



27 July 2021

The Hon David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Need for mandatory pet food regulation to safeguard the health of Australian pets

Together, we represent millions of pet-owning Australians, the veterinary industry, and the pet food industry, and make up the key stakeholder groups in the current national review of pet food safety regulation in Australia.

Today, more than ever, our pets provide us with comfort and companionship and are viewed as family members. Almost two-thirds of Australian households (61%) have a family pet (5.9 million in total) including an estimated 5.1 million dogs and 3.8 million cats. All pets in Australia should have access to safe, high-quality nutrition and Australians want to have confidence the food they are buying for their pets is safe and nutritionally appropriate. The consequences of losing a beloved companion due to unsafe pet food are devastating. The recent events in Victoria with many dogs dying due to unsafe pet food, have highlighted yet again the need for comprehensive and adequate regulation. In addition, pet food is stored and consumed usually within a pet owner's home. Unregulated pet food, with an unstandardised approach to food safety and labelling, increases risks to humans and their pets. Australians expect robust Government regulation of pet food that safeguards their families.

In May 2018, you secured the support of all state and territory jurisdictions to lead a national review of pet food safety regulation. We were appointed as members of the Pet Food Review Working Group and have been working with federal and state government representatives on options for establishing a nationally consistent regulatory framework. However, we are concerned that three years later, we still do not have clarity from government about a pathway forward.

It is imperative that the Australian Government presents a clear strategy for establishing regulation of pet food in Australia, including a mandatory Standard for pet food safety. The current self-regulation of the pet food industry fails to protect Australian pets. We believe that implementing Government regulation is the only effective way to address the issue of pet food safety in Australia and is consistent with the recommendations of the 2018 Senate Inquiry and the legal consultant report commissioned by the review team.

On behalf of our members and supporters, and the millions of pet owners in Australia, we are seeking clarity on what actions the Australian Government is going to take to address this important issue. We seek your personal assurance that the review process will lead to pet food regulation to safeguard the health and welfare of Australian pets. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and would appreciate your reply by the 11th of August and the opportunity to meet with you to discuss a pathway forward.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Mussell
Chief Executive Officer
RSPCA Australia

Carolyn Macgill
Executive Manager
PFIAA

Warwick Vale
President
Australian Veterinary Association