

UPDATED, NOVEMBER 26, 2008

ORIJEN CAT FOOD | AUSTRALIA

On November 20th, 2008 Champion Petfoods announced a **VOLUNTARY RECALL** of **ORIJEN** brand cat food sold in Australia.

The recall is restricted to **AUSTRALIA ONLY** and was issued in response to reports from the Australian veterinary community of 27 cats showing neurological symptoms after consuming ORIJEN.

While there is no definitive link between ORIJEN CAT food and illness in the Australian cats, we have recalled our product from Australia as a precautionary measure.

The following 'Questions and Answers' are intended to explain:

- **WHY THE PROBLEM IS EXCLUSIVE TO AUSTRALIA**
- **THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM**
- **PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND AVAILABLE TREATMENT OPTIONS**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: **DOES THE RECALL EXTEND BEYOND AUSTRALIA?**

A: No, The recall is for **AUSTRALIA ONLY**

Q: **HOW DO YOU KNOW THE PROBLEM IS LIMITED TO AUSTRALIA?**

A: **WHILE ORIJEN SALES IN AUSTRALIA ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN ¼ OF 1 PERCENT OF TOTAL SALES, AUSTRALIA ACCOUNTS FOR 100% OF CASES.**

- ORIJEN was sold in Australia only for a 9 month period of February through October 2008.
- During this time **ONLY 6 PALLETS** of ORIJEN CAT food actually entered retail distribution in Australia. This equates to 200 Australian cats fed daily over the 9 month period.
- Of these 200 cats, 27 are reported having the syndrome of which 4 have been unfortunately euthanized and 4 that are thankfully recovering.
- During the same nine month period, shipments of ORIJEN CAT food equivalent to feed 85,000 cats were made to 49 other countries.
- **ZERO** cases were reported outside of Australia.

Q: **WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT AUSTRALIA?**

A: **IRRADIATION**

Champion Petfoods has investigated factors that make Australia unique from our other ORIJEN markets, both export and domestic.

- Of the 50 countries to which we supply ORIJEN, Australia is the only country that requires the **IRRADIATION TREATMENT** of ORIJEN cat foods.

Q: WHAT IS IRRADIATION?

A: Irradiation is a process that passes Cobalt 60 gamma rays through food to reduce microbial hazards, specifically, in this case - imported pet foods containing fresh meats.

Q: IS ALL DRY CAT FOOD IN AUSTRALIA IRRADIATED?

A: **NO.**

- The overwhelming majority of dry cat foods in Australia do not require irradiation. ORIJEN is one of very few that must comply with this regulation.

Q: WHY IS ORIJEN IRRADIATED?

A: Australia requires irradiation on foods that include fresh meats or that have been cooked at low temperatures.

- Other pet foods that are cooked at high temperatures or are made with chicken meal, turkey meal, fish meal or other ingredients that are pre-cooked at high temperatures prior to inclusion in pet foods do not have to be irradiated.

Q: ISN'T IRRADIATION GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS SAFE?

A: **YES.** But Irradiation is typically applied to human foods at doses between 5-10kGY.

- ORIJEN in Australia received a minimum level of 50 kGY and records recovered from the Australian irradiation facility show that ORIJEN was irradiated to levels reaching 61 kGY. **THESE ARE VERY SUBSTANTIAL LEVELS OF IRRADIATION.**
- Studies indicate that cats fed dry cat food irradiated at levels between 36 and 47kGY develop the same neurological symptoms as seen in the Australian cats.

Q: HOW DOES IRRADIATION AFFECT ORIJEN?

A: In recent weeks, Champion Petfoods has conducted extensive testing on ORIJEN Cat sold in Australia. From a combination of laboratory test results, scientific papers from reputable journals, and consultation from various nutritional experts and veterinarians around the world, we have discovered 2 primary factors:

1) VITAMIN A DEPLETION IN IRRADIATED FOODS

- Our tests show that irradiation of ORIJEN Cat at 50kGY causes a depletion of vitamin A of up to 77%. The irradiation levels applied to ORIJEN in Australia exceeded this amount.
- We tested ORIJEN cat foods at varying levels of irradiation (0 kGY (control), 25kGY and 50kGY). The results show a direct and linear relationship between the increase in irradiation dosage and vitamin A depletion. In other words, more vitamins were depleted as the level of irradiation increased.
- Literature published by the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (2007) shows that depletion of vitamin A from irradiated cat food is associated with the same symptoms in cats as are reported in Australia (CASSIDY ET. AL, 2007).
- An excerpt from the American College of Veterinary Pathologists' study supports this finding:

*"Both SPF (specific pathogen free) and conventional status cats had been fed to appetite on the same commercial formula ration (Gilbertson and Page Ltd., Welwyn Garden City, UK), **except that the ration fed to the SPF cats had been irradiated by a single-exposure gamma-radiation treatment between 36.3 and 47.3 kGy (Cobalt 60 irradiator; Isotron Ireland, Tullamore, Ireland).** The irradiated diet was consumed to the same extent as the non-irradiated diet, and affected animals did not lose weight until the developing ataxia hindered their access to food... **Following supplementation of the irradiated diet with pasteurized proprietary tinned cat food in the winter of 2001 and, ultimately, the replacement of the irradiated diet with an equivalent pasteurized diet, no further cases occurred**".*

continues from pg. 2

The report describes an investigation of 8 cases where the disease is associated with the long-term feeding of cats on a gamma-irradiated dry food diet. This study is available on the internet from the link below:

www.vetpathology.org/cgi/content/full/44/6/912

2) THE FORMATION AND RELEASE OF FREE RADICALS IN IRRADIATED FOODS

A second major impact of irradiation is the formation and release of free radicals.

