

Can You Trust Commercial Pet Foods?

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Too much vitamin D triggers recall

Blue Buffalo Co. issued a voluntary recall for three of its dry dog food products that may contain excessive amounts of Vitamin D, which could cause Hypercalcemia in dogs.

The following dog foods were recalled by Blue Buffalo: Wilderness Chicken in 4.5-pound, 11-pound and 24-pound bags, marked with "best by" dates JUL1211B, JUL1311B, JUL2611Z, JUL2711Z and JUL2811Z; Basics Salmon in 11-pound and 24-pound bags, marked with "best by" dates AUG2111B and AUG2211B; and Large Breed Adult Chicken in 30-pound bags, marked with "best by" dates SEP 22 11 P, SEP 23 11 P, and OCT 26 11 P.

The affected products were sold nationwide at pet stores, retailers and wholesale outlets. Consumers are asked to return any unused product for a refund. According to the company, 36 dogs nationwide were reported having symptoms consistent with too much Vitamin D in their systems after being fed these recipes.

How did commercial pet foods began?

James Spratt, a lightning rod salesman, offered his dog some hard, stale, ship biscuits. His hungry dog wolfed them down. Thinking he might have a bigger market for "dog biscuits" than for lightning rods, he set to work. The year was 1860; the US civil war broke out one year later.

The first biscuits, baked on huge cookie sheets, contained mostly cereal products. By scoring the dough, biscuits conveniently broke, but crumbling them further made them absorb water or other liquids quicker and they become more palatable to dogs. Before long, flesh mixed with the dough ushered in a new age of convenience, ensuring the success of Meat Fibrine dog food. It was introduced with a full color display billboard, the first on a London store, picturing American Indians killing bison to provide meat for the new product.

Competition by the 1930s resulted in over 200 brands of canned dog food sitting on dealer shelves. Knowing little about nutritional requirements, processors sometimes sold the same exact contents as cat or dog food, by using different labels.

Before World War II, canned food constituted 91 percent of the market. With war came a shortage of metal, and the industry switched to dry pet food. Dry food captured 85 percent of the market by war's end.

By 1960, 3,000 companies produced 15,000 brands of pet food, with canned foods capturing a 60 percent market share. By 1972 these figures had dropped to 1,500 companies with 10,000 brands, and by 1987 these figures had shrunk even further to 150 companies producing 1,200 brands.

Guarded like prisons, windowless slaughterhouses are dark foreboding places far removed from brightly-lit grocery aisles. We must provide companion animals plant based foods, or we support an obscene animal based economy, based on slaughterhouses.
