

## FDA Says It Halted Melamine-Tainted Pet Treats

**“The system worked,” the Food and Drug Administration says**

*By Rose Gordon*

Bird treats were refused before they reached consumers due to poison and unsafe additive suspicions.

Bird and small animal treats produced in China, which tested positive for melamine, were accidentally sent into the U.S. market for sale but were stopped before reaching consumers, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says.

Sampling by the FDA's Los Angeles District showed that pet treats imported from China, including treat seed sticks for cockatiels and honey cakes for hamsters tested positive for melamine, according to a government report. Those treats, about 54,000 units, “were placed on hold for redelivery and was erroneously shipped into commerce,” according to a Dec. 26, 2007, FDA enforcement report. A company-initiated recall, however, stopped the products from going beyond their distributors, a spokesperson for the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine says.

“The import alert on melamine in pet products from China worked as it alerted the LOS-DO [Los Angeles District] to check,” said Laura Bradbard, acting director of veterinary center's Communications Dept. “The company informed their nine distributors of the recall and the product returned for destruction. The system worked and the product did not get to pets.”

When melamine became the no. 1 suspect in the cause of a wave of sicknesses and deaths among dogs and cats eating certain pet foods last year, the FDA issued an import alert to warn its inspectors to look out for the chemical, particularly in imports from China. The illegal additive was previously reported in wheat gluten and rice protein concentrate added to dog and cat food only, not in other pet food.

The treats (listed below) were imported by United Pet Group of Cincinnati, Ohio, and shipped to distributors in Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Texas and Washington, the report said. A spokesperson with Spectrum Brands which operates United Pet Group, makers of Eight in One Pet Products which includes Ecotriton and Wild Harvest lines, said he could not immediately offer comment.

Recalled products:

- a) Wild Harvest Fruit and Honey Cockatiel, Recall # V-021-2008;
- b) Ecotriton Tropical Fruit and Honey Bars, Recall # V-022-2008;
- c) Wild Harvest Hamster, Gerbil, Mouse & Rat Honey Cakes, Recall # V-023-2008

CODE

- a) Lot: 07096 and Lot: 07108;
- b) Lot: 07096

According to the FDA's monthly import refusals report, Wild Harvest Premium Parakeet Fruit Sticks were refused Nov. 30. due to suspicion of poison. An “ultra blend bites (parrot food)” was also refused on the same grounds that day. On Nov.15, several types of Wild Harvest and Ecotriton Cockatiel Fruit 'N Honey treats and bars were refused due to poison and unsafe additive suspicions. A month earlier on Sept. 18, double packs of the Cockatiel Fruit 'N Honey bars were refused as were Ultra Snax Hamster/Gerbil Fruit Surprise Banana Bars. All of the treats were manufactured by Jiang Su Peidi Brand Food Products Co., Ltd. in Tai Zhou according to the FDA import refusal. One other bird treat, “Birdie Goof Balls, 2 in 1 Chew Treat, Sm.,” manufactured by Wenzhou Peidi Pet Products Co. Ltd. of Nanyan, was rejected Sept. 18 due to poison concerns.

Many types of products are refused by FDA inspectors at ports around the United States, sometimes due to mislabeling, vermin infestations or concerns that the product could be unsafe or even poisonous to the consumer. When an item is refused for import, the owner, according to the FDA's website, can request a hearing to provide evidence of the product's admissibility. If evidence is not substantiated, the FDA issues a second notice of action refusing admission of the product. At that time, it must be destroyed within 90 days or exported.