

nd Cats Get to Pet Food

are buried, 30 percent are cremated and 40 percent — or about 5.2 million — are sent to rendering factories.

Several hundred thousand deceased California pets are trucked off to renderers in Los Angeles, Modesto and Sacramento, and some of them end up in pet food.

"When you read pet-food labels and it says meat or bone meal, that's what it is — cooked and converted animals, including some dogs and cats," said Eileen Layne, of the California Veterinary Medical Association.

Critics like Libby Schenkman of the Berkeley-based Animal Rights Connection are upset by

such "cannibalism," but government, academic and industry officials say rendering pets recycles a valuable commodity while simultaneously solving a difficult waste-disposal problem.

"The alternative is burying, or some other form of environmental contamination," said Bert Mitchell, associate director of the surveillance-and-compliance branch of the FDA.

Most scientists say the high temperatures and pressures used in rendering kill any viruses and bacteria.

Veterinarians at the University of Minnesota warned in a paper that the sodium pentobarbital used to

put pets to sleep "survived rendering without undergoing degradation." They concluded, however, the residue would be too small to cause a problem so long as renderers mixed euthanized pets with other raw materials throughout a day's production runs.

Bay Area animal shelters and veterinarians rely heavily on rendering for animal disposal. Faced with a mammoth pet-overpopulation problem, shelters in the nine-county area reluctantly put to sleep almost 100,000 sick or abandoned animals per year. Virtually all pay to have the euthanized pets hauled to renderers in Sacramento and Mo-

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other states to determine if they contain rendered pets.

Three Agencies

Three different state agencies have responsibility for inspection and enforcement of rendering factories, which leaves many gaps.

To make sure no small animals go into pet food components, "we'd have to put a person at the rendering plant at all times it's in operation," said Steve Wong, acting branch chief of the Feed, Fertilizer and Livestock Drugs branch of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. His eight inspectors visit each rendering plant an average of once every 2½ months.

In spot checks during the past two years, the state cited Sacramento Rendering on five occasions for product-labeling violations. In another case 15 months ago, a shipment of 52,280 pounds labeled as meat and bone meal headed to Sacramento Rendering from West Coast Rendering Co. in Los Angeles was found by state inspectors to be tankage. The state imposes no penalties for mislabeling by a rendering firm; it simply asks that the practice be corrected.

Executives at four of the leading pet food companies say no household pets are in the raw materials they buy from renderers.

THE PET DISPOSAL PROBLEM

Local animal shelters, overwhelmed by the large number of stray and unwanted dogs and cats they handle, dispose of the euthanized animals by sending their remains to rendering plants in Modesto and Sacramento. Figures below are for fiscal 1989 unless noted.

County	Animals Impounded	Returned to owner	Adopted	Euthanized ¹
San Francisco	17,144	1,535	7,666	7,721
Santa Clara ²	40,515	3,544	5,139	29,067
Alameda	23,290	3,986	5,281	14,102
Contra Costa	20,400	3,050	3,564	14,187
San Mateo	16,453	3,064	3,955	9,296
Solano	10,974	1,229	1,240	8,586
Marin ³	6,215	1,993	1,376	2,846
Napa	2,885	351	726	1,553
Sonoma ⁴	17,084	3,193	4,370	9,262
LOCAL TOTAL	148,745	21,945	33,317	96,620
Los Angeles ⁴	163,259	11,865	28,490	114,714

¹ includes pets dead on arrival and those which died in custody of the shelters

² 1989 calendar year

³ All the euthanized animals in Marin and some in Sonoma are cremated.

⁴ includes 12 of 22 animal shelters in the city and county

NOTE: The number disposed may not equal total number of animals impounded because some remain on hand at the end of the year or are disposed of in the fiscal year after they are impounded.

Source: Chronicle research

"There are no dogs or cats in our products," said Patrick Farrell, a Ralston Purina Co. spokesman. "We have strict quality assurance programs in place from all of our suppliers."

Yet rendering industry employees say it would be impossible

for any purchaser to know the exact contents of what they buy. One 20-year industry veteran said it would be easy to pass off dogs and cats in a poultry by-product, because of the similar protein content.

An East Coast executive, with

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ste Into Usable Products

27 rendering plants on pounds of animal

industry closed to take that to landfill, it would make your H Koewier, president of a board animal by-product association. Remable animal by-product a restaurant's deep pressed down sewers or

is a rendering plant across the country in the recyclable waste packers and restaur-

r is slaughtered, for 8 percent is used for — excess fat, bones, es to renderers. They eat rejected by USDA consumption, such as steers or chickens, hortiles say any tox-

ins disappear when processed at high temperatures in the renderers' cooking equipment.

Renderers have two basic products: fat, called tallow or grease, and dried meat and bone meal. Some of the tallow goes directly into soaps and animal feed. Chemical manufacturers purchase the rest, processing the tallow into fatty acids used in lubricants, cosmetics, cement, polishes and printing inks. Feed mills purchase the meat and bone meals, which serve as a basic ingredient for chicken, cattle, hog and pet food.

Historically, most rendering companies have been local, family-owned firms. The one exception is Darling-Deleware Co. Inc., which became the only nationwide rendering company after being acquired by a group of Texas investors in 1986 (see related story, Page C3).

Because its products compete with alternative commodities from around the world, such as Malaysian palm oil, the rendering industry tends to see its fortunes ebb and flow. Prices for tallow and meat meals are on a downswing.

"In recent years we've been selling our end products at prices less than what they were 15 years ago," said Ray Kelly, executive vice president of Baker Commodities and a spokesman for the National Renderers Association. Tallow today commands only 13¢ a pound, compared with 25¢ a pound in 1979.

To help keep sales up, renderers have increased their exports of tallow to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and some Central American countries. But competition from New Zealand and Australia has cut heavily into exports of meat and bone meals.

The U.S. trend away from consumption of red meat also has hurt the rendering industry, because it reduces the source of raw material.

"But it's still a pretty lucrative business," said Craig Breunig, president of Wahoo By-Products, a renderer located outside Omaha, Neb. He said as long as consumers eat beef, pork and chicken, there will always be a rendering industry because it is the only way to dispose of the by-products.