Next Beam

Raw Safety: Mitigating the 20x FDA Recall Risk of Fresh Pet Food

2025 Is the Highest Number of Preventable Pet Food & Treat Recalls*

Salmonella | *Listeria monocytogenes* | *Escherichia coli* | Bird Flu or Foodborne Illness

*Based on data collected from the FDA (https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/recalls-withdrawals) since they began recording recalls in 2018.

Raw Pet Foods Are 20x More Likely To Be Recalled: What FDA Data Tells Us, and What Can Be Done

2025 Is the Highest Number of Preventable Pet Food & Treat Recalls, Ever

Article last updated: December 2025.

OUTLINE

Executive Summary

FDA recall databases for the pet food industry show that recalls for the presence of pathogens are far higher for raw foods - more than 20x as common as they are in non-raw pet foods.[1]

E-Beam technology is a well-proven "cold" process that can be used to deliver a reliable kill step for raw foods, preserving the essentially "raw" nature of the food while dramatically increasing its level of safety.

In the pet food market, E-Beam technology can be deployed as part of a best-of-breed manufacturing strategy as a kill step that will confidently prevent recalls.

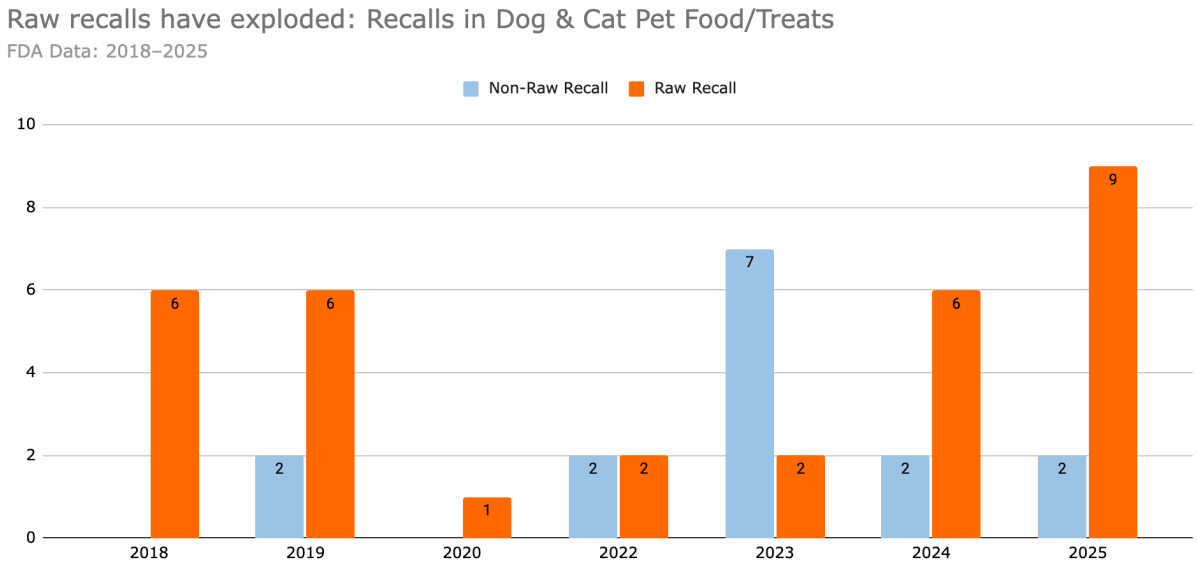
[1] NextBeam analysis: US raw pet foods < 10% of market (https://www.marketresearchfuture.com/reports/raw-pet-food-market-23005) by revenue with higher ASPs and 32/51 pathogen-related recalls from 2018-2025 are for raw pet foods

FDA Data: 2018 - Oct. 2025 U.S. Pet Food & Treat Recalls That Could Have Been Prevented with Proper Irradiation

The data below was compiled from two FDA sources[2]:

(1) Voluntary company recalls: https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/recalls-withdrawals

(2) FDA advisories: https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/news-events/outbreaks-and-advisories



