

Senate Agrees to Stricter Pet Food Controls

The decision is in response to the ongoing pet food recall.

Posted: May 04, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

The U.S. Senate recently approved legislation that would create stricter regulations on pet food ingredients, processing and labeling. In response to the pet food recall that has affected more than 150 brands and caused the deaths of at least 16 animals, the U.S. Senate voted 94-0 to approve legislation that would establish federal standards for pet food ingredients, processing and labeling.

The food safety amendment (S.1022), which was added to a prescription drug bill that the Senate continues to debate today, would establish fines for companies that do not promptly report contaminated products and order the creation of an "adulterated food registry" system to track compromised items.

If passed, pet food companies would have five days from the time they are notified of a possible food contamination to test the product and determine the validity of the claim. If the company determines the food item is contaminated, it has two days to report the problem to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as other parties linked to the product through the food chain.

The labeling and production standards would be developed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Association of American Feed Control Officials, veterinarians, pet food manufacturers and animal health organizations.

The amendment was introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) who last month prompted a Senate hearing on the pet food recall to question both the FDA and pet industry representatives.

Durbin introduced separate legislation that would give the FDA mandatory pet food recall power, but that bill (S.654) and its corresponding house bill (H.R. 1148) are still pending.

So far, the FDA has confirmed the deaths of 16 dogs and cats that had eaten the contaminated food. However, the deaths of another 1,950 cats and 2,200 dogs also have been reported, the FDA says, but none of the cases are confirmed as being caused by, or linked to, the recalled pet food.