

Important Updates on Menu Foods Recall

The cause of the pet deaths has still not been definitively established. While Menu Foods has announced the presence of aminopterin discovered by the NY Department of Agriculture, the FDA has not confirmed that fact, (nor has Cornell) and the ASPCA's toxicologist says "clinical signs reported in cats affected by the contaminated foods are not fully consistent with the ingestion of rat poison containing aminopterin".

ISVMA has received numerous telephone calls from veterinarians wanting to know where to send tissue samples if they suspect a client's pet has died as a result of eating recalled food from Menu Foods.

This afternoon, I asked Gene A. Niles DVM, Diplomate ABVP, ABVT who is the Director of the Centralia Animal Disease Laboratory what he would recommend to these veterinarians. Dr. Niles offered the following advice:

"Veterinarians that have animals that were exposed to the suspect food and subsequently die from kidney failure should perform complete postmortem examinations. A full complement of tissues (not just kidney) should be fixed in formalin and submitted to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory for complete histopathology evaluation. Also, a full complement of fresh tissues should be collected for toxicological analysis (serum, blood, urine, liver, kidney, stomach content (vomitus), brain, fat etc). These tissues should be frozen and submitted along with the fixed tissues. Opened cans of suspect food should be put in plastic bags and frozen and can be held by the owner or sent with the other tissues.

"An alternative is for veterinarians to refer their clients to their nearest animal disease diagnostic laboratory for complete diagnostic workups.

"Until the causative agent is definitively confirmed, we are freezing food and fresh tissue samples and holding them for future toxicological analysis. When a definitive cause is confirmed, we will then analyze the appropriate tissue/tissues or forward the samples to an AAVLD accredited laboratory, if need be."

If you have an opportunity to address the public through your local media, please remember to focus your message on:

- Calming the public;
- Getting sick pets to a veterinarian;
- Re-establishing confidence in commercially available pet foods known to be safe;
- Letting the public know that everything is begin done to find and correct the cause;
- Finally – whatever the real or additional cause is determined to be, the family veterinarian stands ready for diagnosis and treatment!

The American Veterinary Medical Association has some excellent advice and information for both pet owners and veterinarians at <http://www.avma.org/aa/menufoodsrecall/default.asp>.

Appeals Court Blocks Horse Meat Inspections

A federal appeals court's decision Wednesday to block the Agriculture Department from providing horse meat inspections for a fee has repercussions for the Illinois processing plant.

The decision in a lawsuit filed by the Humane Society of the United States also is another setback for the horse slaughter industry overall.

In January, a federal appeals court upheld a 1949 Texas ban on the slaughter of horses for the purpose of selling the meat for human consumption overseas. The ruling forced two plants in Texas to scale back operations.

Wayne Pacelle, president of the humane society, said Wednesday's ruling by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia effectively shuts down operations at Cavel International Inc. in DeKalb, Ill., the only plant still fully operating in the U.S.

Congress stripped funding for horse meat inspections in 2005, but the USDA devised a plan to provide the inspections for a fee for slaughter plants. Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, found the USDA did not follow federal procedures for setting up the inspection fee program.

Remember ISVMA Lobby Day is April 18

The ISVMA will hold its Lobby Day on April 18, 2007 in Springfield. We invite all veterinarians to come to Springfield to get a briefing from the ISVMA lobbyists on the key issues impacting veterinary medicine and instructions on how to communicate our positions to your state legislators. The legislative briefing will take place at 10:00 a.m. at the [Hoogland Center](#) for the Arts in Springfield, IL (click on the preceding link for information and directions).

All ISVMA member veterinarians are invited to participate in the Lobby Day activities. Among the issues we will lobby are opposition to the proposed gross revenues tax and state support for higher education funding (specifically, the College of Veterinary Medicine). The Illinois State Chamber of Commerce is also holding a lobby day on April 18 and we will coordinate our efforts opposing the governor's "Tax Fairness Plan."

Please email info@isvma.org and let us know if you would like to participate in this important grassroots lobbying program. If you plan to join our advocacy force, we will send you more detailed information regarding our issues and meeting information as we get closer to the event.

About the Photo in This Issue...

Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) are small thrushes that breed throughout much of the western United States, Mexico, and southwestern Canada. Males are easily identified by the brilliant blue plumage of their heads, wings, and tails, their rust colored breasts, and, frequently, chestnut back patches. Females are duller and have more brown and gray in their feathers.

Insectivorous during the warmer months, this species winters in open scrubby forests in the foothills and canyons of the Southwest. While there, juniper and mistletoe berries are a major part of Western Bluebirds' diet. The availability of these foods determines Western Bluebird movements throughout winter. The Western Bluebird acts as an important dispersal agent for these plants.

Western Bluebirds can usually be found in open, parklike forests, edge habitats, burned areas and where moderate amounts of logging have occurred, provided a sufficient number of larger trees and snags remain to provide nest sites and perches. Unlike Eastern (*Sialia sialis*) and Mountain (*Sialia currucoides*) bluebirds, this species does not favor large, open meadows. Western Bluebirds are adversely impacted by clear-cutting, snag removal, fire suppression, and any changes in land use that cause open forest and edge habitat to be diminished. Like other bluebird species, Western Bluebirds have suffered from competition for nest sites because of the introduced European Starlings and House Sparrows.

I photographed this male Western Bluebird in Mesa Grande, California in February 2007.

Contact Us

Please feel free to forward this issue of the E-SOURCE to veterinarians that are not receiving ISVMA's electronic newsletter. Any ISVMA member may subscribe to the E-SOURCE for free:

If you wish to add your name to the recipient list, send an e-mail to info@isvma.org and ask to receive the E-SOURCE newsletter.

ISVMA values your membership and does not want to send you any unwanted email. If you would like to be removed from this member service, please email info@isvma.org.