

Congress plans pet food hearings

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Illinois Sen. Richard Durbin said Congress will hold a hearing on the FDA's investigation into pet food contamination linked to the deaths of dogs and cats.

"The system broke down," Durbin, the Senate majority whip, told the Washington Post. "It's not just about contaminated food killing pets, it's a system that failed."

Menu Foods, which made the dog and cat food and sold it to dozens of other companies, "felt no sense of urgency" to alert pet owners sooner, Durbin said.

Durbin said the Kansas plant where many of the tainted pet foods were made had never undergone an FDA inspection.

"Our pets have no voice, but we do, so we must speak out," Durbin said Thursday in Chicago, the Chicago Tribune reported. "What happened in the last couple months is unacceptable."

FDA scientists have detected a chemical used to make plastic in imported wheat gluten in the pet food, although it wasn't clear how it got there.

The FDA hasn't yet tried to count how many pets died or got sick after eating tainted pet food because it's been focused on tracing the contamination, an official said. Officially, 15 animals, mostly Menu Foods test dogs and cats, died after eating the products, but veterinarians say the number is likely far higher.

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