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**Monday June 4, 07:42 PM**

# Pet food firm turns back on dog and cat meat

*By Patrick White*

QUEBEC CITY (Reuters) - Bowing to public concern that Fido might end up eating Fluffy, a Canadian company has decided to stop mixing meat from dead dogs and cats into its processed pet food.

Quebec rendering giant Sanimal, which used to process the meat from about 18,200kg of dead cats and dogs a week, said it was no longer accepting the carcasses of domestic animals, many of which had come from Canadian animal shelters.

"Clients were concerned and we had faced pressures in the past. It is a question of public image," said Mario Couture, Sanimal's vice-president of procurement.

Couture, whose firm has revenues of more than 46 million pounds a year, renders 18,200kg of meat carcasses a week. It said dead cats and dogs had previously been processed into powder that was mixed with cereal to produce petfood.

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"This food is healthy and good, but some people don't like to see meat meal that contains any pets," Couture said.

He said Canada's entire petfood industry was also shunning that type of petfood to avoid a North American-style repetition of Europe's mad cow disease, where cattle fodder containing material from sick sheep is blamed for a new strain of that sickness in cattle.

"We want to be sure that it won't hit us in North America," Couture said.

Other Canadian rendering companies said they were not impressed with Sanimal's use of meat from cats and dogs in the first place.

"I don't like the idea. It is bad public policy. We don't do it and most renderers have never done it despite the fact it is not harmful for health," said Humphry Koch, executive vice-president of Vancouver-based West Coast Reduction.

Sanimal, a 62-year-old company based in Quebec, uses dead animals -- mainly pigs and chicken -- from Quebec and other parts of Canada. It has also started banning sheep and roadkill animals to ensure safer petfood.

But petshop owner Paul Latendresse said Sanimal's decision would pose new problems for veterinaries who will face hefty fees to dispose of euthanised cats and dogs -- rendering plants charged only a modest fee for that.

"It will change things for veterinaries, it will be much more expensive for them now to bury or incinerate domestic animals," said Latendresse, owner of the Quebec City petshop Animalerie Boutique Tropicale.

He said some veterinaries have already started to put dead cats and dogs in freezers, not knowing what to do with them.

"We might end up in a situation where people will get rid of domestic animals in unsuitable locations," he said.

Latendresse said most consumers did not even know that some animal feed might include cats and dogs. "People ignored it and never questioned food content," he said.



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