

6 July 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Regulatory Approaches to Ensure the Safety of Pet Food

Dear Senators

Thank you for the opportunity to do a submission on the regulatory approach to ensure the safety of pet food.

As a dog owner myself I have a huge interest in this, not only for the safety of my dog, but because a family members pet had to euthanised due to the onset of Megaesophagus along with many other dogs who had been fed Advance Dermocare.

Something has to be done in the pet food industry to stop anything like the Advance Dermocare debacle happening again. Mars were aware of reactions to Advance Dermocare in September 2017, and then the police dogs being reported in December 2017. If Mars were to have acted sooner and voluntarily recalled Advance Dermocare in December 2017, it would have prevented over 100 dogs developing megaesophagus, including our family members pet.

I would like to see pet food products added to Food Standards Australia New Zealand's existing statutory authority for human food products. This would ensure clear and consistent labelling of pet food. I would also like to see pet food products adopt the voluntary and mandatory recall framework (Standard 3.2.2) by Food Standards Australia New Zealand for human food products. This would enable one statutory authority to oversee food standards across both human and pet foods for Australia and New Zealand. Had legislative power been in place before, it may have led to Advance Dermocare being recalled sooner and less dogs being affected by Megaesophagus.

I would highly recommend regulating nutrition claims for pet foods, so that they are in line with nutrition claims for human foods. A streamlined process of nutrition claims and labelling across both human and pet food products should be considered to minimise confusion. After all pets are in some cases a life line to humans, we should be able to feel that we can trust pet food companies and also trust what they put in their food. At present it is like a lucky dip as to which food we feed our pets.

Our dog was fed the dried Pedigree Chum dog food (also made by Mars) one batch of the food made him cough severely after he was fed, we decided to cease feeding him this food with

immediate effect due to the fact that it was produced by Mars and our family members pet had suffered at the hands of this company. I do have some of this food left should there be an inquiry into this food too, but just for the moment I want to concentrate my energies into the regulation of the pet food industry.

If a large human food company had mass produced a food and 100 humans had either died from the effect of the food or been severely disabled then there would be outcry. But because the Advance Dermocare incident has been about dogs it seems to be that everything possible to brush it under the carpet is being done. Mars have so far given a feeble offer to owners of the dogs who have been affected and are treating the dogs as if they were objects. NO..... they are not objects and to find another dog like the one our family had (in nature and personality) would be highly unlikely, he can't be just swapped like something in a shop! He was unique.

This is why I feel so strongly that the pet food industry needs an overhaul, it needs to be brought into the 21st Century and consumers need to feel that they are feeding their pets quality food, we need to know where the ingredients are sourced and the nutritional value of the food just like human food.

Please help us to feel confident again in feeding our pets, a premium food with premium ingredients. At present the bigger companies are getting away with charging premium prices for in some cases substandard food

Many Thanks for taking the time to read my submission, I would like to think that I may be making a difference. Australian pet owners deserve better.

Laura Faulkner