



A few years ago, a major pet distributor had to destroy a large shipment of bird treats, not because the irradiation caused a problem with the treat, it just ruined the plastic packaging which made them unsellable. Some plastics and packages with metallic ink can react badly to high rads of radiation.

Dogs were unaffected with Orijen, as it was thought the nutrient affected was specific to cat's nervous systems' needs, such as Vitamin A or taurine. It was thought that the problem had to do with the spinal sheath cracking which caused gradual paralysis. However, the dog food was also withdrawn since cats and dogs may live and feed together and the possibility was there that cats eating the dogs food might contract the syndrome.

A few weeks before this edition of Urban Animal was published, reports came out of China regarding mass deaths of dogs in two cities. The deaths were linked to a supposedly imported premium food that was a North American brand but allegedly manufactured in Australia. Optima was the suspected food, which is a brand made by Doane in the US, a Mars subsidiary, but which hadn't been manufactured in Australia nor exported from here as initial news reports stated. As it turns out, Mars does not export to China.

The problem was a toxic compound called aflatoxin which comes from the aspergillus mould, a fungus found on corn and other grains that can be a result of spoilage. It was the basis of the major dog food recall four years ago in the US from Diamond Pet Foods, but in this case it was thought to be from imported Optima which may have been compromised by poor storage in heat or age.

It was thought that the product may have come from Taiwan, Hong Kong or Japan but the Mars company had stopped supplying the latter two markets over nine months ago. The mystery deepened when the Chinese authorities investigated and determined the Optima brand had not been imported from Taiwan and that no Optima product had been imported for a long time.

So the most likely explanation is that the food was in fact counterfeit. This is common with perfumes, cosmetics, luxury brands, CDs, DVDs and fake prescription drugs. It appears that the Optima packaging was bogus to disguise inferior Chinese-manufactured product to be sold to consumers who demanded a premium 'safe' US brand. In an ironic twist, it appeared the country that was blamed for thousands of pet deaths overseas due to food tainted by melamine suffered its own pet tragedy due to bootleg product.

Just before this magazine hit the presses, yet another pet food problem came to light when a major US manufacturer of peanut butter that is used in human snacks, confections and pet treats had to make a huge recall due to salmonella contamination. Fortunately, Australia was unaffected as the US treats are not imported here.

Up until the past few years, most pet owners were unaware of the country of manufacture of their pet's food and equally ignorant of the ingredients. But just as they started reading their own human food for nutritional information, those who were concerned for their pets—after either seeing sensational media reports or doing their own research—started to question the sources and compounds within their pet's foods and treats.

One of the problems that the sometimes hysterical media reports create is that pet owners freak out, thinking their brand may be affected even if it isn't the one reported in the media. When the Orijen crisis erupted, other pet food companies got frantic calls. In the case of the 7:30 Report, a retailer was being interviewed in front of a stack of a brand that was not recalled. The mere image of logos caused consumers to swamp the toll-free help lines of that brand the next day.

Some owners had reported a strange smell and initially it was thought the food might have been damaged in shipment due to heat or might have had suspect ingredients. But the company that makes it, Champion Pet Foods of Alberta, Canada, claims that the problem came from excessive irradiation of the food which was demanded by AQIS. Imported dry and semi-dry pet foods either have to be manufactured at a certain temperature range for a certain period of time and be certified for this or else must be irradiated. Usually only spices, herbs and some tropical fruits are treated this way, but any food can be forced to be irradiated if AQIS deems it.

It was this problem with their food being cooked at only two degrees lower than required that forced the Nutro pet food brand to be withdrawn from sale in Australia two years ago. Some other brands that have been imported and discovered not to comply with heat treating either were turned around or irradiated. It's thought that the metallic packaging of the Orijen product as well as very high doses of radiation may have caused a change in the food's nutritional components and led to the neurological problems the cats suffered.