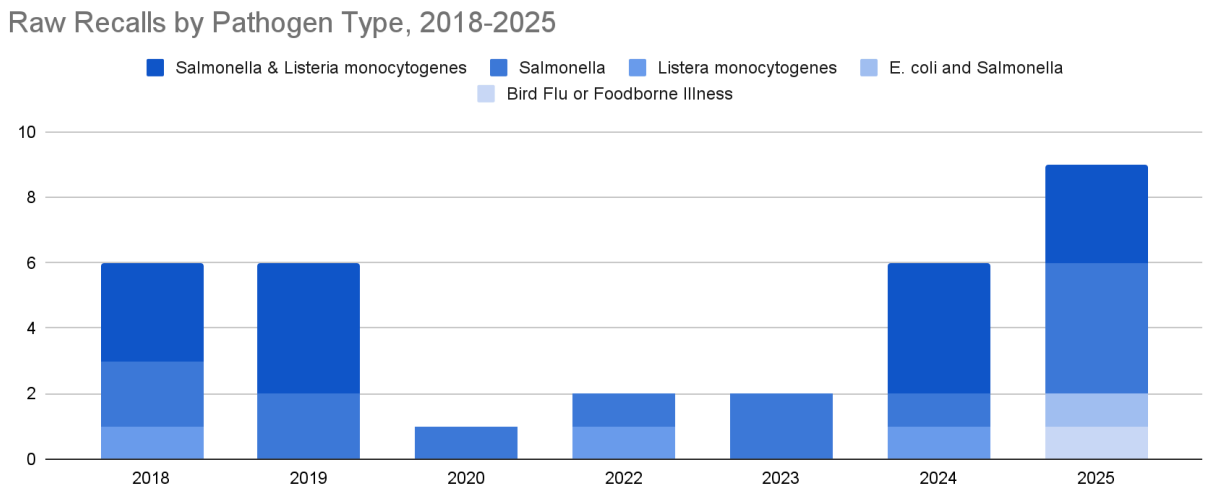
See table with full breakdown.

The FDA keeps an updated and extensive list of pet food and treat recalls and advisories as they occur. While some involve issues unrelated to microbial contamination (e.g. formulation errors, excess vitamin levels, etc.), a significant portion are tied to the presence of pathogens like *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* - especially in raw pet foods.

There have been 81 total pet food recalls and advisories recorded by the FDA from 2018 through October 27, 2025. Based on the information published, 51 of these were due to the presence of pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *Listeria*

[2] While the FDA maintains both public recall and advisory channels, the boundary between them is not always clear. In several recent cases involving a specific pet food vendor, the FDA stated that it had recommended a recall, but that the company had not publicly initiated one or provided documentation confirming full removal of the affected lots. This gap highlights a potential blind spot in the current system: contaminated products may remain in circulation even after the FDA issues warnings. The advisory process, while valuable, does not carry the same oversight or enforcement authority as a formal recall, which can limit its effectiveness in ensuring that unsafe products are completely withdrawn from the market.

monocytogenes, and others. Of these 51 recalls for pathogens, 64% (32) were recalls for raw diets. Recalls across all raw diets totaled 35.



The high proportion of raw diets subject to recall illustrates the challenging nature of making raw pet food products safe (i.e. despite being < 10%[3] of the market they are responsible for ~67% of recalls, making raw pet foods over 20x[4] as likely to be contaminated with pathogens as compared to non-raw pet foods).

Pathogen Type	Non-Raw	Raw	Total	Pathogens by % of total
Bird Flu or Foodborne Illness	1	1	2	4%
E. coli and *Salmonella*		1	1	2%
Listeria monocytogenes		3	3	6%
Salmonella	16	15	31	61%
Salmonella & *Listeria monocytogenes*		14	14	27%
Grand Total	**17**	**34**	**51**	**100%**

As usual, *Salmonella* dominates the pathogen-specific recalls in the dataset. But also of interest in the above table of recalls by pathogen is the wider variety of

[3]https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/86047/packaged-facts-more-pets-getting-a-raw-food-dea.html

[4]NextBeam analysis: US raw pet foods < 10% of market (https://www.marketresearchfuture.com/reports/raw-pet-food-market-23005) by revenue with higher ASPs and 34/51 pathogen-related recalls from 2018-2025 are for raw pet foods

pathogens (*Listeria* and *E. coli*) present in raw pet food recalls. A breadth of pathogens calls for a universal food safety kill step that can deal with a wide variety of pathogens. FDA's stance on raw pet foods is very clear: these raw products can present significantly more microbiological danger to pets and their owners/families.[5]

