

The Regulatory approaches to ensure the safety of pet food

Summary of my Submission:

We had a perfectly healthy and beautiful 9 year old blonde labradoodle called Stanley who was a big part of our family. From a puppy he had skin allergies and was fed Advance Dermocare as that seemed to be one of the only foods he could eat without his skin having a negative reaction.

Our dear Stan was diagnosed with Megaesophagus in March 2018. The common link in Stans case and many other dogs is the fact that they were fed Advance Dermocare.

It is time to bring the pet food industry to account for what they put into their food, they are killing dearly beloved pets, and the pets are leaving behind devastated families.

It is time for an independent body to regulated pet food so that these big companies cannot monopolize the industry.

My name is Julie O'Toole, I live in SA, and I am very much in agreeance that there should be an independent body who should regulate the pet food industry.

We used to have a perfectly healthy dog named Stan. When Stan was a puppy he had a skin allergy and the vet I took him to said it was highly likely that the food he was eating was causing it. We had to put him on a strict diet to make sure he didn't get this awful allergy again. At the time we lived in Perth and the food which was recommended was Eukanuba dog food for Sensitive Skin.

We moved to Adelaide in 2010 and I found it quite hard to get the Eukanuba Sensitive Skin food and so I decided it was probably time that I found an alternative, and I then started buying Advance Dermocare dry food for dogs, this food wasn't cheap but we bought it because we loved our dog and didn't want to see him suffer at the hands of a skin allergy.

So Stan was fed Advance Dermocare until March of this year. My husband and I had been saving for a number of years for a dream holiday, which we had booked last year to commence on 7 March 2018.

Before we went on holiday, Stan was vomiting a little but we just put it down to the fact he must have eaten something he shouldn't have, and so we went on holiday. Our son and daughter were looking after Stan and our other dog Coco, and they saw a steep decline in his health once we had left for our holiday. As we were travelling all over it was sometimes impossible for us to speak to them but we kept in touch by email. They didn't mention the fact that Stan was ill as they didn't want to spoil our holiday, but took him to the vets where the vet on first inspection thought it may have been kennel cough, he was treated with Antibiotics but my daughter soon realised that they weren't working and that he may have to go back to the vets, the vet also mentioned that some dogs go into a type of depression if their owners go away on holiday....this is something that Stan did do every time we were separated from him he would pine for us.

Our daughter Laura kept us updated as you can imagine we were starting to get quite alarmed by the situation back home, but as we couldn't see Stan put it down to him missing us. Laura skyped us and said that she was taking Stan back to the vets as he wasn't keeping any food or water down, and from this point we were kept up to date with what was happening, as our holiday had now become a bit of a nuisance as we were too far away and felt helpless. Laura took Stan to the vets again where he was diagnosed with Megaoesophagus, this was something that we had never heard of and our vet said that in the history of him being a vet had only ever seen one other case of this horrendous disease.

I then started googling Megaoesophagus and could see on the internet what an awful disease this was, in the meantime Stan was going to the vets daily to keep hydrated as he was keeping nothing down at all. Then I saw a headline from the Herald Sun stating that police dogs in Victoria had also been diagnosed with this disease and they had also eaten Advance Dermocare. Alarm bells started to ring, I immediately messaged my daughter to make sure that she didn't give Stan any more of this food, she also advised the vet, and also spoke to the Dog Squad at Victoria Police to see how they were managing to keep food down their dogs. Our dog Stan was part of our family, we had only been in Australia a couple of months before we got him and he lived the adventure, the ups and downs with us. He was our friend. For us there was no other thing to do but to come home from the holiday that we had saved so

hard for, that is how much we loved him, we then booked our flights back to Adelaide. As soon as we saw Stan on our arrival home it was a very sad sight to see, he had lost so much weight and was a shadow of the dog he used to be, all he wanted to do was go home with us. We stayed with him for a few hours but realised that this was no life for our best friend, and we had to make the agonising decision to have him put to sleep. I can say that 3 months on we are still devastated by our loss, I know that they say time is a good healer, but all we can think about is our dog who became so ill whilst eating Advance Dermocare along with 100 or so more dogs.

Mars did the right thing to recall the food but their management of the aftercare is atrocious, these big companies need to be brought to task and they must state what they put in their pet foods and where it was sourced. The University of Melbourne are taking their time as obviously they don't want to mis-diagnose, but it seems that the food is being blamed for the disease, how it couldn't be I don't know, it seems pretty obvious to Joe Bloggs on the street.

It is now time for the Government to act upon this, at the moment I am very worried as to what I should be feeding my other dog Coco, there have been so many reports in the media of other dog foods which have had contamination issues (I refer to the mould in Applaws dog food, Mate Dog Food recalled because of contaminants, Nutro wet food (not recalled) and Pedigree DentaFlex to name but a few).

As a consumer I need to know what the main ingredients in the food are, and that the food is made to a high standard with clear precise labelling and the nutritional value for all pet food made in Australia. Please consider my submission I feel so strongly about this, for some people a pet is their only company and we have to protect our pets from the money making companies who are selling 'Faulty' food, at an extortionate cost. We think that because we pay so much for the food, that we are buying quality, when in fact, a quality dog food actually killed my beautiful Stan.

Please help us to regulate this industry. Australian pets need this to go through, we can then be proud and say that our pet food is regulated as it is in the USA & UK. We need to feel safe again