

FDA Issues Cat Food Warning

Wild Kitty Cat Food found to contain salmonella; maker says product is safe.

Posted: February 13, 2007, 7:40 p.m. EST

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to consumers not to purchase or use a national cat food product because it contains salmonella bacteria. However, the maker has countered the cat food warning, faulting FDA guidelines. The product makers insist the product is safe for cats.

The FDA issued a statement Feb. 13 saying that it detected salmonella bacteria in a Wild Kitty Cat Food product during a routine Dec. 27, 2006, inspection in which it collected and analyzed a sample of frozen raw Wild Kitty Cat Food.

Salmonella bacteria infection can cause high fevers, severe headaches, vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhea in humans as well as cats. Long-term complications can include arthritis.

The allegedly tainted product, Wild Kitty Cat Food, is sold nationwide to retail stores through distributors and Internet sales. The FDA says after its discovery of the salmonella, it contacted the food manufacturer, who refused to recall the product despite several requests that it do so.

Stephanie Nadeau, the owner of Maine-based Wild Kitty Cat Food Co., confirmed the FDA's recall requests, but told CatChannel.com that her company will not comply. The reason, she says, is that there is no need. All FDA guidelines for the tainted product were followed, she said, and that pathogens, such as salmonella, are inherent in any raw poultry product.

"We're in complete compliance with the current laws governing all manufacturers of raw pet food as set forth by the FDA. The FDA realizes that if they have a raw meat product, they can't get (all) the salmonella out of it. They can't get the salmonella out of the poultry supply. The FDA realizes this," she said.

The specific products covered by the FDA warning are Wild Kitty Raw All Natural, Frozen Cat Food – Chicken with Clam Recipe, net weight 3.5 oz (100 g) and 1 lb in plastic containers. Some of these containers could be uncoded.

Nadeau said that she will not comply with recall requests based on principle, despite the economic harm the FDA announcement could cause her company and its reputation.

"They may very well put me out of business," she said of the FDA. "I am very worried about it."

The FDA, however, says that consumers who have purchased the Wild Kitty product should not feed it to their pets, but should instead safely dispose of it. The FDA recommends that anyone who experiences the symptoms of salmonella infection after having handled the product should seek medical attention, and then report use of the product and illness to the FDA's Office of Emergency Operations. Phone numbers to call in each U.S. state are available through the FDA website.

In addition, people who have concerns whether their pet has salmonella should contact a veterinarian, the FDA says.

Nadeau said that her company has not had a single health-related complaint about its products, regarding salmonella or otherwise, since the company was founded in 2005.