How E-Beam Can be Used to Prevent Recalls

Irradiation technology is well-understood and regulated by the FDA. Both FDA[6] and USDA[7] endorse the use of radiation processing for food safety applications. Additionally, FDA regards irradiation technology for medical device sterilization (a far more demanding application) with its highest level of recognized maturity.[8]

Irradiation technologies - of which E-Beam is a major growth modality - are highly relevant for the raw food segment, where thermal kill steps (e.g. pasteurization or cooking) are definitionally not possible.

E-Beam is a single post-packaging process that inactivates bacteria and viruses at the molecular level. The process is well-defined (E-Beam has been used for sterilization and bioreduction since the 1950s).[9]

[5]https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/get-facts-raw-pet-food-diets-can-be-dangerous-you-and-your-pet
[6]https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/food-irradiation-what-you-need-know
[7]https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/irradiation-and-food-safety-faq
[8]https://www.fda.gov/media/74445/download
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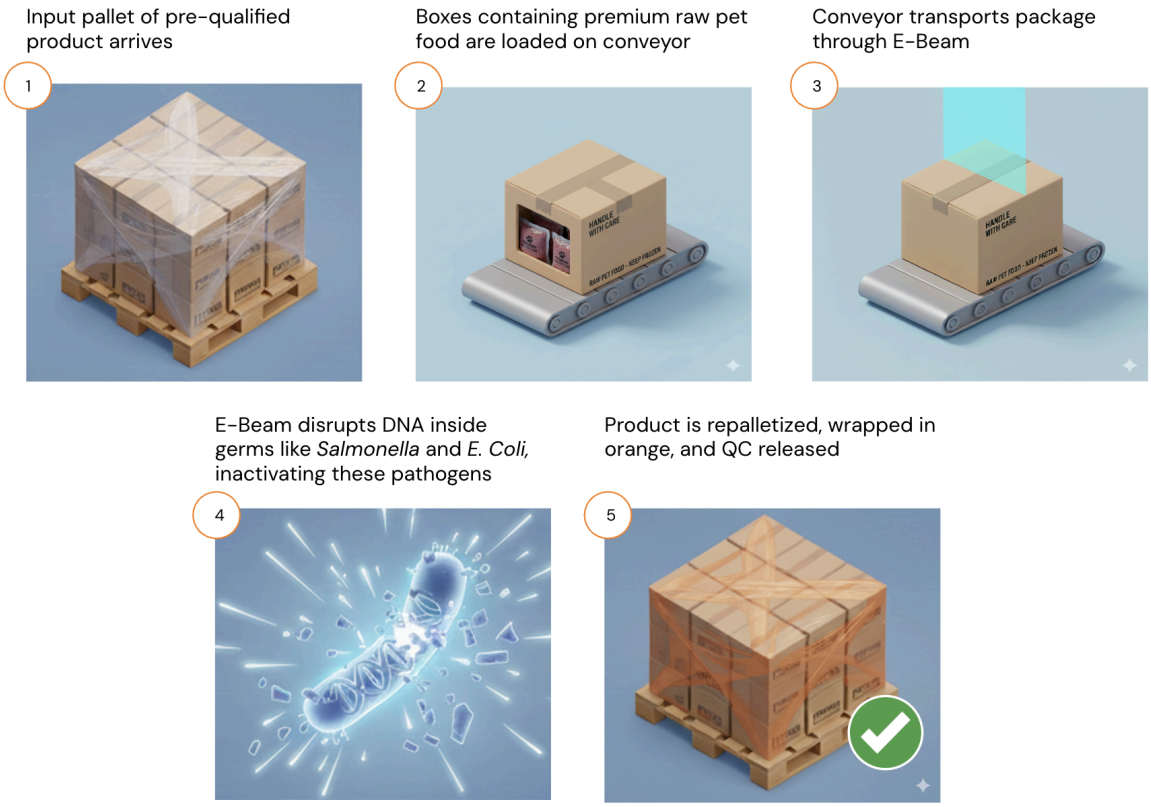


