

# A Prescription for Disease: Commercial Pet Foods' Deadly Ingredients

By Julie Cantonwine & Dr. Gaia Mather

If you watch much television at all you're bound to see the ads: sleek and handsome purebred dogs running across the screen in slow motion, so eager to reach the bowl of Gravy Train (or Alpo or Mighty Dog, you name the brand). Most recently the ads are accompanied by their owners (trainers and veterinarians) telling us how wholesome and nutritious this food is for their beloved pets. Commercial pet food is a great convenience for busy pet owners but do we really know exactly what we are feeding our furry friends and companions? The \$11 billion per year U.S. pet food industry would like us to believe that we are feeding our animals a wholesome and nutritious diet as they try so hard to portray in their ads. What most consumers don't know is that the pet food industry is just an extension of the human food and agriculture industries: a way for these large companies to get rid of their waste. What is really in pet food? The answer to this question is shocking and disturbing, but important for the well-informed consumer to know. The majority of commercial pet foods are made by a handful of large multinational companies: Alpo, Fancy Feast, Friskies and Mighty Dog are produced by Nestle  
9-Lives, Amore, Gravy Train, Kibbles & Bits, Recipe, Vets are from Heinz  
Colgate makes Hills Science Diet

Proctor & Gamble Produces Eukanuba and Iams.

According to Dr. Richard Pitcairn in his book, [Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats](#), there is no mandatory federal inspection of ingredients used in pet food manufacturing. In all but two or three states, the law allows pet food makers to use "4-D sources", that is tissues from animals that are dead, dying, disabled or diseased when they arrive at the slaughterhouse. Another shocking fact is that before meat even arrives at the rendering plant it has already been saturated with chemicals. To comply with government regulations all meat rejected by slaughterhouses must be "denatured"; a procedure designed to make it unpalatable to humans, thus ensuring it cannot be resold as human grade meat. There are a variety of methods used. Dr. Wendell Belfied, DVM (former USDA vet) wrote in "Let's Live" magazine: "In my time as a veterinary meat inspector, we denatured with carbolic acid (phenol, a potentially corrosive disinfectant) and/or creosote (used to preserve wood, also a disinfectant)." According to federal meat inspection regulations fuel oil, kerosene, carbolic acid and citronella are the approved denaturing materials used. Other foods rejected by the USDA that ends up in pet foods include moldy grains and rancid animal fats.

According to an article in "Environmental News" (March '99) a large percentage of commercial pet food is made up of meat by-products: a toxic brew containing diseased and contaminated meat from slaughterhouses, animal heads, toenails, chicken feathers, feet and beaks. It also includes dead animals picked up from the nation's roads, rancid restaurant grease, and thousands of animals euthanized in animal hospitals and shelters (flea collars and all). Along with the meat come any drugs that have been introduced into the animals such as hormones, antibiotics and barbiturates used to put pets to sleep. Unsold supermarket meats arrive in their original Styrofoam and plastic packaging are tossed into the pot. If you haven't already made some changes in your pet's diet, this information will certainly make you want to seek some alternatives. One good resource for dietary information is Dr. Pitcairn's book, which contains recipes to make your pet's food as well as natural alternatives to commercial foods. Other recommendations for reading on this subject are the book 'Foods Pets Die For' by Ann Martin, New Sage Press, 1977.

According to the "Whole Dog Journal", vol.3, no.8, quality foods should contain the following:

Superior sources of protein (whole meats or single-source meat meal)

A meat source as one of the first two ingredients (chicken or chicken meal for instance)

Whole, unprocessed grains, vegetables and other foods (rich in nutrients and Enzymes).

Quality food should NOT contain:

Meat by-products (which are produced through the rendering process)

Artificial preservatives (BHA, BHT, or Ethoxyquin)

Artificial colors

## Sweeteners

Propylene glycol.

It would be wonderful if we could all feed our animals an all-natural raw food diet, but for some the following alternatives will be very helpful. The following is not a complete list of all that is available but will give you some respected names:

CANIDAE FLINT RIVER RANCH

CALIFORNIA NATURAL INNOVA

PETGUARD LIFESPAN WYSONG

SOLID GOLD WELLNESS

PRECISE NATURAL BLEND

STEVES REAL FOOD SOJOURNER FARMS

We share this information to educate consumers on the potentially dangerous ingredients that are in most commercial pet foods. Of course, a natural diet is the best for our companion pets' good health. A healthy pet is a happy pet.