



# *Inside Ag*

## *July 2012*

### **Handling Pet Food Safely**

Recent news stories regarding cases of salmonella in pet food remind us that safe handling of pet food is not only important for your pet, but it is also important for you and your household members.

Salmonella can be present in a pet food or treat because it was a raw product not subjected to a process that kills the bacteria, or because it was not cooked adequately. In addition, pet foods and treats can become contaminated through poor product handling after leaving the manufacturer; and salmonella can be transferred to individuals handling the contaminated products.

Salmonella in pet foods and treats can cause serious infections in dogs and cats, as well as in people - especially in children, older people and those with compromised immune systems.

While most of us are aware of the special precautions needed when preparing raw foods for our own consumption, it is also important to handle pet foods safely and to follow the precautions outlined below.

#### **Purchasing**

- Purchase products in good condition, without signs of damage to the packaging (such as dents or tears).

#### **Preparation**

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and hot water before and after handling pet foods and treats.
- Wash pet food bowls, dishes, and scooping utensils with soap and hot water after each use.
- Do not use the pet's feeding bowl as a scooping utensil; instead, use a clean, dedicated scoop or spoon.
- Dispose of old or spoiled pet food products in a safe manner (such as in a securely-tied plastic bag in a covered trash receptacle).

#### **Storage**

- Refrigerate promptly at 40° F or discard any unused wet pet food.
- Dry products should be stored in a cool, dry place (under 80° F).
- If possible, store a dry pet food in its original bag inside a clean, dedicated plastic container with a lid, keeping the top of the bag folded closed.
- Keep pets away from food storage and preparation areas, as well as garbage and household trash.