

Pet food manufacture

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Background

The relevant EU legislation is:

- Regulation **1069/2009** hereafter referred to as the “Control Regulation”.
- Implementing Regulation **142/2011** hereafter referred to as the “Implementing Regulation”.

The **EU Control Regulation** and **EU Implementing Regulation** control the manufacture of raw pet food, processed pet food, including dried pet food and canned pet food, chews and flavored innards or digests from animal by-products. The regulations restrict materials that can be used in pet food and require that Animal Health and Welfare Department (AHWD), as the competent authority, approves plants where pet food is manufactured. This includes premises manufacturing pet food in domestic houses whether using meat fit for human consumption or category 3 ABP.

DAERA Veterinary Service Animal Health Group is responsible for the monitoring and inspection of approved pet food plants. Where requirements are not being met approvals may be suspended or revoked. (EU Control Regulation article 45 and 46).

The EU Control Regulation and EU Implementing Regulation have broadly the same requirements for pet food manufacture as the previous **EC regulations 1774/2002**.

Approval requirements

Pet food plants must:

- operate in accordance with Annex XIII of the EU Implementing Regulation
- Have adequate facilities for storing and treating incoming material under conditions which prevent the introduction of risks to public and animal health
- send unused ABP or product to an appropriate ABP plant for disposal if necessary
- have a HACCP plan in place and keep it updated when changes in operation occur. (Article 29 EU Control Regulation).

In order to be approved, you should contact Animal Health and Welfare Department, Triq il-Biccerija, Albertown Marsa on 22925372/76, or email abpsection.mafa@gov.mt You can also obtain an application form for your business sending a request to the same email address.

This form must be completed and returned to allow an approval inspection to be arranged. Detailed conditions will need to be complied with and you will need to satisfy the inspecting officer that you are able to operate the facility in compliance with the legislation. If satisfied, VRD will issue an approval document that will allow you to operate.

Once approved you will be subject to routine inspections, the frequency of which will be based on the risk posed by the operation and how compliant you are in its operation. Currently there are no charges for these approval or routine inspections.

Premises that handle or store ABP

Premises that handle or store the materials that will be sent to plants for pet food manufacture must be approved. For more information see our Registration, transport, handling and storage requirements **guidance**.

Sourcing of material for use in pet food

Only certain Category 3 animal by-products (ABP) and products derived from Category 3 material including Processed Animal Protein (PAP) and certain imported Category 1 materials can be used in pet food.

The EU Control Regulation requires operators to carry out safe sourcing (Article 37), or failing that, safe treatment (Article 38). This applies to pet food plant operators (Article 35).

Safe sourcing means using material that:

- does not present unacceptable risks to public or animal health
- has been collected and transported, or brought from the point of import, to the plant under conditions excluding risks to public and animal health.

Operators must keep documentation confirming the requirements of safe sourcing have been met.

Where the risks cannot be controlled by safe sourcing then treatment must reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Materials for Raw pet food

Only material from slaughterhouses, or game killed for human consumption, can be used in raw pet food manufacture. (EU Control Regulation Article 10 (a) and (b) (i) and (ii)). Material that:

- has been passed as fit for human consumption but is not going to be used in this way for commercial reasons. e.g. clean tripe

- came from animals that passed ante-mortem inspection but was rejected as unfit for human consumption, e.g. livers with fluke. For such material to be used there must not have been any signs of communicable disease.

Materials for the production of other pet food (Canned pet food, processed pet food, dog chews and digests)

Other raw materials can be used in these products, including material from the slaughter of animals, egg and milk production, fish processing, etc. where either:

- animals were passed fit for human consumption before slaughter
- the animal of origin was not showing signs of a communicable disease.

