

Pet food recall shakes trust

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It seems the peaceful days of trusting what we put in our pets mouths is all but vanished.

Just three weeks ago we were blissfully and blindly feeding our beloved pets their kibble.

The whole system worked simply.

We as the dutiful and devoted stewards of our four-legged pals would select - what we thought - was the best food and serve them.

No worries, no problems - just happy pets with full bellies.

But all of those notions are all but destroyed after finding out that some of the largest pet food suppliers recalled a number of their products - supposedly tainted.

Some were reportedly tainted with wheat gluten that is believed to have lead to renal failure and deaths in more than a dozen cats and dogs nationwide. One Southwest Florida vet already reported 12 possible cases of pets sickened by tainted pet food.

Menu foods, a Canada-based supplier recalled tons of dog and cat foods - specifically wet "cuts and gravy" styles. The large manufacturer is responsible for helping produce some of the most popular pet food names like Alpo and Iams.

Though there is not a definite answer as to what has sickened and in some cases killed more than a dozen of our nation's pets - a chemical derivative called

melamine is being implicated as the toxin found in the wheat gluten products that sickened the animals.

The chemical is supposedly used as a fertilizer in China.

And it seems the tainted product didn't discriminate - modest priced and more upscale food were affected in the recall alike.

In case your bubbling over with wonder - there is no requirement that pet food

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products have premarket approval by the FDA. However, FDA works to ensure that the ingredients used in pet food are safe and have a purposeful function in the pet food. Many ingredients such as meat, poultry, grains, and their byproducts are considered safe "foods" and do not require premarket approval, according to the FDA Web Site.

So how do reasonably intelligent and learned folks like ourselves find answers and worse yet make sense of it.

This problem is challenging because it cripples our critical thinking since most of us are so emotionally involved with our pets. To many of us they're like children in fur coats.

The idea that we can possibly harm - or worse - kill our own pet with a few cupfuls of kibble is mind-numbing.

One can not help but wonder and fume about the fact that pet food manufacturers

bought wheat products from China when we live in a country rich in wheat crops.

How could companies send for products to use for consumption that we can't properly regulate.

It's not like we as consumers are not willing to pay good money for high quality products. In fact we demand the best for our pets that cannot speak for themselves.

But it's hard not to feel duped and

increasing market globalization will create a challenge for monitoring what goes into our pet foods - mass recalls like this should force companies to keep a tighter eye on their products.

"Stay tuned," he said. "I think it's going to make companies work."

In the meantime, while the recall is still in effect, there is no need to put Fido or kitty on a diet or yourself in a mental tizzy.

"Just be intelligent," he said. "Don't be reactive."

Keep an eye out for future recalls and monitor your pet's health.

Murphy strongly suggests that anyone who suspects their pet is sick from eating possibly tainted food get them examined. A simple blood test can indicate if you have an ailing pooch or kitty.

Symptoms to watch for in a sick animal is excessive thirst, loss of appetite, an increase in urination, vomiting and lethargy.

Consumers with questions can contact Menu foods at (866) 895-2708.

And don't forget when it comes down to it folks, we are our pets' best friends and its up to us to make a difference and give them a voice. ■

CONTACT ELLA

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