

Contaminated pet food, treats can harm people, too

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FDA recommends careful handling of what you feed your dog or cat.

(HealthDay)— Tainted pet foods and treats may make more than your dog or cat sick, new data from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suggests.

Harmful bacteria can also make owners ill if they handle contaminated pet products improperly, and bacteria such as salmonella can spread from pets to people, the agency said.

"Ultimately, we're hoping to learn ways FDA can help minimize the incidence of foodborne illness associated with pet foods and treats," Renate Reimschuessel, head of the FDA's Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network, said in an agency news release.

To collect the new data, the FDA worked with 11 veterinary labs across the United States to investigate pet infections reported by [pet owners](#). One of the main focuses was [salmonella infections](#).

Of almost 3,000 dogs and cats tested so far, fewer than 100 have tested positive for salmonella, the agency found.

"Pet owners should know, though, that almost half of the dogs that tested positive for salmonella showed no symptoms," Reimschuessel said.

And a dog with no signs of illness can still be carrying salmonella, which can spread to people, she added.

The dogs that have tested positive for [salmonella](#) were more likely to have eaten raw pet food, Reimschuessel said. Raw food is not heated or cooked, which might explain why there was a higher likelihood of contamination, officials said.

There are a number of things pet owners can do to protect themselves, including checking the FDA's list of recalled pet products. Other measures include:

- Feed pets in areas that are easily cleaned and sanitized
- Wash hands carefully after handling pet foods
- Earmark specific utensils for use only with pet foods
- Wash counters and any other surfaces that come into contact with pet foods
- Keep dry pet foods in a sealed container in a cool, dry place

- Never buy [pet food](#) in dented cans or damaged packaging

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [healthy pets and people](#).

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