Also included are by-products from food manufacture. They are listed in the EU Control Regulation article 10 a) to m) and include the following in addition to those that can be used in raw pet food manufacture:

- material from animals that passed inspection for human consumption prior to slaughter - hides, skins, horns, feet, pig bristle, feather and blood (unless they are from ruminants requiring TSE testing, in which case they can only be used if they are tested and give a negative result)
- material from on farm slaughter of rabbits and poultry
- hatchery waste, eggs, egg by-products and day old chicks killed for commercial reasons
- fish and by-products from fish processing plants
- material from the production of food including degraded bones
- products of animal origin (POA) or foodstuffs containing products of animal origin no longer intended for human consumption for commercial reasons or because of packaging problems, etc
- PAP derived from the above materials
- imported pet food
- petfood and feedingstuffs of animal origin, or feedingstuffs containing animal by-products or derived products, which are no longer intended for feeding for commercial reasons or due to problems of manufacturing or packaging defects or other defects from which no risk to public or animal health arises,
- blood, placenta, wool, feathers, hair, horns, hoof cuts and raw milk originating from live animals that did not show any signs of disease communicable through that product to humans or animals
- aquatic animals, and parts of such animals, except sea mammals, which did not show any signs of disease communicable to humans or animals
- animal by-products from aquatic animals originating from establishments or plants manufacturing products for human consumption.

The following material originating from animals which did not show any signs of disease communicable through that material to humans or animals:

- shells from shellfish with soft tissue or flesh
- hatchery by-products
- eggs and egg by-products
- day old chicks killed for commercial reasons
- some species of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates

- some rodents and lagomorphs (rabbits).

The following cannot be used:

- hides, skins, hooves, feathers, etc. from animals that haven't been passed fit for human consumption before slaughter. (e.g. hides from knackereries)
- fat tissue from animals that were passed fit for human consumption when inspected before slaughter at a slaughterhouse
- catering waste.

Processed Animal Protein (PAP)

PAP use is controlled by the TSE regulations which require the following:

- pet foods using PAP or blood products of ruminant origin cannot be manufactured in establishments that make livestock feed
- bulk pet foods containing blood products of ruminant origin or PAP have to be kept in facilities physically separate from bulk livestock feed during storage, transport and packaging.

Collection and transport of raw materials for inclusion in pet food

Must be done under general conditions described in EU Implementing Regulation.

In accordance with the principles of safe sourcing, material for pet food must be transported in a way that excludes risks to human and animal health, i.e. at appropriate temperature and in appropriate conditions.

Unprocessed material going to pet food plants does not have to be temperature controlled if it's processed within 24 hours of collection or has already been chilled or frozen and those storage temperatures are maintained during transport.

Requirements for the manufacture of pet foods

Requirements are given in Annex XIII of the EU Implementing Regulation.

Raw pet food must be:

- packaged in new leak proof packaging
- protected from contamination throughout production and up to the point of sale
- labeled "pet food only".

Canned pet food must be subjected to heat treatment to a minimum Fc value of 3.

Processed pet food (Non-hermetically sealed, dry products)

Either the ingredients of animal origin have to be subjected to a heat treatment of at least 90°C or final product has to be subjected to 90°C throughout.

When they are produced in accordance with the EU Implementing Regulation the following can also be used:

- milk and milk-based products
- gelatine
- hydrolysed protein
- egg products
- collagen
- blood products that are either fit for human consumption but not intended for human consumption for commercial reasons or come from animals rejected for human consumption pre-slaughter but not showing signs of disease communicable to humans or animals
- PAP, including fishmeal
- rendered fat, fish oils
- dicalcium phosphate
- tricalcium phosphate
- flavouring innards / digests.

Drying and fermentation can also be used to produce processed pet food provided any such treatment ensures that the pet food poses no unacceptable risks to public and animal health.

Other means of processing may also be used when non-pathogenic invertebrates, rodents or lagomorphs (rabbits) are used in the production of petfood, again providing the treatment ensures that the pet food poses no unacceptable risks to public and animal health.

In addition, all processed pet food must be:

- protected from contamination after processing
- packaged in new packaging.

Dog chews

Must be:

- subjected to a treatment that is sufficient to destroy pathogenic organisms, including salmonella. Any method that can be proven to be effective is allowed
- protected from exposure to contamination after this treatment
- packed in new packaging.