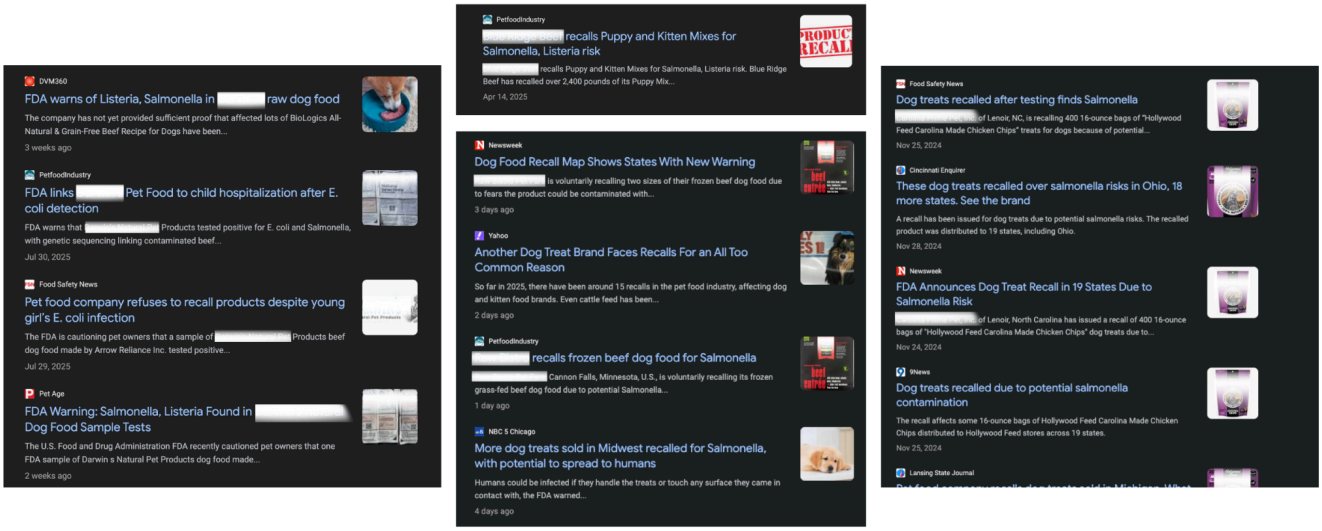
As can be seen in the above diagram, E-Beam's method of inactivation is to destroy the DNA/RNA of bacteria and viruses, rendering them incapable of reproduction. Fortunately, this mechanism presents little-to-no material change to the nutrition content of raw pet food, and it is effective for a variety of common foodborne pathogens:

- ***Salmonella* –** The leading cause of pet food recalls for more than a decade, *Salmonella* can survive in both raw and dry formulations and threatens pets and people alike.
- ***Listeria monocytogenes* –** This pathogen thrives in frozen or raw pet foods, where cold temperatures slow growth but do not eliminate it.
- ***Escherichia coli* (E. coli) –** *E. coli* can survive routine handling and spread rapidly through cross-contaminated ingredients or equipment. Even small amounts are capable of causing severe illness in pets and humans, making early prevention essential.

- **Avian Influenza (H5N1) and Other Viral Foodborne Illnesses –** Recent contamination events involving H5N1 in raw poultry cat foods have shown how easily viruses can enter the pet food supply.

Importantly, E-Beam can penetrate final sealed packaging, destroying pathogens inside of containers while leaving no residue. This key ability ensures there is no risk of downstream contamination, unlike many other kill steps that must happen in advance of final packaging.

The Cost of Recalls



"All press is good press" — unless it's related to food safety.

Every recall brings financial loss, supply chain disruption, and reputational damage. For brands built on health and transparency, the impact often extends far beyond the affected product's withdrawal.

The financial consequences of a pet food recall can be severe. Industry analyses estimate that the average direct cost of a food recall can be roughly $10 million (source: food-safety.com), covering removal, logistics, and public notifications. When legal fees, lost sales, and reputational harm are added, the total impact often multiplies several times over. Some pet food events have exceeded $40–50 million, such as the 2007 Menu Foods recall, which devastated the company's brand and ultimately forced its sale. For smaller manufacturers, even a single contamination incident can jeopardize long-term survival.