 <p>Is your pet looking for something tasty?</p> <p>We stock a wide range of 100% all natural, all Australian dried pet treats your pet is sure to love!</p> <p>Mention this ad &amp; receive a free toy valued at \$10 with every treat purchase over \$50*</p>	 <p>Need A Haircut?</p> <p>Then you need the ever popular OSTER GOLDEN A5 DUAL SPEED CLIPPERS</p> <p>Just \$319.95*# for the clippers, extra size 40 blade &amp; 3 blade combs...<b>SAVE \$68.60 on RRP</b></p> <p>Plus mention this ad &amp; receive a free Nifty Clipper for trimming around paws with your clipper purchase*</p>
<p>*price excludes postage #while stocks last</p> <p>view our full range at <a href="http://www.pamperedpaws.com.au">www.pamperedpaws.com.au</a> or call 0411 036 665</p> <p><b>pampered paws</b> pet supplies online</p>	

\* Also, because many brands use similar words in their names or bylines, consumers can become confused. For example, the imported North American brand Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance is sold here by Pet Organics ([www.petorganics.com.au](http://www.petorganics.com.au)). However, there is the Natural Balance brand, made in Western Australia and trademarked in this territory ([www.naturalbalance.net.au](http://www.naturalbalance.net.au)) which is also distributed in Sydney by another company. But in Melbourne there is a company trading under the name Natural Balance Pet Foods which makes their own dry dog food in addition to delivering foods solely in that area ([www.balancepetfoods.com.au](http://www.balancepetfoods.com.au)). Coincidentally, that company also sells the WA-based Natural Balance brand—though the companies are not related—among other foods and vet supplies.

Our magazine has had a series of stories on what goes into pet food without sensationalising it, how to read pet food ingredients panels and nutritional information and what to watch out for. For those readers interested in specific topics, here are the editions of Urban Animal, the dates and articles. You can order them for \$5 each or read them free on our website [www.urbananimal.com](http://www.urbananimal.com).

Issue 9 (Nov 2006)	Shock Ingredients & Prices of Pet Treats
Issue 10 (Feb 2007)	What's In Pet Food Part 1
Issue 11 (May 2007)	Pet Food Analysis Part 2
Issue 12 (Aug 2007)	Choose What Your Pet Chews--Dry Food
Issue 13 (Nov 2007)	Fresh & Frozen Foods Comparisons
Issue 14 (Feb 2008)	Canned Food Analysis
Issue 15 (May 2008)	Vitamins, Minerals & Supplements
Issue 16 (Aug 2008)	Bones & How to Feed Them to Dogs & Cats

To assist consumers in their choices of dry dog foods, we got in touch with all of the pet food importers and local manufacturers who sell dry dog food (it would have been too much this issue to do canned dog food, dry and can cat food and treats) and asked the following ten questions of them, noting that we would put up the survey in this issue. We asked them to identify each brand of dry dog food they sold in Australia and:

1. Is it locally manufactured or imported?
2. Manufactured in your own factory or contract co-manufacturer/co-packer?
3. If not made by own company, who is the contract co-manufacturer/co-packer?
4. Country of manufacture?
5. Has it been recalled anywhere in the world in the past 5 years? Reasons?
6. If imported is it irradiated?
7. If imported is it heat treated to conform to AQIS rules?
8. Do you have a toll-free help line?
9. If the word organic is used, is the food certified organic at place of manufacture?
10. If manufactured in Australia, do you use any foreign ingredients (primarily protein/carbohydrate/fat not any additives such as vitamins or minerals).

The questions were sent out on January 16 with a deadline of February 2. Those that didn't respond by January 27 were reminded of the deadline. Those which were queried were:

- Mars: Advance, Optimum, Pedigree, Chum, Royal Canin
- Proctor & Gamble: Iams & Eukanuba
- Nestle Purina: Beneful, Pro Plan, One, Supercoat, Lucky Dog, Bonnie
- Colgate Palmolive: Hills Science Diet, Hills Prescription Diet
- Natura: Evo, Innova, California Naturals
- OEM: A La Carte, Derma Pro, Tucker Time, Medi Pro
- Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance

- Nutrience
- Eagle Pack
- Natural Balance
- Artemis
- Pro Pak
- Natures Gift
- Pawganics
- Ziwi Peak
- Biopet
- Be Natural
- Coprice
- Veganpet

We elected not to include house brands of supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths though we know who makes them. And we also decided not to include very low-end dry food.

