



The Shocking Truth About Commercial Dog Food



Warning. *The following story is shocking but true. It's taken with permission from an article published in 1990 by the Earth Island Journal.*¹

"The rendering plant floor is piled high with 'raw product'. Thousands of dead dogs and cats; heads and hooves from cattle, sheep, pigs and horses; whole skunks; rats and raccoons — all waiting to be processed. "In the ninety degree heat, the piles of dead animals seem to have a life of their own as millions of maggots swarm over the carcasses. "Two bandanna-masked men begin operating Bobcat mini-dozers, loading the 'raw' into a ten-foot deep stainless steel pit. They are undocumented workers from Mexico doing a dirty job. "A giant auger at the bottom of the pit begins to turn. Popping bones and squeezing flesh are sounds from a nightmare you will never forget. "Rendering is the process of cooking raw animal material to remove the moisture and fat. The rendering plant works like a giant kitchen. "The cooker, or 'chef', blends the raw product in order to maintain a certain ratio between the carcasses of pets, livestock, poultry waste and supermarket rejects. "Once the mass is cut into small pieces, it is transported to another auger for fine shredding. It is then cooked at 280 degrees for one hour. "The continuous batch cooking process goes on non-stop, 24 hours a day, seven days a week as meat is melted away from bones in the hot "soup". "During this cooking process, the "soup" produces a fat of yellow grease or tallow that rises to the top and is skimmed off. "The cooked meat and bone are sent to a hammer-mill press, which squeezes out the remaining moisture and pulverizes the product into a gritty powder. "Shaker screens sift out excess hair and large bone chips. Once the batch is finished, all that is left is yellow grease, meat and bone meal."

Welcome to the Dark Side of Recycling

So, what on earth could this unsavory concoction be legitimately used for?

Certainly not to make anything edible — right?

Unfortunately, as hard as it is to believe, the final product of this grisly process is sold as a source of protein and fat for making animal feeds.

That's right, food made to be fed to chickens, pigs, cattle — and dogs.

Every day, hundreds of rendering plants across America ship thousands of pounds of this recycled rubbish to ranches, farms, feed lots — and pet food manufacturers.

Each batch of rendered product must be labeled according to its dominant animal source.

So, the ingredients most likely to be made in this same way tend to have vague names that fail to clearly identify the source animal.

For example:

- Animal by-product meal
- Meat by-product meal
- Animal fat

All are products of similar rendering process.

**Toxic Waste
and Euthanized Pets**

However, this same system which converts waste into animal feed has also evolved into a recycling nightmare. That's because many rendering plants are unavoidably processing toxic waste, too. You see, dead animals are frequently accompanied by a host of unwanted contaminants. Pesticides enter the rendering process via tainted livestock. Fish oil is commonly contaminated with mercury and other heavy metals. Dead pets collected from shelters are frequently thrown into the grinder with their flea collars still attached. Insecticide-laced patches found on the skin of slaughtered cattle are also carelessly added to the mix. Antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals follow livestock directly into the soup. And drugs given to euthanize animals have been regularly found in the rendered product. Unwanted metal contaminants can be traced to a variety of sources including pet collars, ID tags, surgical pins and needles. Even plastics can sometimes end up in the process.

Even Spoiled Grocery Meats

Every day, out-of-date supermarket meats as well as spoiled fish and poultry arrive by the truckload, right in their original Styrofoam trays and shrink wrap. There's simply no time for the tedious task of unwrapping each individual package of the many thousands of rejected products. Plastic cattle ID tags, pesticide patches and even the green waste disposal bags containing dead pets from veterinary clinics and shelters are tossed directly into the pit. As difficult as it can be to imagine, literally all of it — plastic, paper, cardboard — goes right into the rendering machine. As shocking as it is to believe, much of what goes into some dog food is simply what's left over after the processing of human food — what's commonly classified as "unfit for human consumption".

**Unfit for Humans
Yet Legal for Dog Food**

Here's a short list of some of the unsavory raw materials already mentioned — plus a few others. And although each of the following ingredients are appalling, each can be lawfully used to make dog food:

- Slaughterhouse waste (organs, heads, hooves, beaks, feet)
- Bread and cereal rejects (cobs, stalks, mill sweepings)
- Dying, diseased and disabled farm animals
- Road kill (deer, skunks, and raccoons)
- Contaminated grain middlings
- Distiller fermentation waste
- Spoiled supermarket food
- Euthanized cats and dogs
- Restaurant grease
- Dead zoo animals

The Bottom Line

By now, it's probably become obvious the pet food industry can be nothing more than a sinister waste disposal vehicle for human food manufacturers — and a way to profit from its own garbage. That's why it's so important for every pet owner to be able to spot these dubious ingredients — and to avoid buying the products that have been made using these questionable materials.

Look for brands made by conscientious manufacturers who take pride in producing quality products — those designed to enhance and extend the life of your dog. You'll almost certainly be buying a better dog food.

Footnotes

1. **Keith Woods, "The Dark Side of Recycling", Earth Island Journal, Fall 1990**