



Is it safe to handle your pets' food?

Think pet foods are getting safer? Think again. It's getting so bad you may not even want to touch your pet's food.

The Food and Drug Administration announced it is stepping up its efforts to test pet food for contamination with salmonella.

Food officials are concerned that humans handling pet food or treats contaminated with salmonella could accidentally ingest the bacteria, thereby making them sick.

The FDA aims to test pet food, treats and supplements to see just how many of them are contaminated with salmonella in the first place, as well as to figure out the "antimicrobial susceptibilities of each Salmonella" that is discovered. It also plans to make sure the salmonella-contaminated pet food is removed from the markets.

A number of pet-food retailers, including PetSmart, PetCo, Costco, Walmart and Target, contributed samples for the FDA test, AOL Daily Finance reported.

Salmonella bacteria can cause diarrhea, fever and cramps in people who have been infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Even though the symptoms usually only last four to seven days, some people's symptoms get worse and they have to be hospitalized.

Salmonella poisoning is extremely common, with 40,000 cases reported each year in the U.S. (not counting unreported cases), according to the CDC.

Salmonella is most commonly contracted by eating raw meat, seafood and poultry (when feces can get into the meat during butchering, which can then be ingested by humans if not washed or cooked properly), according to the Mayo Clinic. Raw eggs can also be infected with salmonella if the chicken is infected, and some fruits and vegetables watered with contaminated water can also have salmonella.

The Chicago Tribune reported that people should wash their hands after feeding pets to prevent contracting salmonella, and that it's also a good idea to keep babies away from animals' pet food dishes.

Last year, the CDC published a report in the journal Pediatrics about a salmonella outbreak from pet food that sickened 79 people in 21 states, with many of those people being kids under age 2.

Aside from dog food, 5,000 pounds of pine nuts from Wegmans Food Markets were recently recalled because they were possibly contaminated with salmonella, the FDA reported.

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