient is not defined

by the Association of American Feed Control Officials; it lacks the necessary chemical specificity and may never qualify for definition. Some have suggested that since MOS is derived from yeast, labeling it as such would suffice. Unfortunately, this is not entirely accurate and misses the mark in communicating its inclusion to the consumer.

MOS appears to have beneficial functions in the animal by acting as a barrier at the gut level. For pets, it may have the most potential in specialty or therapeutic diets when this type of support is required and when the opportunity to communicate these advantages is more viable. ●

Dr. Greg Aldrich is president of Pet Food & Ingredient Technology, Inc., which facilitates innovations in foods and ingredients for companion animals. Tel: +1.785.271.0238, E-mail: aldrich4@cox.net.

Despite being investigated for a long time, MOS hasn't become mainstream.

research with dogs indicates that MOS can alter microbial populations in the hind gut, shifting toward less pathogenic species, and stimulate several markers of immune health, such as increased IgA production. This work has also shown that MOS at reasonable doses does not behave similarly to other prebiotics, such as by affecting fermentation, digestibility or stool characteristics. Rather, MOS may work best in concert with oligosac-

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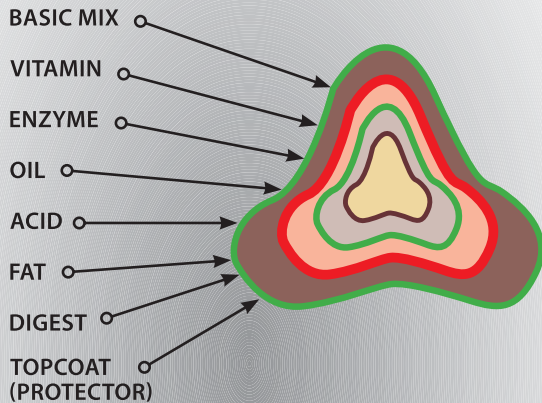
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Research Notes

Key Concepts

► Implementing research

(*J. Nutr.* 138: 646-650): The nutrition research community needs to consider those who actually make policies and implement programs.

► Fiber and diabetes

(*J. Nutr.* 138: 44-442.) Colonic fermentation of naturally available high fiber foods can also be mainly attributed to soluble DF.

Implementing research

Research and implementation often exist in separate worlds. To improve results, the nutrition research community needs to consider those who actually make policies and implement programs. Researchers must prioritize research with respect to effectiveness of policies and programs. They should incorporate knowledge and tools of social sciences, including economics, sociology, political science and management into their work. They should pay greater attention to environmental and institutional variables and understand strategies, knowledge utilization and policy processes.

Fundamentally, research on implementation should use a systematic approach to produce generalizable evidence and conceptual models, tools and methods that are communicated effectively to policy makers and programmers. Nutrition researchers need not expand far beyond their disciplinary comfort zone to do this, but they do need to build bridges with other fields to have greater success in addressing nutritional challenges.

Source: J.L. Garrett, 2008. *J. Nutr.* 138: 646-650

Fiber and diabetes

A high dietary fiber (DF) intake is emphasized in the recommendations of most diabetes and nutritional associations. It is accepted that viscous and gel-forming properties of soluble DF inhibit macronutrient absorption, reduce postprandial glucose response and beneficially influence certain blood lipids. Colonic fermentation of naturally available high fiber foods can also be mainly attributed to soluble DF, whereas no difference between soluble and insoluble DF consumption on the regulation of body weight has been observed.

Source: M.O. Weickert, et al 2008. *J. Nutr.* 138: 44-442.



