



Notice to Industry

33/2009

## Changes to Import Conditions for Pet Foods – Update to Notices 33/2008-09 and 7/2009

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) issued Notices to Industry on 23 December 2008 (Notice 33/2008-09) and on 6 March 2009 (Notice 7/2009) concerning the Safety of Imported Pet Foods. The purpose of this further notice is to update and advise industry of new measures that AQIS will implement to address the concerns raised in the previous Notices about feeding gamma irradiated pet food to cats.

- AQIS has previously offered importers the option of subjecting imported pet food to treatment with gamma-irradiation where these products have not undergone moist heat treatment to achieve a minimum core temperature of 100°C for at least 30 minutes or equivalent during the manufacturing process.
- The gamma-irradiation option was offered to importers only subsequent to the importer agreeing to accept this treatment.
- The previous Notices to Industry ( 33/2008-09 and 7/2009) provided information which suggested a possible link between the development of a serious neurological condition in cats (leukoencephalomyelopathy) and a diet of gamma-irradiated pet food.
- Biosecurity Australia (BA) has now considered further information on this issue and has advised AQIS that it no longer considers gamma-irradiation to be a suitable treatment for imported dried/semi-moist cat food.
- AQIS has considered this advice and other information, and determined that existing import permits for pet food that include the condition for treatment with gamma-irradiation will be suspended or varied.
- Accordingly, AQIS will no longer offer the option of gamma-irradiation for imports of dried/semi-moist cat food.
- Cats should not be fed dog food because of the different nutritional requirements of the two species. However, there is some circumstantial evidence that cats fed on imported dried/semi-moist dog foods that have been subject to gamma-irradiation may also be prone to the neurological condition.
- BA has advised that there is no evidence that the health of dogs fed on gamma-irradiated dog food is compromised. Importers of dog food will still be offered the option to treat their products with gamma-irradiation. However, it is intended that an extra condition will be applied to import permits that will require these products to be prominently labelled '**Must not be fed to cats**'.
- Affected import permit holders will be contacted as soon as possible by AQIS to advise of these changes.
- AQIS will also contact providers of gamma-irradiation treatment to advise of the withdrawal of gamma-irradiation treatment as an import condition for cat food, but not for dog food.