

Pet products from China not found to be toxic

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Q: Many rescue organizations and veterinarians warn against purchasing pet food made in China, and I can understand why, given recent scares about quality control. But what about other products that a pet's mouth may come in contact with, such as toys and food bowls? Are there any health dangers or risks associated with these types of products? And is there anything I should look for before I buy?

A: These warnings stem from the possibility of contamination with a compound called melamine, which is used in the manufacturing of industrial products, including flame retardants, dinner plates and plastic colorants. In fact, many of the plates people ate from in the 1950s and 1960s contained melamine.

Melamine was recently added to various food products illegally to falsely elevate the protein levels by acting as a source of nitrogen. It was the major compound responsible for the widespread pet food recall of 2007. When ingested by dogs and cats, the tainted food caused varying degrees of urinary symptoms and kidney failure. Sadly, it led to death in some animals. Melamine was also linked to human sickness and deaths in 2007 after it was found in contaminated milk powder in China.

Melamine toxicity is a legitimate concern. However, it has not been implicated in any toxicity involving pet products like toys or food bowls. When melamine is used in the manufacturing of plastics, it is in an inert resin form and is not readily available to animals. Therefore, purchasing non-food products from China is not a major health concern to our pets. But it is always important to be aware of what we are feeding our pets, which includes knowledge of the food's ingredients and origins.

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