**WHAT’S REALLY IN PROCESSED DRY DOG FOOD**

(Parts of the following were taken from reports done by the American Pet Institute , the Association of American Feed Control Officials AAFCO and the American Food and Drug Administration FDA)

‘Plump whole chickens, choice cuts of beef, fresh grains and vegetables are all the wholesome nutrients your dog or cat will ever need.’

Processed pet food provides a market for slaughter house offal, grains considered ‘unfit’ for human consumption and similar waste products to be turned into profit. This waste includes intestines, udders, oesophagi as well as diseased and cancerous animal parts.

You may have noticed a unique, pungent odour when you open a new bag of dry pet food – what is the source of that delightful smell? It is most often rendered animal fat, restaurant grease and other oils to rancid or deemed inedible for humans.

Restaurant grease has become a major component of feed grade animal fat over the last fifteen years. This grease, often held in fifty gallon drums, is usually kept outside for weeks, exposed to extreme temperatures with no regard for future use. ‘Fat blenders’ or rendering companies then pick up this used grease and mix the different types of fat together, stabilise them with powerful antioxidants to retard further spoilage and then sell the blended product to pet food companies.

These fats are sprayed directly onto the dried kibble or extruded pellets to make an otherwise bland or distasteful product palatable. The fat also acts as a binding agent to which manufacturers add other flavour enhancers . Pet food scientists have discovered that animals love the taste of these sprayed fats. Manufacturers are masters at getting a dog or cat to eat something she would normally turn up her nose at.

In 2003, thousands of tons of pet food were pulled from the shelves after consumers complained that their dogs were vomiting and losing their appetite. The loss amounted to over $20 million dollars. The problem was a fungus that produced vomitoxin (an aflatoxin or ‘mycotoxin’, a toxic substance produced by mould) contaminating the grain. Then in 2007 another fungal toxin triggered another recall of …54 brands. This time, the toxins killed 25 dogs.

Although it caused many dogs to vomit, stop eating and have diarrhoea, vomitoxin is a milder toxin than most. The more dangerous mycotoxins can cause weight loss, liver damage, pancreatitis, lameness and even death.

These incidents prompted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to intervene. Diana Butcher, the Agriculture Policy Advisor for the then Governor Ed Schafer concluded that the discovery of the toxins wasn’t much of a threat to the ‘human’ population because “the grains that would go into pet food is not a high quality grain”.

Adding chemicals to food originated thousands of years ago with spices, natural preservatives and ripening agents. In the last 40 years, however, the number of food additives has greatly increased. Potentially cancer-causing agents such as BHA (butylated hydroxyanisoleil), BHT (butylated hydroxytoluane), ethoxyquin and sodium nitrate are all very toxic and harmful preservatives. Ethoxiquin was originally developed as a rubber stabiliser and insecticide. It has been used for many years as a preservative in the feeds of short-lived animals bred for slaughter, such as poultry, pigs and beef and has not been approved for human use. It is listed in one chemical dictionary as ‘toxic by ingestion, a skin irritant that may produce liver changes, effects the fertility of stud canines and immune system breakdown over time’ **(** read **– pancreatitis, hot spots , scurf, skin allergies and hair** **loss).**BHA and BHT are preservatives that are banned in Europe as they are linked to allergies, tumours and psychological changes.

Ethoxiquin is only approved for use in human food for preserving spices, such as cayenne and chilli powder at a level of 100 parts per million – but it would be very difficult to consume as much chilli powder each and every day as a dog would eat dry food.

You won’t find these chemicals listed on the side of your pet food packages as you will need to enquire directly to the manufacturer to find out which ‘preservatives’ and ‘antioxidants ‘ they are using.

Watch out for these in all dry pet food products, including the more expensive veterinary and ‘top shelf’ brands.

Commercially manufactured or rendered meat meals and by-product meals are frequently highly contaminated with bacteria because their source is not always slaughtered animals. Animals that have died because of disease, injury or natural causes are a source of meat for meat meal. The dead animal might not be rendered until days after its death. Therefore the carcass is often contaminated with bacteria such as Salmonella and Escherichia coli. Dangerous E. coli bacteria are estimated to contaminate more than 50% of meat meals. While the cooking process does kill bacteria, it does not eliminate the endotoxins some bacteria produce during their growth and are released when they die. These toxins cause sickness and disease but pet food manufacturers do not test their products for endotoxins.

Cereal grains are the primary ingredients in most commercial pet foods and many people select one pet food and feed it to their pets for a prolonged period of time. Therefore, companion dogs and cats eat a primarily carbohydrate diet with little or no variety. Today, the diets of our beloved pets are a far cry from the primarily protein/vegetation diet with a lot of variety that their ancestors ate as they would hunt and kill their prey (first, eating their way through the anus, the preditor would eat the stomach contents full of grass, grains, fruits and vegetable matter, before moving to the heart, lungs, offal and eventually gorging themselves on the muscle/meat). The problems associated with a commercial diet are seen every day at veterinary establishments around the world. Chronic digestive problems, chronic vomiting, diarrhoea and inflammatory bowel disease and pancreatitis are the most frequent illnesses treated.

