

## **Health Alerts**

### **Health Advisory #157 - Canine Deaths/Illnesses Related to Aflatoxins in Diamond Dog Food - December 23, 2005**

Below is a notice sent by the NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to veterinarians enrolled in the NYSDAM disease surveillance and alert system. The NYS Department of Health has shared this information with local health departments to provide awareness of the incident and information contained in the public statement from this pet food manufacturer in case inquiries are received from the public.

There is not any current risk to human health in NYS that the Department of Health is aware of. Additional information will be disseminated if any concerns for public health arise. Media inquiries should be directed to Diamond Pet Foods as indicated in their statement. Pet health questions should be directed to the NYSDAM at (518)-457-3502.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has just been made aware of a serious aflatoxin contamination problem in dog food manufactured by Diamond Pet Food. Since December 13th there have been reports, primarily from the Rochester, NY area, of at least 5 owners with dogs that became sick after being fed a Diamond Pet Food product. A total of 14 dogs have been reported affected, six of whom have died thus far. Testing of 3 of the dogs that died through the New York State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell University has confirmed aflatoxicosis as the probable cause of death of all three animals. In addition, testing of Diamond Pet Food samples from these households has revealed at least one sample containing 239 ppb, 2.5 times the toxic level of aflatoxin for dogs. Diamond Pet Food has also reported a finding of 250 ppb in one sample.

All animals (including people), birds and fish are susceptible to aflatoxins. Birds and fish are most sensitive to the effects. Dogs are exposed to aflatoxins after ingesting aflatoxin contaminated food. Aflatoxins in the amount of 0.5 to 1.0 mg/kg may be lethal. Sensitivity to aflatoxins in the dog depends on individual susceptibility, age, pregnancy status, and nutritional status.

#### **Signs and Symptoms in the Dog**

Acute - vomiting within hours of ingesting contaminated food, anorexia, depression, increased water consumption and urine output, and possibly death within 3 days of ingesting the contaminated feed. Dogs may have evidence of bleeding problems such as blood in the stool or vomitus, bruising, or accumulation of blood in chest or abdominal cavities.

Subacute - occurs after chronic ingestion of lower levels over 2 - 3 weeks. Dogs will be lethargic, anorectic, experiencing increased water consumption and urination, changes in liver enzymes, and jaundice. These dogs may die from bleeding disorders.

Chronic - Chronic ingestion of very low levels of aflatoxins may cause immunosuppression, increased susceptibility to infectious agents, and may also be associated with non-specific signs.

There is an increased risk of liver cancer in animals exposed to chronic low levels of aflatoxins and in animals that have recovered from acute or subacute poisonings.

#### **Treatment**

There is no known treatment beyond removing the exposure source of aflatoxin and supportive care. Acute ingestions of aflatoxin may be treated with activated charcoal if ingestion was known to have occurred in the previous few hours.

The following is an excerpt from the statement released by Diamond Pet Food on December 20, 2005:

Media Contact:

Mark Brinkman, Diamond Pet Food  
(573) 229-4203

Diamond Pet Food has discovered aflatoxin in a product manufactured at our facility in Gaston, South Carolina. Aflatoxin is a naturally occurring toxic chemical by-product from the growth of the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*, on corn and other crops.

Out of an abundance of caution, we have notified our distributors and recommended they hold the sale of all Diamond Pet Food products formulated with corn that were produced out of our Gaston facility (see complete list below). Please note that products manufactured at our facilities in Meta, Missouri and Lathrop, California are not affected. The Gaston facility date codes are unique from other Diamond facility codes in that either the eleventh or twelfth character in the date code will be a capital "G" (in reference to Gaston). (New York is among the states serviced by the Gaston facility.)

We are rapidly analyzing retained samples of all products produced in Gaston so we can isolate specific lot numbers impacted and provide this information to our distributors, retailers and customers as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, if your pet is showing any symptoms of illness, including sluggishness or lethargy combined with a reluctance to eat, yellowish tint to the eyes and/or gums, and severe or bloody diarrhea, please consult your veterinarian immediately.

Product quality and customer satisfaction are important to us. We pledge to keep you updated as new developments occur.

Gaston Facility Products Removed From Sale:

Diamond Low Fat Dog Food	Professional Chicken & Rice Senior Dog Food
Diamond Hi-Energy Dog Food	Professional Reduced Fat Diamond Maintenance Dog Food
Chicken & Rice Dog Food	Diamond Performance Dog Food
Professional Adult Dog Food	Diamond Premium Adult Dog Food

Professional Large-Breed Puppy Food	Diamond Puppy Food
Professional Puppy Food	Diamond Maintenance Cat Food
Professional Reduced Fat Cat Food	Diamond Professional Cat Food
Country Value Puppy	Professional Adult Cat Food
Country Value Adult Dog	Country Value High Energy Dog
Country Value Adult Cat Food	Kirkland Signature Maintenance Cat Food
Canine Club Adult Dog Food	

Owners of animals that become ill who have been feeding a Diamond Pet Food product are advised to take their animal and a feed sample to their private veterinarian immediately. The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets will be contacting feed control officials in other states as well.