



Notice to Industry

33/2008-09

SAFETY OF IMPORTED PET FOODS

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is aware of recent media articles alleging that certain imported pet food products may have been responsible for the death of several cats and dogs. This notice is to advise of AQIS requirements for the importation of pet foods.

- Heat or irradiation treatments are necessary to address animal quarantine pest and disease risks that may be associated with imported pet foods. These treatments are stipulated as an import condition on permits issued by AQIS
- Not all imported pet foods are irradiated. Importers of pet foods are offered the option of irradiation where they cannot or do not wish to comply with the necessary heat treatment levels. Biosecurity Australia recommends the level of irradiation applied by AQIS and this level is consistent with international practice.
- Irradiation has been available as an import condition for pet foods for many years and AQIS is not aware of any previous instances where irradiation has caused any significant safety concerns in imported pet foods. There are many published scientific papers on the effects of irradiation on food showing that irradiation is safe, though as with many food preservation methods, vitamin levels can be reduced. Manufacturers can choose to supplement vitamin levels to adjust for such effects.
- Under the *Quarantine Act (1908)*, AQIS only has the power to manage the quarantine risks posed by imported biological products, including pet food. The scope of the *Quarantine Act* does not cover non-quarantine risks such as environmental contaminants, industrial and agricultural chemicals, natural toxins or microorganisms that do not pose a quarantine risk but can affect animal health. AQIS therefore does not have the power to regulate the safety of imported pet food.
- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has worked with the Pet Food Industry Association of Australia (PFIAA) to develop a voluntary industry Code of Practice for the Manufacturing and Marketing of Pet Food.
- This code is intended to protect pets and consumers by controlling potential non quarantine hazards to animal health that might be associated with pet food.
- Ultimately it is the responsibility of pet food manufacturers and importers to determine if their products pose a risk to pet health as a consequence of contaminants that may be present.