



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ASPCA Advises Pet Parents to Pause Before Cooking Up a Storm
*Homemade Diets for Pets Need Veterinary Supervision***

NEW YORK—As investigations into several aspects of the recent pet food recall continue—including any link between **melamine**, the toxin identified in the contaminated foods, and renal failure in pets, especially cats—the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) has received several inquiries from concerned pet parents regarding the safety of homemade diets for their pets.

While these questions are natural, the ASPCA’s expert toxicologists and veterinarians urge pet parents to **fully research homemade diets for pets** before pulling out the chef’s hat.

“The ASPCA still generally recommends high-quality commercial diets for pets,” said Dr. Steven Hansen, a board-certified veterinary toxicologist and senior vice president with the ASPCA, who manages the ASPCA’s Midwest Office, including its Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) and Pet Nutrition and Science Advisory Service. Such foods are highly research-based, and are formulated with nutrients specific to your pet’s wellbeing

“Homemade diets can certainly provide pets with an adequate diet, but they do require a substantial amount of work and guidance by your veterinary team to ensure that the final product includes a complete nutritional balance,” explains Dr. Hansen.

“This is especially important if you plan to give your pet vegetarian or vegan food—**some fruits and vegetables, in certain doses and circumstances, can be extremely harmful to pets.**” For example, onions, garlic, chives, avocado, grapes, raisins, and macadamia nuts can all cause illness when eaten by pets. “And we **strongly advise against feeding pets raw foods**, since that may lead to salmonella poisoning.”

Dr. Louise Murray, director of medicine at the ASPCA's Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital, agrees. "Ask your veterinarian to refer you to a specialist with an advanced degree in animal nutrition, certified by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition (www.acvn.org). These **certified veterinary nutritionists** will be able to formulate a balanced recipe for your pet, which will give you peace of mind as well."

If a homemade pet food recipe is used, it is very important to remember the following:

- **Follow recipe directions exactly**, without any substitutions or omitting of ingredients. This includes processing and cooking instructions since some processing steps can destroy or damage the nutrients in the ingredients.
- It is also important to **have your pet examined by a veterinarian at least twice a year**, so that her health can be evaluated.
- Supplementing your pet's diet with healthy treats is fine, but **treats, even healthy ones, should not make up more than five to 10 percent of your pet's daily caloric intake**. Too many treats will throw off the balance of nutrients your pet is receiving from her standard diet.

Some appropriate healthy snacks for dogs include: carrot sticks, apple slices (without seeds), green beans, and cantaloupe. Pets that do not tolerate dietary changes well or have specific health conditions should not be given these types of extras unless approved by the pet's veterinarian.

The ASPCA's newly-created "Pet Food Recall Resource Center" provides pet parents with useful and timely information related to the recall and their pets' wellbeing, at www.aspca.org/recall . More information on pet care and nutrition tips are available at www.aspca.org .

The ASPCA continues to remind pet parents to monitor their pets' health closely until the exact nature and reach of the contamination has been confirmed. Adverse effects or deaths of pets linked to eating the contaminated foods should be reported to the FDA at <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/backgrounders/complain.html> . The FDA has also posted new information on the pet food recall and its regulation of pet foods at <http://www.fda.gov/cvm/petfoods.htm#newsreleases> . Additionally, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has a wealth of resources at <http://www.avma.org/aa/menufoodsrecall/default.asp> .

About the ASPCA[®]

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA[®] (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals[®]) was the first humane organization established in the Western Hemisphere and today has one million supporters. The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. The ASPCA provides national leadership in anti-cruelty, animal behavior, humane education, government affairs and public policy, shelter support, and animal poison control. The NYC headquarters houses a full-service animal hospital and adoption facility. The Humane

Law Enforcement department enforces New York's animal cruelty laws and is featured on the reality television series "Animal Precinct" on Animal Planet. Visit www.asPCA.org for more information.

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