

FDA Solicits Public Comment on Proposal to Track Pet Food-Related Illnesses

The Pet Event Tracking Network would let federal and state agencies with authority over dog and cat food track and report illnesses.

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A new network could receive and create health alerts about cat food.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is seeking public comment on a proposal to implement a new Web-based system to track dog and cat illnesses associated with dog and cat food. The deadline to comment is Monday, Sept. 27, 2010.

As proposed, the Pet Event Tracking Network (PETNet) would be a secure, Internet-based network of FDA officials and other federal and state agencies that have authority over dog and cat food. Network members would be able to both receive and create alerts about dog and cat food incidents.

When reporting incidents, PETNet members would be asked to include the species involved, clinical signs, number of animals exposed, number of animals affected, name and type of pet food involved, and the manufacturer and distributor of the pet food, among other items. The information would be used to help federal and state regulators determine how best to use their resources to prevent or quickly limit the adverse events caused by adulterated pet food.

The idea for PETNet originated two years ago in the wake of the mass pet food recalls. At that time, a group of veterinarians, animal feed regulators and others involved in animal health issues proposed PETNet as a way to identify, track and report pet food/animal feed contamination incidents. As originally envisioned, PETNet also would include a system for reporting disease outbreaks and would be supported by diagnostic laboratory facilities and a mechanism for conducting epidemiological studies. Eventually, the idea for PETNet was streamlined to focus on information sharing, rather than epidemiological or other aspects.

FDA said it intends to identify and invite officials from all 50 states to participate in PETNet. FDA estimates that each state will submit reports 10 times per year. According to the FDA, the state regulatory officials who would be submitting PETNet reports already receive the information from consumers as part of their regular duties.

To view the proposal in its entirety, visit the FDA regulations website and search for docket number 2010-N-0368. Comments may be submitted electronically via the FDA regulations website or by mail to the Division of Dockets Management (9HFA-305), Food and Drug Administration, 5630 Fishers Lane, Rm. 1061, Rockville, MD 20852. All comments should be identified with the docket number 2010-N-0368.