



How Pet Food is Regulated

The authority to regulate Pet Food is vested in Federal and in State Law. The Federal agency responsible for animal feed regulation is the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), which regulates animal feed, including pet food, under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic act and Federal Code, Title 21. Each state has a program responsible for regulating animal feed, including pet food, under the laws and rules of their specific jurisdiction, usually associated with the State Departments of Agriculture.

A third entity, known as the Association of American Feed Control Officials Incorporated; otherwise known as AAFCO, is important to an understanding of how the feed regulatory system works. AAFCO, of itself, has no regulatory authority, although its membership is the officials of USFDA and the State Feed Control Officials. AAFCO has established a uniform code, known as the Model Bill, Model Regulation and Model Pet and Specialty Pet Food Regulation which serves as the standard on which the states base their feed laws and regulations in order to maintain a substantial degree of uniformity throughout the US. AAFCO also has established the uniform definitions of numerous feed ingredients in order to provide a common understanding of what is used in animal feeds.

While the roles of the USFDA and the State Feed Control Programs overlap, there are differences. Federal authority is primarily concerned with interstate feed distribution and state authority is involved with products distributed within their jurisdiction. There is a tremendous amount of cooperative activity between the USFDA and the States through information exchange, cooperative agreements, contracts and grants. The state feed control officials do perform the major portion of the regulation of feed and pet food products within their jurisdictions.

State and federal law and regulations enumerate many requirements for pet food, including the requirements that the products be unadulterated and correctly labeled. Specific activities which both systems engage in include marketplace monitoring of products and labeling, process control inspections at facilities manufacturing animal feeds formulated with drugs, inspections for compliance with the ruminant feed ban, inspection of ingredient manufacturers and complete feed manufacturers, investigations of adulteration and misbranding issues and product sampling, to name a few.

AAFCO has been pressing for, and has drafted model language designed to enhance the process control requirements and inspections for non-medicated feed, which includes specific process control points for plants which manufacture pet food and specialty pet foods. It is our hope that industry embraces this very necessary enhancement to feed safety.

David Syverson
Chair, AAFCO Pet Food Committee