

Portions of Pet Food Safety Study are the 'Epitome of Junk Science'

On March 31, 2013, I announced that I was "moving on," and I ended my daily posts on eFoodAlert. Since then, I have been concentrating on my creative writing projects. Nevertheless, I've continued to monitor food safety stories, muttering under my breath from time to time about the quality of some of the coverage. But I have not been motivated to comment publicly on any of these stories until today's release of a pet food safety study carried out under the auspices of the Association for Truth in Pet Food (ATPF). I decided that I could not let this report stand unchallenged and unanswered.

The Association for Truth in Pet Food, headed by Susan Thixton, has just released a report that details the results of mycotoxin, nutrient and bacteria tests carried out on a number of brands of canned and dry cat foods and dog foods. According to James Andrews, writing for Food Safety News, the testing program was sponsored by consumers through crowdfunding and coordinated by ATPF.



Susan Thixton, writing in her TruthAboutPetFood.com blog, describes the results of the study as "shocking and sad." In my opinion, her adjectives are correct but misapplied. What I find "shocking and sad" is the waste of consumers' money in a wild goose chase after low-level pathogens of minimal risk to either humans or their pets.

Consider the "qualifying pathogens" reported in the detailed study:

- **Acinetobacter.** This is a low-grade pathogen that is mainly associated with hospital-acquired infections (especially in intensive care units), or with community-spread outbreaks in war zones and natural disaster areas.
- **Pseudomonas.** These bacteria are present in the environment, in our water, and in food. It is a cause of "swimmer's ear." Otherwise, Pseudomonas is an opportunistic pathogen, typically either hospital-acquired or affecting individuals with compromised immune systems or respiratory systems, such as cystic fibrosis patients.
- **Streptococcus.** While some species of Streptococcus are pathogenic (e.g., Streptococcus pyogenes), others are benign. Some species of Streptococcus are used in the production of fermented dairy products and are considered to be probiotic.
- **Staphylococcus.** While Staphylococcus aureus is associated with food poisoning (via its production of enterotoxins) and with infections, other species of Staphylococcus are either benign or are low-grade pathogens associated with hospital-acquired infections. Staphylococcus

epidermidis is a common inhabitant of the skin of humans and animals. Even *Staphylococcus aureus* is carried on the skin and in the nasal passages of many individuals.

- **Bacillus.** Most species of *Bacillus* are benign and are widely dispersed in the environment. *Bacillus* is a spore-former and very heat-resistant. It can be found with great frequency in dried foods, including spices, flour, and powdered dairy products. *Bacillus cereus* is a source of foodborne illness, but it must attain high concentrations before it can cause illness.

In addition to these “qualifying pathogens,” the study organizers decided to troll through the foods for a long list of other irrelevant microbes, including *Anaerococcus*, *Comamonadaceae*, *Corynebacteriaceae*, *Halomonas* (another low-risk pathogen associated with contamination of intravenous lines), *Cloacibacterium*, *Bifidobacterium* (a probiotic), *Pantoea*, *Gemella*, *Peptoniphilus*, *Actinomyces*, *Sphingobium*, *Bradyrhizobium*, *Tumebacillus*, *Paracoccus*, *Paenibacillus*, *Lactococcus*, *Acetobacter*, *Chloroplast* and *Lactobacillus* (a probiotic).

The author of the study provided absolutely no rationale for this selection. Nor was any explanation offered for excluding known human and animal pathogens, such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, from the list. Where was the logic in this? What was the point in throwing money at a laundry list of irrelevant microbes? The funding did not allow species-level identification of any of the bacteria, according to the study report. Yet, without species-level identification, the results of the bacterial testing of the pet foods are worthless.

I also take issue with the presentation of the mycotoxin test results. The results are reported at levels of parts per billion (PPB), whereas these results are usually reported as parts per million (ppm). By changing the manner of reporting the results, the study makes the data appear more shocking. For example, FDA recommends a limit of 10 ppm for fumonisins in grain destined for pet food. This is the same as saying 10,000 parts per billion. Even the worst-performing pet food sample was well within this guidance level. Furthermore, the comparison table presents an arbitrary set of risk values generated using a proprietary formula developed by Alltech, an animal nutrition company. There is no way to substantiate the validity or the significance of these so-called risk levels.