Irradiation does not affect all foods equally. ORIJEN is a nutritionally dense food with much higher levels of long-chain fatty acids (DHA, EPA) than conventional pet foods. These fatty acids are susceptible to oxidation following irradiation. Bi-products from fatty acid oxidation, mainly free radicals, are released into the body with the potential to cause tissue damage.

Combined with the loss of antioxidant vitamins (see Vitamin A described above), free radicals are thought to be a major contributing factor.

- When irradiation is applied to food, the molecular structure of long chain fatty acids (DHA, EPA) is altered. This causes the formation of free radicals that are then released into the body.
- ORIJEN CAT foods contain very high levels of EPA and DHA unsaturated fatty acids and therefore have a much greater potential for free radical formation (in response to irradiation) than do conventional dry cat foods.
- Scientific evidence shows that increased oxidative bi-products combined with decreased presence of antioxidant vitamins (see above) are consistent with the symptoms shown in Australian cats. The fact that cats in Australia treated with vitamin and antioxidant supplementation have shown improvements supports this finding.
- An excerpt from the American College of Veterinary Pathologists' study supports this position:

*"Irradiation is known to reduce the vitamin content of food, the effect of which may be indirect, in that inadequate amounts of these compounds may be available to counteract the effects of free radicals generated by normal cell metabolism. A previous study found that irradiation of a feline diet containing 9.8% fat with a 2- to 5-Mrad dose totally destroyed its vitamin A and β -carotene content, whereas thiamine, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine), and folic acid were depleted to a lesser extent, and vitamin E concentrations appeared to be unaffected by this dose of radiation. **The relatively high dietary fat requirement of cats may be significant in this context in that irradiation of this fat component could potentially generate higher concentrations of micronutrient-damaging free radicals than would be generated on irradiating diets of lower fat content.**"*

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I LIVE IN AUSTRALIA AND FEED ORIJEN CAT?

A: Please return any unused portion of ORIJEN Cat food to the place of purchase for a full refund. If you think that you see any symptoms of this syndrome in your cat please contact your veterinary immediately. There is evidence that health can improve with vitamin and antioxidant supplementation.

SIGNS

- Changes in your cat's way of walking – the gait may be wobbly, or your cat's legs may slip under when going around a corner
- Unwilling to jump onto sofa or bed
- Loss of balance and falling off of bench-tops, tables etc

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

- Fresh food carnivorous diet consisting of fresh meat, occasional fish, occasional vegetables
- Premium dry food if unable to feed the above

continues from pg. 3

- Anti-oxidants – Cysteine/Glutathione to protect liver and kidneys – for 6-8 weeks
- Omega fatty acids ie. Fish Oil to act as anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant
- Vitamin A – oral form for 3 week period – weight of the animal and specific dose is important, please consult with your vet or with Champion Petfoods for specific dosages.
Regular exercise and play
- Access to fresh spring water or reverse osmosis (RO) water

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Anti-oxidants, Omega fatty acid, Vitamins
- Prednisone, Metacam or Antibiotics if needed on veterinarian's advice
- Exercise, movement and physical therapy are crucial for recovery

Q: ARE ORIJEN DOG FOODS IN AUSTRALIA ALSO IRRADIATED?

A: **YES.** All ORIJEN diets sold in Australia and subjected to the same irradiation process.

Q: ARE ORIJEN DOG FOODS SAFE?

A: Champion Petfoods has examined the issue of safety in dogs very closely.

- ORIJEN dog diets have been sold and consumed in Australia over the same 9 months that ORIJEN Cat has been sold, only in much greater quantities.
- **NO DOGS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED.** Dogs and cats are two different species with different nutritional needs and metabolic pathways. For example, cats require higher levels of vitamins than dogs (AAFCO 2008), and cats are highly sensitive to changes in vitamins or oxidative by-products (such as occur from irradiation).
- There are no reports or scientific studies linking irradiation to health problems in dogs.

Q: WILL CHAMPION CONTINUE TO SELL ORIJEN PRODUCTS IN AUSTRALIA?

A: **NO.**

Veterinarians in Australia have recently reported households where both dogs and cats are present and cases where cats prefer ORIJEN dog food over the brand of cat food they receive.

- Of the 27 cases of illness, at least 2 cases involve cats eating ORIJEN dog food.
- As we are unable to control for cats consuming ORIJEN dog food, there is a small but measurable risk of cross-feeding in dual pet (dogs and cats) households.
- Implemented as a precautionary measure to prevent cross contamination, Champion Petfoods has elected to stop selling ORIJEN dog foods in Australia.

EVERY ORIJEN PRODUCT IS RIGOROUSLY TESTED BEFORE LEAVING OUR FACTORY. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ORIJEN CAT FOODS IN AUSTRALIA ALL ORIJEN PRODUCTS SHOULD BE USED IN CONFIDENCE.

Champion Petfoods Ltd. is a family-owned award-winning pet food producer. For over 25 years, our mission is to promote the health of dogs and cats worldwide – a mandate in which we are passionately engaged.

Every member of our family and the vast majority of our staff share their homes with beloved dogs and cats. These relationships enrich our lives and empower our spirits. At Champion, making pet food is much more than a business operation - it is our calling, our true passion.

It is with our own pets in mind that we extend our deepest empathy to the Australian families affected by this regrettable circumstance. While we will no longer sell any of our pet foods in Australia we remain committed to on-going research into this case with the hope that our findings can be used to better inform the international community on the potential effects of irradiation on nutrient dense dry cat food.

Sincerely,



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