The Impact of a Food Safety Certification Statement and/or Seal on Pet Food Packaging

MF Raasch

Procter & Gamble Pet Care, Mason, OH, 45040; Email: Raasch.mf@pg.com

The quality and safety measures that pet food companies take may not be readily apparent to veterinarians and pet owners. Purchasers of premium pet foods are interested in this type of information to help them make good choices for their pets. No longer is nutritional adequacy sufficient; today’s consumers are looking for more. An outcome of pets’ becoming important family members has been the expectation that pet food be held to the same safety standards as human food. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the impact of a third party food safety/quality certification statement/seal on pet food packaging with veterinarians and to review what major pet food companies are doing to communicate food quality and safety on their packaging.

A literature review looking at scholarly papers about certifications on food labels was completed and an 18 question electronic survey was submitted to 3,000 companion animal practicing veterinarians across the U.S. A total of 100 veterinarians completed the survey. Overall most veterinarians agreed that the safety of pet food was important to them, that certification would improve pet food safety, and that they would be more willing to recommend brands with certification. The addition of a visible signal on pet food packaging whose manufacturers had independent third party safety/quality certification would make it easier for veterinarians to direct clients to these brands.

This research provides a better understanding of what veterinarians think about pet food safety and the use of a food safety certification statement and/or seal on pet food packaging. Further study to determine what pet owners think and what would be most impactful to them would also be useful. Finally, this research may offer an opportunity for pet food manufacturers to increase awareness of their quality and safety measures
and to gain trust and confidence from both veterinarians and pet owners in pet food.

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