Where the company responded, we put their answers below. If they refused to answer and gave a written reason, we have reproduced it. If they simply did not respond after two emails and two phone calls, we list that fact on the next page.

Product name	Country Made in	Manufactured by	Ever recalled in 5 years?	Heat treated?	Irradiated?	Toll Free Help #	Certified Organic?	Website	Foreign Ingredients
Biopet	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes (ACO)	www.bippetonline.com.au	
Ziwi Peak	New Zealand	Own facility	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	www.ziwipeak.com	
Artemis	USA	Diamond Pet Foods	No	Yes	No	No	No	www.artemispetfood.com.au	
Nature's Gift	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	No	No	www.naturesgift.com.au	
Advance	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	www.advancedpetnutrition.com.au	
Eagle Pack	USA	Own facility	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, where applicable	www.eaglepack.com.au	
Nutrience	USA	Own facility	No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	www.nutrience.com/australia	
Petganics	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	No	Yes	www.auspetess.com/pawganics	
Vegan Pet	Australia	self-made in contract facility	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	www.veganpet.com.au	Yes, Due to drought, rice from Thailand
Natural Balance	Australia	Own facility	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	www.naturalbalance.net.au	
Pro Pac	USA	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	www.propackpetfood.com	
Be Natural	Australia	Co-manufactured	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	No website	
Coprice	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	www.coprice.com.au	
(inc Innova, Evo, California Natural & Mother Nature)	USA	Own facility	No	Yes	No	No	N/A	www.naturapet.com	
Optimum	Australia	Own facility	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	www.optimumpet.com.au	
Royal Canin	France	Own facility	Yes, 2007	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	www.royalcanin.com.au	

## An explanation beyond the chart results should be made in regard to a number of brands

We emailed and called each of the brands twice to make sure that they had adequate time to answer the simple questions and that the survey didn't get lost in the email ether. It was also to answer any question that the manufacturers or importers may have had in regard to sensitive issues. For those who did not want to answer the questions, we offered two alternatives—a short statement, which we reproduce below with permission, or simply that they did not respond.

### The brands that did not respond are:

**Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance**—We spoke to their Australian distributor but they did not want to give any information nor participate in any way. We do know their food is imported from the US and that some dry dog and cat products were subject to a voluntary recall in April 2007 for detected melamine in a rice gluten compound.

(Disclosure: We have accepted six quarter-page and half-page ads from this company in the past three years.)

**OEM Petcare Products**—A French company with manufacturing facilities in Australia, they did not respond in any way other than to say they were too busy over the phone. Their dry food products include A La Carte and Derma Pro but they do a lot of contract manufacturing for a number of Australian brands and also export overseas.

**Bushs**—An Australian manufacturer that has its own brands and also makes foods for other brands (such as Hills below) according to their formulas, did not respond despite promising to after our last call. Their contact apologized that the information was not submitted on time, citing changes to brands, packaging and forward planning in the new year. Bushs inhouse brands have included Box Bistro, Farrells, Bushs, One, Country Kennels, and PetChef.

(Disclosure: We have accepted four junior-page ads from Bushs in the past two years.)

We did receive three general refusals to participate by major multinational brands Proctor & Gamble (Iams & Eukanuba), Colgate Palmolive (Hills Science Diet and Hills Prescription Diets) and Nestle Purina (various brands below) which read like they were following similar corporate templates in their language. In each case, we spoke to them off the record and all three voiced the same concerns as well as having to follow company guidelines on this sensitive topic. We appreciate their

written responses and reproduce them below without the identities of the individuals assigned to respond to us. However, we also note here that all of them have had major product recalls overseas which fortunately didn't translate to any problems locally.

