

Ferret Nutrition Roundtable, Ferret Nutrition Question #9

What would you like ferret owners to know about your food in light of the pet food recalls (mainly for dog and cat foods) of 2007?

By Sandy Meyer

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Ferret Nutrition Question #9

What would you like ferret owners to know about your food in light of the pet food recalls (mainly for dog and cat foods) of 2007?

SW: Our diet (Brisky Pet's Old Mill Ferret Diet) is manufactured in the United States of America from domestic ingredients only. It is manufactured in small lots for freshness. All lots are recorded and tracked, and all diets are labeled with the lot numbers in case there is ever a concern over a particular batch of diet.

TW: Singly, the most important thing is that our food is made in and all the ingredients are from the United States. Our plant is EUS-certified and FDA, USDA-certified. Those are important issues. There are no glutens in our food. Glutens, per se, are not bad, but where they come from can be. So these are just some very specific issues.

All of our suppliers are out of the human-food area, and that's not saying that our foods are human-grade. Nobody can in reality make that statement. I'm not sure there are any foods on the market that are human-grade all the way. They may have some human-grade material, but, for the most part, all the food that goes in the pet diets come from the human-grade chain. So they're good-quality ingredients as long as they are coming from good suppliers.

We're the oldest ferret food manufacturer in this country. There were no other ferret foods other than the pelleted foods or the old mink foods when we first came out. We've been around for that long. We were ahead of all of our competitors by coming out with a food, and still lead as far as research and development go. When people call here, they get a straight answer. It's not something that we take lightly. As important as the food we make is the service we give. If we are going to maintain our leadership position, we will maintain our customer service in the same vein as we do our food.

AP: We are EU-certified, which is a stricter guideline that we have to abide by. That's really important to us. And we are in the ferret community; we are right there and we make sure we can give you the best ferret diets that are possible. When somebody has a concern, we listen to people's demands. We really do listen to what the ferret owners have to say. We're always available. You'll never get "press 1 to talk to so-and-so." As a ferret owner, when you call here, if I'm not here, they will get in touch with me so I can call you back. So, if I'm at home, I'll call you, because that's what we're all about.

GS: No ZuPreem diet was involved in the pet food recall in 2007. All ingredients included in ZuPreem Premium Ferret Diet are from the United States. Additionally, ZuPreem maintains stringent quality-control standards during the manufacturing and packaging processes.

For the past seven years, ZuPreem has received a "superior" certificate of achievement — the highest rating awarded — from the American Institute of Baking. The ZuPreem warehouse, its manufacturers and all storage facilities are AIB-certified. This certification is a "human grade" classification that verifies that the proper storage, sanitation and processing of the diets are stringently followed. ZuPreem allocates resources each year to ensure that all facilities consistently maintain the superior AIB-rating.

JF: We did not and do not use any of the tainted ingredient sources.

KJ: We don't use imported ingredients in our foods. We use low-ash chicken meal with added taurine, enzymes and amino acids, as well as chelated trace minerals.

KS: None of the products we manufacture were involved in the pet dog and cat food recall that occurred in 2007. Unlike many products sold in this country, all of our diets are made in the United States of America from ingredients grown in the United States or Canada. Rigid quality controls are in place for all of our products, which we monitor directly to assure the

highest quality diets possible.

LG: No Wysong foods were involved in the recall. Dr. Wysong formulates, and our company produces, our own foods domestically. All ingredients are screened for quality. Unlike most ferret diets on the market, Wysong Ferret Archetypal diets are True Non-Thermally processed (raw) and can be truly said to match the genetic expectations of the ferret. Additionally, if caregivers take advantage of Wysong's continuing free educational efforts, Wysong.net, and rotate proper natural foods, the chances of toxicity are greatly reduced.

MM: We don't source ingredients from China. We do all of our own manufacturing, so we're completely vertically integrated. We have our own extruders; as a matter of fact, we extrude foods for many companies around the world, ferrets or whatever.

We do our own manufacturing, and most companies don't. Most companies have their food manufactured at a third party and then they bring the food and then resell it themselves. So our quality control, we have a handle on it. We buy the raw ingredients and we mix them, we clean them, we blend them, we package them and we ship them. We do everything ourselves so we are absolutely assured that I don't have melamine or anything else in the stream.

[Two things to remember are:] 1. We don't buy from China and 2. We have access to all our ingredients. We only do the high-protein foods. Ours are about 52 percent protein, 22 percent fat and less than 8 percent carbohydrates. We have an extremely low level of carbohydrates, great digestibility, and we have a level of biosudicose in the food that does extremely well at health benefits. We get reports back all the time about sick ferrets that were sick for years doing extremely well now — ferrets that grow all the hair back. We feed strictly carnivore diet and our diets were patterned after the analysis of a mouse. Mice are the primer food eaten in the world by most carnivores, they start the food chain.

PR: Every one of our ingredients is U.S.-made. We track everything back to its source. We test every ingredient. We had 100 percent confidence going through this that we were safe. I think knowing your sources and knowing the quality that they have for your ingredients goes a long way. When you're just a commodity buyer and you're just buying commodities to put into your food, from one source or the other, you have reason to be concerned.

Are there ferret foods out there that are just based on a lot of commodity-type things and should ferret owners be concerned? Absolutely. We communicated that on our website [when] they were breaking that people have to be concerned. Frankly, we had a few phone calls, but outside of that, people visit our website on a regular basis for updates and information and there was no concern whatsoever.

My recommendation is for people to read the labels. Turn them over. We don't have the fanciest, slickest bag because we want people to know that we're putting our money into the quality of the food inside the bag. Turn it over and read the ingredients. You're going to see that four of our first five ingredients are meat. That makes a big difference. When you're feeding a colony of very high-quality pet ferrets, like we are, you cannot skimp on quality. When people choose to feed Marshalls, they truly are feeding the very best, and the reason for that is because I have a very large investment in our whole breeding colony and nobody else in the whole world can say that.

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Meet The Panelists

Each ferret-food manufacturer representative is identified by his or her initials.

SW: Stefan Wawrzynski, operations director for Brisky Pet Products.

TW: Tom Willard, Ph.D., president of Totally Ferret/Performance Foods Inc.

AP: April Pietroiaco, ferret specialist at Totally Ferret.

GS: Gail Shepherd, senior marketing manager at ZuPreem, a division of Premium Nutritional Products Inc.

JF: Jack Fallenstein, owner of Triple F Farms Inc.

KJ: Ken Johnson, national accounts manager at D & D Commodities Ltd.

KS: Kathy Schneider, technical services manager for Central Avian & Small Animal, a division of Kaytee Products Inc.



LG: Lucas Gillis, supervisor, office manager at Wysong Corp.

MM: Michael Massey, president of Pretty Bird International Inc.

PR: Peter Reid, president of Marshall Pet Products Inc.