

(Translation)

2 May 2014

Clerk to Panel
(Attn.: Ms Alice LEUNG)
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms LEUNG,

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Issues relating to the Regulation of Pet Food

Clerk to Panel wrote to this Bureau on 24 April 2014, conveying the concerns about the regulation of pet food raised by Hon Chan Chi-chuen vide his letter to the Panel Chairperson dated 22 April 2014. This Bureau is requested to provide a response. Our reply is set out below.

At present, we are not aware of any large-scale commercial enterprise that is producing pet food in Hong Kong. Some pet owners may choose to prepare food for their pets from fresh ingredients. In recent years, we see a growing tendency for pet owners to feed their pets with processed and pre-packaged food readily available in the market. As pet animals often feed on one single food item on a long-term basis, pet food producers usually employ veterinary surgeons and animal nutritionists to develop different food products providing a balanced diet for different types of animals. This is to ensure that the pet food products are suitable for long-term consumption by pet animals and are able to sustain the pets' healthy growth and living.

Unlike the case of food for human consumption, there are currently no safety standards for pet food commonly recognized by international organisations for reference. Producers mainly rely on the professional advice of individual experts or make reference to standards drawn up by individual organisations. In most cases, the pet food sold in Hong Kong is compound formulated food imported from the United States, Europe and Australia. As pet food producing countries or regions, they have their own regulatory regimes for the production, quality control and description of ingredients of pet food. For instance, the European Union has enacted specific laws on animal food. The United States has in place a single regime governing food for both human and animal consumption. In Australia and Canada, self-regulation by the trade is practised. Different jurisdictions have developed different regulatory approaches according to their own needs. Major pet food producing countries usually have more stringent regulations. Where necessary, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will proactively seek information on the quality of pet food products from the importers or distributors concerned. Pet owners wishing to know more about the particulars of pet food or the needs of individual pets may seek such information from distributors or veterinary surgeons.

In most cases, pre-packaged pet food available in the local market carries labels that provide such information as the description of its ingredients, places of origin etc. The Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) prohibits any person from applying false or misleading trade descriptions, including descriptions as to composition or place of origin, to goods in the course of trade or business. The Ordinance applies to general goods including pet food. Members of the public may report to the Customs and Excise Department any suspected cases of false trade descriptions in relation to pet food. For cases of suspected contamination of pet food products, they may make enquiries with the source of purchase and importer or distributor of the pet food concerned or contact AFCD. Where necessary, AFCD will assist the complainant by following up with the importer or distributor concerned. Aggrieved consumers may lodge complaints about pet food with the Consumer Council.

Over the past years, there have not been any significant pet food safety incidents in Hong Kong. As the safety of pet food in Hong Kong is generally satisfactory, we do not see a need to introduce legislation to regulate pet food for the time being. AFCD will continue to keep in view overseas developments in the control of pet food, as well as the overall safety of pet food in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, AFCD collects and keeps information about major pet food producers and distributors in Hong Kong. This would help facilitate follow-up actions in the event of enquiries or

complaints concerning such pet food. We will review animal welfare-related legislation from time to time to ensure that the control regime remains relevant and appropriate in changing circumstances and meets the needs of our society.

Yours sincerely,

(Alison Lo)
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.

Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Attn.: Dr Thomas Sit)

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