### From Proctor & Gamble (Iams and Eukanuba)

*"At this stage P&G Pet Care elects to not partake in the survey, however we would like submit the following statement:*

*At P&G Pet Care we stand behind the premium quality of all our Eukanuba and Iams products. With over 60 years of research and development and a strict 19-point Quality Assurance program that covers everything from laboratory testing of materials, cleanliness of production facilities and handling of finished product we can assure customers our products are safe and continue to deliver the highest quality nutrition that dogs and cats need. Should you have any further questions regarding the premium quality of our products, please call our Customer Care help line on 1800 004267."*

Their response may sound like a commercial to you, it certainly did to us, but in fairness we reprinted it verbatim. As far as we can tell, all of their products are imported, though they did not want to confirm this. In March 2007 a voluntary recall in the United States and Canada was made on canned or pouch "wet" cat and dog food products manufactured by Menu Foods and sold under the Iams and Eukanuba brands. No dry foods were affected.

### From Colgate Palmolive (Hills Science Diet and Hills Prescription Diet)

*"Hill's Pet Nutrition does not wish to respond to the questionnaire. We do however have a team of nutritional consultants on the Hill's HelpLine willing to discuss all nutritional questions with the pet owning public. Their hours are 8AM to 6PM, EST and the free call number is 1800 679 932."*

We know it sounds like another ad but it doesn't answer the simple questions we have asked. We do know that many of their lines are manufactured in the US while some lines have also been manufactured in Australia until recently under contract with Bushs. At present, no dry dog foods are manufactured locally. No dry dog foods have been subject to recall but the company had a voluntary precautionary recall of canned and dry cat food in March 2007 packed by Menu Foods as a safety measure.

(Disclosure: We have accepted eight full-page ads from Hills in the past three years.)

**And finally, from Nestle Purina PetCare**

*"Thank you for inviting Nestle Purina PetCare to participate in the Urban Animal dry dog food survey.*

*The quality of our products and the safety of our customers' pets is non-negotiable. We have strict quality control in place at all our sites and the majority of Nestle Purina's dry dog food products are made in Australia by Purina. All of our products are safe for pets to consume.*

*This includes the following dry dog food brands: Supercoat, Lucky Dog, Beneful and Bonnie.*

*Purina ONE - Four of six variants made in Australia. Remaining two made by Purina in the USA*

*Pro Plan - Made in the USA by Purina. Not Irradiated on entry."*

Nestle Purina PetCare in the US March 2007 issued a "proactive" recall for Mighty Dog brand dog food pouch products and Alpo Cuts in Gravy Canned Dog Food manufactured by Menu Foods as a precautionary measure. Neither has ever been sold in Australia.

(Disclosure: We have accepted two ads from Purina PetCare in three years, one from Pro Plan and one from Total Care, a grooming and pet products range. We have also run ads for Supercoat before and after its acquisition by Nestle Purina.)

We thought it appropriate to comment on Royal Canin (A Mars family product which is independent to the local Mars brands), which submitted its details with the exception of the recall question, which we brought to their attention. As they pointed out to us in an email,

*"This is a very general question, recalls can be anything from a missed date code, torn bag or product contamination.*

*This information would take months to source and I can see little relevance in doing that. Royal Canin prides itself on its quality and the procedures that it has in place to maintain extremely high levels of product security."*

Our response to them was simple—that it would only take a few seconds to find the facts about a major set of recalls—none of which affected product shipped to Australia from their French factory.

In May 2007, Royal Canin USA recalled eight Sensible Choice dry dog food products that contained trace amounts of melamine. The previous month it had withdrawn seven other dog food lines and one cat product due to the presence of a melamine-derivative contaminant—cyanuric acid. Both of these were manufactured in Canada at Menu Foods. In an unrelated recall, Royal Canin USA recalled three Veterinary Diet Canine canned foods due to excessive levels of Vitamin D3 as a result of a vitamin/mineral pre-mix error.

And finally, we did receive responses from Mars in relation to their two key superpremium lines, Advance and Optimum. However, we did not receive any responses from other brand managers of dry dog food products Pedigree and Chum, which are complete dry dog foods, nor Good O and My Dog which are technically semi-dry but not sold as nutritionally complete formulas.



In August 2008 in the western US, Pedigree Complete Nutrition Small Crunchy Bites Dog Food was recalled due to a salmonella contamination incident. These are North American brands that are not shipped here and it should be pointed out that all Mars wet and dry brands are manufactured either in Australia or New Zealand.

(Disclosure: Advance has advertised with us on four occasions including this issue.)

# BALL HOG?



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