Consumer concern over food recalls is growing. According to the 2025 GS1 US Food Safety and Recall Survey, 93% of Americans are concerned about how frequently recalls occur, and 60% have avoided an entire food category after a recall. **59% say they hesitate to repurchase the same brand, particularly among younger consumers.**[10] These shifts in behavior show that each recall carries lasting reputational effects that extend well beyond logistics and cost.

E-Beam irradiation provides a proven and reliable way to prevent these outcomes. When integrated as a validated kill step after packaging, E-Beam processing ensures microbial stability for every lot of product that leaves a facility. The process is efficient, residue-free, and recognized by regulators worldwide for both human and animal food applications.

A Smarter Safety Model for the Future

Pathogen-related recalls are not inevitable. They result from microbial contamination during manufacturing that can be difficult to control - especially in the raw foods category. But with decades of recognized maturity and successful implementation in more challenging applications (e.g. medical device sterility), modern E-Beam technology is well-equipped to be added as a final, highly effective control step in manufacturing. And as the raw pet food market grows, with more brands adopting fresh or minimally processed formulas, the need for reliable microbial reduction is critical to ensure safe products are delivered across the industry.

E-Beam irradiation offers a scalable and sustainable solution. Irradiating premium raw food delivers food that stays safe, helps brands establish and maintain credibility, and enables consumers to trust what they feed their pets.

Every recall avoided protects not only pets and families but also the integrity of the entire pet food supply chain.

[10] https://www.gs1us.org/industries-and-insights/media-center/press-releases/food-safety-recall-survey

Interested in learning more? You can either:

- Submit a request for an estimate to understand fit, pricing, and timeline
- Or instantly & conveniently book a meeting with our E-Beam experts to talk through your goals

We look forward to helping you take the next step.

Recommended Next Steps

→ **Share this white paper with a colleague**

→ Keep a pulse on the sterilization industry by subscribing to ***Irradiation, Illuminated***

→ **Instantly book a call** with a NextBeam sterilization expert to discuss E-Beam compatibility

Pet Food & Treat fda.gov Recall Table

FDA Categorization	Rationale	Year	Date	Brand-Names
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2018	02/09/2018	Raws For Paws
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2018	02/13/2018	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2018	03/02/2018	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2018	03/02/2018	Steve's Real Foods
Company Recall	*Listeria monocytogenes*	2018	03/20/2018	Rad Cat
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2018	03/26/2018	Blue Ridge Beef
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2019	01/14/2019	Answers Pet Food
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2019	01/31/2019	Hare Today Gone
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2019	03/26/2019	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2019	08/15/2019	Texas Tripe
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2019	08/30/2019	Aunt Jeni's Home Made
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2019	09/26/2019	Performance Dog Raw Pet Food
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2020	02/14/2020	Aunt Jeni's Home Made Frozen Raw Pet Food
Company Recall	*Listeria monocytogenes*	2022	07/06/2022	Primal Pet Foods Inc.
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2022	8/5/2022	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella*	2023	10/12/2023	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2023	10/27/2023	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2024	01/03/2024	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	*Listeria monocytogenes*	2024	07/01/2024	Viva

FDA Categorization	Rationale	Year	Date	Brand-Names
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2024	09/20/2024	Darwin's Natural Selections Pet Food
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2024	09/23/2024	ANSWERS
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2024	09/23/2024	Answers Pet Food
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2024	11/22/2024	Gaines Family Farmstead
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2024	11/23/2024	Hollywood Feed
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2024	12/04/2024	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2025	01/03/2025	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2025	01/31/2025	Blue Ridge Beef
Company Recall	Bird Flu or Foodborne Illness	2025	03/15/2025	Savage Pet
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2025	04/11/2025	Blue Ridge Beef
FDA Advisory	*E. coli* and *Salmonella*	2025	07/29/2025	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
Company Recall	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2025	08/25/2025	Viva
FDA Advisory	*Salmonella* & *Listeria monocytogenes*	2025	09/24/2025	Darwin's Natural Pet Products
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2025	10/09/2025	Foodynamics
Company Recall	*Salmonella*	2025	10/10/2025	Raw Bistro