Allergy or hypersensitivity to foods is a common problem usually seen as diarrhoea and vomiting. Food allergies have become an everyday ailment.

Many commercial pet foods are made with ingredients that have poor protein digestibility. Diets containing protein with less than 70% digestibility cause large stools and/or diarrhoea and some fillers and fibres used in these foods can also cause colitis, which is the inflammation of the colon.

Urinary tract diseases are directly related to the diets of both cats and dogs. Plugs, crystals and stoned in their bladders are triggered or aggravated by commercial pet food formulas.

Animal proteins used in commercial pet foods consist of diseased meat, road kill, and contaminated material from slaughterhouses, faecal matter, euthanized cats and dogs, poultry feathers and are all prepared together as rendered material. Vegetable proteins, often the mainstay of dry foods include ground yellow corn, wheat shorts and middlings, soybean meal, rice hulls and peanut meal. All provide very little nutritional value and are nothing more than sweepings and offal from milling room floors left over after processing. The removal of the oil, germ, bran, starch and gluten from these grains eliminate the essential fatty acids and a number of fat soluble vitamins and minerals.

The animal proteins used in these foods come from a number of different sources. Dead stock removal operations provide the ‘4-D’ animals: Dead, Diseased, Dying or Disabled. Most have died or are dying from causes unknown and have been treated with a wide variety of drugs before their demise or have been given a lethal injection of a potent drug to euthanize them. The animals are then delivered to the ‘receiving plant’ where the hide is sold to a tannery. The meat from these animals is then sold for pet food after it is completely covered in charcoal (to prevent ingestion by humans) and marked “unfit for human consumption”.

If the animal arrives at the ‘receiving plant’ in a state of decomposition it is transported to a rendering plant along with road kill that is too big to bury at the side of the road, also we have the condemned material from slaughter houses, animals that have died on their way to slaughter, diseased animals or parts, diseased blood, extraneous matter, hair, feet, head, mammary glands, carpal and tarsal joints or any part of the animal condemned for human consumption can be rendered for pet food. Before this material leaves the slaughterhouse it is “denatured” (doused in chemicals) to prevent it from getting back into the human food chain when being transported to the rendering facilities.

Another source of animal protein, which the industry vehemently deny they use, are rendered companion animals….

Dogs and cats euthanized at clinics, pounds and shelters are sold to rendering plants, rendered with other material and sold to the pet food industry. One small plant in Quebec was rendering 10 tonnes of dogs and cats yearly. The ministry of Agriculture in Quebec, where a number of these plants are located advised that “the fur is not removed from dogs and cats” and that “dead animals are cooked together with viscera, bones and fats at 115C (236F) for twenty minutes. “One large pet food company in the U.S., with extensive research facilities, used rendered dogs and cats in their food for years and when the information came to light ‘claimed no knowledge of it’.

The Food and Drug Administration, **C**entre for **V**eterinary **M**edicine, in the U.S is aware of the use of rendered companion animals in pet food and has stated “The CVM has not acted to specifically prohibit the rendering of pets. However, that is not to say that the practice of using this material in pet food is condoned by CVM”.

In a research paper from the University of Minnesota, entitled “Facts of Sodium Pentobarbital in Rendered Products”, it states that the barbiturate, sodium pentobarbital, which is the bright fluorescent green drug used to euthanize small animals, ‘survived the heat of rendering without undergoing degradation, (Which means that your pet is digesting tiny amounts of this potent drug over years and years, which in turn will shorten it’s life span).

In the U.S, as in Canada, the pet food industry is virtually self-regulated. In the U.S the AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) sets guidelines and definitions for animal feed ingredients including pet foods but it is up to each state to adopt and enforce these guidelines. The AAFCO states that ‘there are no restrictions on the type of animals which can be used in meals, tankage, and digests etc… any kind of animal can be used including cats and dogs.

The sad scenario is that it is our pets who are suffering the ills of these inferior ingredients and the lack of a nutritious diet. We have been brain washed by this billion dollar industry and some miss informed veterinarians, that in order to keep our pets healthy we must feed them a diet formulated for dogs and cats. NO TABLE SCAPS??? We have pets suffering from cancer, pancreatitis, skin problems, allergies, hypertension, kidney and liver failure, heart disease, numerous dental problems, just to name a few. These same individuals can find a myriad of reasons why our pets are inflicted with these problems, the environment, lack of exercise and stress, but will never attribute this mess to the inferior commercial foods we are feeding our pets.

Before the pet food industry began to prosper our pets were eating what we ate as table scraps and living long and happy lives and were dying of old age – 20, 24 years, but these days they are lucky to make 10, 12, 14 years because of what the so called ‘Experts?’ are telling us to do.

Scared? I think we all should be!!