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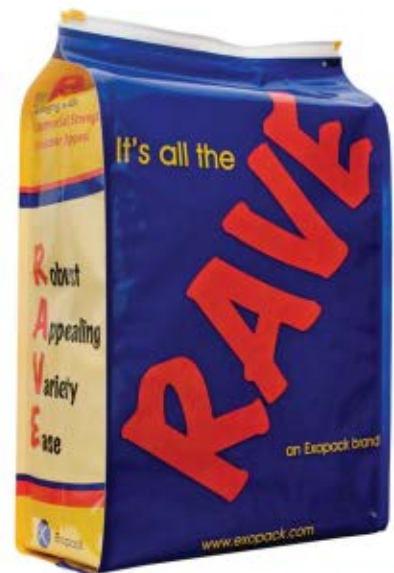
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Defining innovation

The ability to innovate is a necessity today, but just what is innovation? How do you measure it?

BusinessWeek magazine took a stab at it a couple years ago, sending a survey to the 1,500 largest global corporations (market capitalization in US dollars) and asking each company to distribute the survey to its top 10 executives in charge of innovation. Whatever that is—the information on methodology doesn't say if the survey defined what being “in charge of innovation” means. The survey included optional questions on “innovation metrics”—again, no explanation as to what those might be.

The result was “The World's 50 Most Innovative Companies.” *BusinessWeek* must feel confident about the list, because earlier this year it created an Innovation Index with Standard & Poor's, tracking the stock market performance of the 25 most innovative companies (see www.businessweek.com/innovate, upper right corner).

New products galore

In my mind this is all fairly subjective. But I think most people in our industry would agree that innovation—at least in the form of new product development—has been a primary force behind the strong growth we've seen in petfood for several years and that is projected for more years to come. That's why *Petfood Industry* started “New on the Shelves” (p. 14) in August 2006. More new retail products are posted on www.petfoodindustry.com.

Tell us what you think!

Send letters to the editor to editor@petfoodindustry.com or post your comments online at www.petfoodindustry.com

Innovation in new product development has been a force in our industry's growth.

— Debbie Phillips-Donaldson



If you peruse this page monthly or scroll through the consumer products online, you'll notice that much of the innovation has been with ingredients (kangaroo or ostrich, anyone?) or items like breed-specific dog foods. Many of the new offerings come from small to medium-size companies.

Then along comes giant Mars Inc. with its new WholeMeals line for dogs (p. 36), which promises to shake up the traditional petfood category lineup we're used to operating in and consumers are used to choosing from.

Of course, Mars has tons of resources to devote to new product development—the team behind WholeMeals has been working on it for nearly seven years—and to marketing. It launched the line at Global Pet Expo in San Diego, California, USA, in February.

Stumbling upon genius?

Just one aisle over from the huge Mars booth at the show, I happened to stumble on another concept I consider truly innovative, in this case in distribution. Buy the Pound (www.buythepoundinc.com), based in Massachusetts, USA, is a new company started by a former petfood distributor, Greg Mazur. He partnered with Ken Sears, the inventor of a dispensing machine originally developed for birdseed.

Mazur also worked with three nutritionists to develop a natural dry diet,

Nature's Mix Feline Fusion and Canine Fusion. The innovation comes in how the diet is mixed and dispensed.

Buy the Pound's model is to install a dispensing machine in pet stores that allows consumers, via a computer interface, to choose among eight protein sources—selecting one or varying percentages of several—and mix custom dry diets for their pets. For example, you could choose 50% chicken-based kibble, 30% salmon, 10% whitefish, 5% duck and 5% beef. The eight different kibbles are stored in bins within the machine, which dispenses the programmed blend in 1 pound increments.

To me, the genius of this method lies not only in the consumer being able to create a custom blend but also to choose a quantity. You can buy only 1 pound and see how your pet likes its taste and reacts to the protein source. And you can save up to 10 custom mixes in the machine's database, then retrieve one or more the next time you buy petfood.

Buy the Pound is starting a pilot program this month in PetSmart stores in Boston, Massachusetts, and Phoenix, Arizona, USA. We'll keep you posted on how it goes. ●

Phillips-Donaldson is editor-in-chief of Petfood Industry magazine. E-mail her at dphillips@wattnet.net.

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