

Reference

BSE PETFOOD

You will be aware that my Division has policy responsibility for pet food issues and sponsorship responsibility for the industry. In this role we have maintained a very close liaison with the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) on the BSE issue (cf also our role, which the Parliamentary Secretary will recall, in safeguarding the position of meat raw materials imports for pet food manufacture when these were threatened by the hormones in meat ban). It was with some concern, therefore, that I noted the contents of Mrs Attridge's minute of 15 March to the CVO.

I entirely share her concern that, in raising with the pet food industry at Ministerial level the possibility that the Southwood Committee's references to the desirability of monitoring cat and dog populations were based on something more than extreme prudence on the part of the Committee, we could be creating "problems" which do not exist. Worse still, there is serious risk that the media would get to hear of such a meeting and might then begin to ask questions along the lines of why we were apparently concerned that cats and dogs should not be fed ruminant meat and offal when we were content that these should continue to form part of the adult human diet.

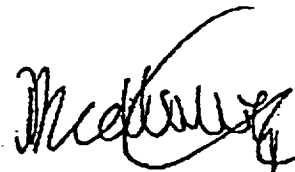
At my Division's instigation, the PFMA were sent copies of the BSE report by Animal Health Group and its contents have not only been made known to the membership as a whole, but the Association has also set up its own sub-group to consider the report's implications for the pet food industry. Indeed the Association has already written to Mr Suich of Animal Health Division expressing keenness to keep in touch with any developments; and to co-operate with us in any way possible.

Ruminant offals are, of course an important raw material in the manufacture of all types of pet food, especially tripe and spleen. Thymus is also used, as are oxtails and prime offals such as heart, liver, kidney and lungs, but to a lesser extent because of their relative expense. Crushed heads (which inevitably involve brain and spinal cord material) are used to a limited extent but will also form one of the constituent raw materials of meat and bone meal, which is used extensively in pet food manufacture - particularly of the dried and compound biscuit type of product. Despite this inclusion as a major ingredient of all those offals in which the Southwood Committee concluded the scrapie agent was most active, the pet food industry (which has an extensive research commitment) has had no reports of any developing pattern of spongiform encephalopathies in dogs and cats. Accordingly whilst they are alert to the need to keep the issue under scrutiny the pet food industry does not at present see cause for concern.

In these circumstances I have serious reservations on the suggestion that Mr Thompson, or indeed any Minister, should enter

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into discussions with the pet food manufacturers on the recommendations in the Southwood report. My view is that sufficient consultation with the industry has already taken place at official level; and I am quite satisfied with their response this far. If it is felt that further consultations should take place (eg if the CVO wished to raise specific technical points concerning research, or monitoring of pet cat and dog populations) then again I see no reason why this should not take place at official level. And in such circumstances I would expect my Division to take the lead. If, on the other hand, the Parliamentary Secretary feels it essential that a meeting should take place at Ministerial level, I should be grateful if you bear in mind my Division's interest.



A³ J D Garnett
17 March 1989

Miss Bowles (PS/Parl Sec - Mr Thompson)

cc Mrs Stagg (PPS/Minister)
Miss Phillips (PS/Perm Sec)
Mr Capstick
Mrs Attridge
Mr Cruickshank
Mr Griffiths
CVO - Raes
Dr Crossett
Mr McKinley
Mr Cockbill
Mr Suich

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