I have refrained from commenting on the portion of the report dealing with nutritional analysis, as this is outside of my expertise. I sincerely hope that someone else will put this portion of the report under a microscope.

I acknowledge the good intentions of Susan Thixton and the Association for Truth in Pet Food, but I am appalled at the way in which this study was designed and carried out. The portions of the study relating to bacterial analysis and presentation of the mycotoxin results are the epitome of junk science. The pet-loving consumers who funded this study — and their dogs and cats — deserved far better.

Phyllis Entis

January 09, 2015

Source: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/01/shocked-and-saddened/#.VMfJh8J0zIW>

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Sobre este mesmo assunto há os textos produzidos por profissionais titulados e experientes nas áreas sobre as quais fazem comentários:

Sobre microbiologia / About microbiology

<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/01/shocked-and-saddened/#.VMJxKsJ0zIU> By Phyllis Entis | January 8, 2015

<https://efoodalert.wordpress.com/2015/01/08/still-shocked-and-saddened/> By Phyllis Entis | January 8, 2015

Phyllis Entis credentials:

A BSc. from McGill University in Montreal (Honours Microbiology & Immunology), and a MSc. from the University of Toronto (Mycology). I was employed as a microbiologist by Canada's Health Protection Branch (Canadian equivalent of FDA) from 1972 to 1979, and spent the last four years as head of the microbiology lab group for the Quebec Region. From 1979 to 2001, I was Research Director of QA Laboratories Limited (in Canada) and QA Life Sciences, Inc. (in the USA), during which time I was responsible for developing a series of rapid tests for food borne pathogens, validating those tests through AOAC International, and providing technical support to the Company's clients, which included some of the largest national and multinational food companies. After 2001, I was a consultant to several clients, including a number of attorneys who represented victims of food poisoning. I have written two text books: FOOD MICROBIOLOGY - THE LABORATORY (Published by Food Processors Institute) and FOOD SAFETY: OLD HABITS, NEW PERSPECTIVES (Published in 2007 by the American Society for Microbiology Press). I developed, researched and wrote the eFoodAlert food safety blog for five years, retiring in 2013 to turn my attention to writing fiction.

Sobre pesquisa e uso de dados e sobre a parte nutricional / About researches and about nutrition

Fonte original em inglês. <https://weethnutrition.wordpress.com/2015/01/11/the-importance-of-peer-review-or-how-to-spot-a-huckster/comment-page-1/#comment-59> [traduzido

Dr. Lisa Weeth credentials

Dr. Lisa P. Weeth, DVM, MRCVS, DACVN

[Médica veterinária, veterinária nutricionista certificada pelo colégio americano de nutrição veterinária].

Sobre pesquisa e uso de dados / About researches

<http://pawcurious.com/2015/01/the-truth-about-pet-food-research/> by Jessica Vogelsang | January 11, 2015.

Dr. Jessica Vogelsang credentials

Dr. Jessica Vogelsang (Dr. V.) is a veterinarian graduated of the prestigious UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine with experience in both emergency and general practice is one of a small group of veterinary and journalism experts to have earned the title of Certified Veterinary Journalist through the American Society of Veterinary Journalists. As a pain management advocate, she completed a comprehensive course in veterinary acupuncture through the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society early in her career. Her professional affiliations and memberships include: American Veterinary Medical Association - San Diego County Veterinary Medical Association - American Society of Veterinary Journalists - Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement - International Association of Animal Hospice and Palliative Care - International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management - World Vets.

The **nutrição.Vet**'s mission and commitment to its readers is to publish only scientifically based information or articles written by graduated professionals of animal feed that are not working for private companies in the pet food universe. For this reason the **nutrição.Vet** not released the study conducted by association the truth about pet food: the study nor was published in indexed journal that has the peer-reviewed articles (experts in the same field of science), nor was it written by experienced veterinary nutritionists. Therefore the activity does not qualify in any way. On this same subject there are the texts produced by certified and experienced professionals in the areas on which make comments:

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Sobre microbiologia / About microbiology

<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/01/shocked-and-saddened/#.VMJxKsJ0zIU> By [Phyllis Entis](#) | January 8, 2015

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<http://pawcurious.com/2015/01/the-truth-about-pet-food-research/> by [Jessica Vogelsang](#) | January 11, 2015.

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