

New Toxin Found in Recalled Cat Food

The FDA and Menu Foods say a plastic, not rat poison, was the tainted ingredient.

Posted: March 30, 2007, 7 p.m. EST

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now says a substance used in fertilizer and plastic laminates is the contaminant in cat foods that were recalled earlier this month.

The FDA and pet food maker Menu Foods now say that amounts of the synthetic plastic melamine are the only contaminant found so far in the wheat gluten ingredient of the tainted, recalled pet food.

Their statements directly contradict findings by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets that says that it found the rat poison aminopterin during tests of the tainted food.

On March 23, the N.Y. State Department of Agriculture and Markets said that state laboratory tests earlier this week discovered aminopterin, an ingredient used in rat poison outside the United States, in some recalled food. However, no other agency has reported the same findings.

Stephen Sundlof, the director of the Center for Veterinary Medicine at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Menu Foods President and CEO Paul Henderson both said in separate announcements March 30 that melamine is the sole toxin that has been found so far in the wheat gluten during tests of the recalled pet food.

“At this time, we do not know how melamine got into the wheat gluten,” Sundlof said.

Melamine, in addition to being a fertilizer ingredient, is found in plastics used to make whiteboards, floor tiles, kitchenware and various other products. The tainted wheat gluten came to Menu Foods from a supplier in China, but that supplier is no longer used by Menu, Henderson said.

“One supplier’s product was adulterated. The source of that adulteration was identified and removed from our system,” Henderson said. He also stated that all pet food manufactured since the recall announcement has been tested and verified to be “safe and healthy.”

Henderson said that Menu Foods as a company was “angry” that the supplier — which Menu Foods and the FDA both have refused to name at this point — allowed the contamination to occur.

Also, Menu Foods has announced that it will pay the veterinary bills of dogs and cats that became sick and/or died because of the tainted products.

“Yes, Menu [Foods] will take responsibility,” Henderson said.

To date, Menu Foods says it has received in excess of 300,000 phone calls from people seeking information about the recall, but it has confirmed the deaths of only 16 dogs and cats that occurred because of ingesting the tainted pet food.

However, using mostly anecdotal evidence, Veterinary Information Network, a website of 30,000 veterinarians and veterinary students, estimated at least 471 cases of kidney failure in pets during the first 10 days of the food recall.

Menu Foods announced the recall of the wet cat and dog foods it manufactures March 16. It voluntarily recalled the products after receiving complaints of vomiting and renal failure in animals following consumption of the products. After feedings of the product, some cats and dogs exhibited loss of appetite, lethargy and vomiting, while others died from renal failure.

A list of the recalled cat food brands is available [here](#).

Owners of pets that became ill or died from ingesting the recalled pet foods who wish to file a report can find the FDA complaint coordinator in their states at the [FDA website](#).

To see all of CatChannel's pet food recall updates, [click here](#).