Digests / Flavouring innards

Must be:

- heat treated or manufactured from specific materials as for processed pet food
- packed in new or sterile packaging or transported in bulk containers or other means of transport that were cleaned and disinfected.

Bacteriology standards and sampling requirements

Random samples for bacteriology must be taken from raw pet food, dog chews, digests and processed pet food, except canned pet food.

Samples should be taken during production and / or storage up to the point of dispatch.

Meat or offal from each species used to manufacture a product should be considered a product line, e.g. chicken, lamb, beef, turkey etc. Tripe of any species is a separate product line.

A representative sample made up of ten separate sub-samples of 30g making a total of 300-gram bulk sample should be taken from each product line. A duplicate sample should be kept by the operator.

The frequency of sampling required will depend on a number of factors including the throughput of the plant; the length of time the plant has been in operation and results from previous samples.

Samples should be collected hygienically into sterile, leak-proof containers and submitted as soon as possible in accordance with instructions from the chosen laboratory.

The laboratory must be accredited to international standard ISO17025 in order to carry out testing.

The EU implementing Regulation states the standards different pet foods must meet in Annex XIII Chapter II paragraphs 5 and 6 and Chapter III paragraph 2. Samples are considered satisfactory if they do not exceed the levels given below where:

- n = number of samples to be tested
- m = threshold value for the number of bacteria; the result shall be considered satisfactory if the number of bacteria in all samples does not exceed m
- M = maximum value for the number of bacteria; the result shall be considered unsatisfactory if the number of bacteria in one or more samples is M or more
- c = number of samples the bacterial count of which may be between m and M , the sample shall still be considered acceptable if the bacterial count of the other samples is m or less.

Raw pet food

- Salmonella: absence in 25 g, $n = 5$, $c = 0$, $m = 0$, $M = 0$
- Enterobacteriaceae: $n = 5$, $c = 2$, $m = 10$, $M = 5000$ in 1 g

This represents an increase in the acceptable level of Enterobacteriaceae from the previous regulations and all plants will be expected to monitor levels.

Processed pet food, dog chews and digests

- Salmonella: absence in 25 g, $n = 5$, $c = 0$, $m = 0$, $M = 0$.
- Enterobacteriaceae: $n = 5$, $c = 2$, $m = 10$, $M = 300$ in 1 g

Where unsatisfactory results are found at either raw or processed pet food plants action should be taken in line with the plants HACCP plan and that plan be reviewed to ensure it is adequately controlling the hazards.

Operators should be clear that unsatisfactory bacteriological results are not an issue that affect approval status in themselves. However HACCP plans must lay out actions to be taken in the event of unsatisfactory results. This may include investigation into the cause possibly with further sampling and steps to ensure that the pet food produced does not cause an unacceptable risk to human or animal health.

“End Point” for processed pet food and dog chews

The regulations define the end point for ABPs after which the regulations do not apply. For processed petfood and dog chews produced within the EU this is considered to be after processing and packaging in accordance with the regulations. In the case of those produced outside the EU it is after clearance through a Border inspection post (BIP).

After the end point processed petfood and dog chews may be placed on the market without restriction under the ABP regulations.

For raw pet food there is no defined end point as there is no processing step to effectively reduce human and animal health risks. Raw petfood can only be placed on the market in accordance with the ABP regulations where it is ensured that no unacceptable risk to human and animal health will arise. This is done by ensuring that appropriate raw materials are obtained and that they are transported and handled in such a way that unacceptable risks are not produced, i.e. safe sourcing as defined in Article 37 of the EU Control Regulation.

Approval of petfood operations within domestic houses

It may be possible under certain circumstances to approve pet food plants in domestic houses, however:

- they will be subject to all the conditions applicable to other pet food plants, including the requirement to carry out bacteriological sampling and the production of a full HACCP plan.
- additionally, and importantly, DAERA will only be able to approve such plants using category 3 animal by-products where it is possible to demonstrate strict separation between the animal by-products and food for human consumption. This may mean physical separation or separation by time; in any case the operation must not pose an unacceptable risk to human or to animal health.