



UNITED STATES SENATOR \* ILLINOIS  
**DICK DURBIN**

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**DURBIN PRESSES FDA FOR ANSWERS ON  
PET FOOD SAFETY AS RECALL WIDENS**

[SPRINGFIELD, IL] - U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today called on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to account for weak links in the pet food inspection system as the federal government confirmed the presence of a chemical used to make plastics known as melamine in samples of the recalled Menu Foods pet food. Yesterday, Nestle Purina PetCare Co. recalled certain Alpo wet dog food products after Hill's Pet Nutrition became the first company to recall dry food on Friday.

Durbin and Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) sent a letter last week to Andrew von Eschenbach, Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), asking for an analysis of FDA's oversight of pet food manufacturing facilities and a report of actions taken since the recent pet food recall.

"Many cats, dogs and other pets, considered members of the family are now suffering as a result of a flawed pet food inspection system," said Durbin. "Congresswoman DeLauro and I have once again reached out to FDA to work on eliminating the vulnerabilities that are affecting food safety. Last week, we asked FDA to quickly provide us with a report of what FDA has done to address the recent recall, and what needs to be done to make real improvements to the system of overseeing pet food safety."

"Based on the evidence so far, it would appear that FDA is failing its responsibilities to protect animals from unsafe food as much as it is failing to protect American consumers. They have never visited the plant in Kansas being mentioned as a possible source of the contamination, and the last time FDA inspected the New Jersey plant that has also been implicated was in 2004," said DeLauro, Chairwoman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, FDA and related agencies. "For the past decade, many of us who have examined our food safety system have pressed for a consolidated food safety agency. In light of recent events it looks like we will need to broaden that effort to include pet foods to ensure that all family members are protected from food-borne illnesses."

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On March 17, 2007, pet food producer Menu Foods, Inc. announced a recall of pet food products made at its Emporia, Kansas facility between December 3, 2006 and March 6, 2007. The recall was made in response to a recent string of kidney failures in cats and dogs as well as a handful of pet deaths. The reported number of pets affected continues to grow and the number of complaints lodged with the company has soared to 300,000.

Since the recall, the FDA has been working with Menu Foods to investigate the source of any potential contamination. According to the FDA, it is unclear what exactly is causing the pet deaths. In samples of the recalled product, tests confirmed the presence of rat poison, aminopterin, which in high doses can cause kidney failure.

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