

Safe Handling Tips for Pet Foods and Treats

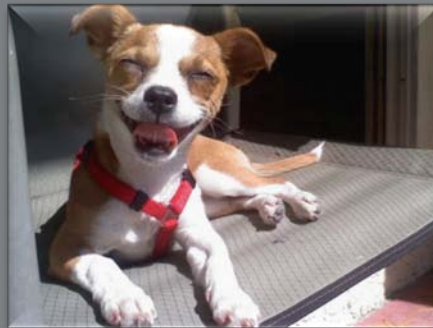
Consumers can take steps to help prevent food borne illness, including Salmonella-related illness, when handling pet foods and treats. These products, like many other foods, can be susceptible to harmful bacterial contamination.

Salmonella in pet foods and treats can cause serious infections in dogs and cats, and in people too, especially children, older people, and those with compromised immune systems. Salmonella in pet foods and treats can potentially be transferred to people ingesting or handling the contaminated products.

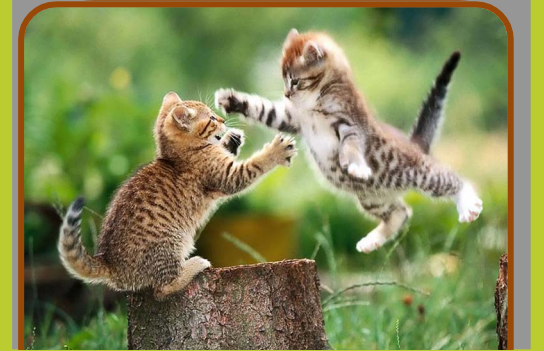
To minimize your family's risk of infections from contaminated pet foods and treats, simply follow a few safe handling instructions and tips.



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Handling Pet Food Safely

Keeping you and your family safe.



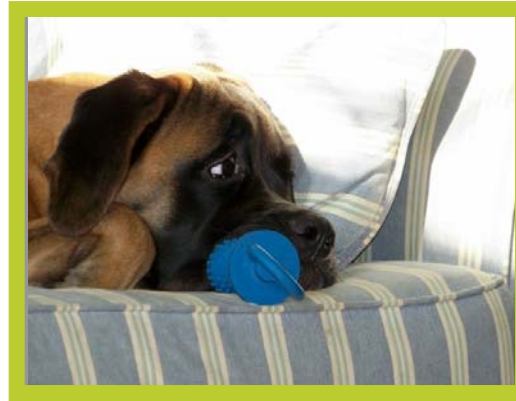
**Virginia Department of
Agriculture and
Consumer Services**

Purchasing Tips

Purchase products, whether canned or bagged, in good condition. Make sure there are no signs of damage to the packaging such as tears, dents or discoloration. Dents can create small holes that are hard to see. These openings, as well as tears in bags, can allow bacteria to enter the food and begin the process of spoiling the originally safe product.

Storage

Promptly refrigerate or discard any unused or leftover wet pet food. Refrigerators should be set at 40°F. Dry products should be stored in a cool, dry place – under 80°F. If possible, store dry pet food in its original bag inside a clean, dedicated plastic container with a lid, keeping the top of the bag folded closed. Keep pets and children away from food storage and preparations areas as well as garbage and household trash.



Preparation

Salmonella, if present in contaminated pet foods or treats, has the potential to not only harm your pet, but also cause serious infection in people. Remember, bacteria can go from people to animals or from animals to people. Here are some important tips:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with hot water and soap before and after handling pet foods and treats.
- Wash pet food bowls, dishes and scooping utensils with soap and hot water after each use.
- Do not use the pet's feeding bowl as a scooping utensil – use a clean, dedicated scoop or spoon instead.
- Infants should not be bathed in kitchen sinks because of the risk of cross-contamination.
- Feed pets somewhere other than the kitchen if possible.



Raw Pet Food Diets

Raw pet foods, particularly meats and poultry, can be a significant source of bacterial contamination and infection – for the pets that eat it and for the people who are preparing it. However, some people prefer to feed their pets these types of diets and in some cases it is shown to have merit. FDA does not believe raw meat and poultry pet foods are consistent with the goal of protecting the public from significant health risks, particularly when these products are brought into the home or used to feed domestic pets. If you choose to feed raw pet food, your obligation for pristine hygiene is even more important for the safety of you, your family and your pets.