

affle Consumers

FOOD LABEL

ients in dog and cat food:

dered, clean parts, other than meat, derived from slaughtered animals. It includes, but is not limited to, lungs, spleen, kidneys, brain, livers, blood, bone, partially defatted low-temperature fatty tissue, and stomachs and intestines freed of their contents.

■ **Poultry by-products** must consist of nonrendered, clean parts of carcasses of slaughtered poultry such as heads, feet, viscera, free from fecal content and foreign matter except in trace amounts as might occur unavoidably in good factory practice.

Officials

BHA, BHT and ethoxyquin.

"All that is anecdotal, there is no tested and tried information about additives. You need to do a double-blind study to confirm anything," countered Quintin Rogers, a professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California at Davis.

He said additives cause far fewer problems than pet owners who give their animals too many supplements such as calcium or vitamin D.

Nutritional Requirements

An expert in animal nutrition, Rogers was one of the committee members appointed by the National Academy of Science's National Research Council to develop minimum nutritional requirements for pets. Dog and cat foods that meet the 1985 guidelines can state on the label that the product provides a complete and balanced diet.

"But give me a tire, an old leather shoe and a quart of oil and I can meet all the national specifications for the NRC diet," said Jeff Bennett, president of Nature's Recipe.

That's because the standards only measure the content of such items as protein, but fail to reveal how much of that protein is digestible and available to the animal. Shoe leather and chicken feathers meet the protein standards, even though little would be absorbed by a dog or cat.

That bothered the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Animal Hospital Association enough to propose that they supervise independent testing of pet food.

"Our concern was their labels were not indicative of the bio-availability of the nutrients," said John Albers, executive director of the AAHA. "There is some doubt in our minds as to whether the labeling is sufficient, whether the claims that are on the label are backed up by adequate testing."

'Supermarket Syndrome'

Walter Martin Jr., chairman of the pet-food advisory committee and immediate past president of the AVMA, recalls a disease his colleagues called supermarket syndrome. Dogs were literally starving to death on a certain generic brand of pet food because it had so little digestible material, even though it met the minimum standards.

Another problem came from a well-known canned dog food that contained large chunks of heart artery. Although counted as protein under the old rules, the aorta is almost totally indigestible, Martin said.

But the two groups dropped plans for independent testing when the Association of American Feed Control Officials agreed to revise the standards for determining which pet foods may use the "complete and balanced" claim on their labels. The proposed policy calls for procedures to substantiate that a pet food not only contains the required nutrients, but that they are digestible by the animal.

cale Products to Boost Profits

they are any better," said Quintin Rogers, an animal nutritionist and professor of veterinary medicine at the University of California at Davis.

As long as the pet food meets the minimum standards set by the National Research Council, most veterinarians say it's perfectly acceptable. The super-premium brands cannot offer better nutrition, only higher digestibility — which means less feces.

"It might make a difference in terms of the cost and amount of kitty litter used, but the higher-price product doesn't mean you have any different nutrition," Rogers said.

Products labeled as pet health food occupy a small niche at the extreme upper end of the super-premium line. Many of these products use "food grade" raw ingredients, found in human food, rather than "feed grade" materials used

exclusively in animal food.

These foods account for only about \$100 million of total industry sales, but seem poised for rapid growth.

"It's a trend," said Susan Goldstein, president of Lick Your Chops, a South Norwalk, Conn., company with sales of about \$4 million. "If it mirrors what has happened in the human health food industry, it will become a major factor and all the big manufacturers will jump in."