

DO YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO FEED THAT TO MY PET?

*Presented as a public service by Happy Paws 1356 S. Ft. Harrison Ave.
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Would you feed your faithful friend, Rover, a raccoon flattened by an eighteen-wheeler or snack on the neighbor's kitty cat? How about serving Fluffy an appetizing bowl of chicken beaks and feathers with a side order of spoiled meat in a Kerosene gravy? If the thought of filling your pet's dinner bowl with road-kill and chemicals makes you queasy, then brace yourself. Recent investigation of the pet food industry reveals that many commercially available pet foods contain not only these ingredients but some even more shocking.

Because there is no USDA inspection required, the giant pet food companies often use the cheapest sources of protein available. These ingredients are found on the label of the food under the name "by-products". By-products can include things such as intestines, feet, hooves, beaks, waste organs, spoiled meat, roadkill, zoo animals and even euthanized dogs and cats. As there are no laws against it, many pet food companies use just these things in their formulas.

The meat sources these pet food manufacturers are using are provided for them by rendering plants. The origin of the meat before it arrives at the rendering plant is what comes into question. Each year millions of dogs and cats are euthanized in animal shelters. Some of these euthanized pets are being picked up by rendering plants and processed into the food. Although generally denied by the pet food industry, recent articles such as one found in the San Francisco Chronicle are beginning to throw public attention on the use of things such as euthanized pets as ingredients in pet food.

In addition to the meat source itself, another question that arises is the safety processing of the meat. One of the few regulations levied against the pet food industry pertains directly to the use of by-products. The FDA mandates that if by-products are used in pet food they must be rendered unfit for human consumption. To achieve this the by-products are denatured. Basically the denaturing process consists of sterilizing the by-products by means of a chemical bath. The most prevalent chemicals used in this process are Kerosene, Diesel fuel, Citronella and Creatose. The products are soaked in these chemicals and then processed into the food.

Since 1950, the average life-span of dogs and cats is down approximately 18%. With the advances in veterinary medicine rivaling the advances in human medicine one must wonder what is going wrong with our family friends. Although not necessarily the only factor in this decrease, recent research points an ominous finger to nutrition as a major factor. The answer to this problem is actually a simple one. We must all educate ourselves on how to read the ingredients of a pet food label and take the same concern we have for our own nutrition and apply it to our little buddies. There are healthy choices available and our furry family members are certainly worth the best.