

## **RMB Newsletter Vol 2:1    An Australian Veterinary Association vet speaks on the TV    January 2002**

Dear Reader,

How was your Christmas? – good I trust.

Down here in Australia we had a scorcher with some devastating bush fires. Conditions were right with plenty of dry undergrowth, eucalyptus oil, hot winds and once ignited nothing mankind could do could stop the blazes.

Happily the flames have died down and the smoke has cleared as I prepare this first RMB Newsletter of 2002. Following on from the previous newsletter we shall take a look at veterinary utterances in the public domain – how some veterinarians, health care professionals, defend the artificial pet food industry. And of course this fits within the general theme of this newsletter:

- i)      Stop the harm done by processed food and the proponents of processed food.
- ii)     Promote the healthy feeding of pets.
- iii)    Promote a healthy human economy.
- iv)     Promote a healthy natural environment.

It's a bit like fighting bush fires. Whilst it makes sense to fight the fires and to take all precautions in case bush fires occur; the main strategy must surely be to prevent folks lighting bush fires in the first place. If pet food companies and their vets stopped promoting harmful products then improving pet health, the human economy and natural environment would be a much easier task.

This edition carries a couple of readers' responses to the last newsletter. Your responses are encouraged; we would be delighted to hear from you.

Until next time,

Wishing you a terrific 2002,

Tom Lonsdale and the Raw Meaty Bones crew

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An Australian Veterinary Association vet speaks on the TV

On 31 October 2001 the Australian national broadcaster Channel 9 went to air, on the popular A Current Affair program, with a segment on the pet food industry and based around the recent publication of Raw Meaty Bones: Promote health.

A researcher from the program had seen a news item about Raw Meaty Bones and contacted me to enquire further. They recognised the merits of the story and scheduled reporter Jane Hansen and a camera crew to spend two days filming. Leah Ryan's pack of rough collies were shown gambolling and playing. Pups eagerly searched for the chicken backs on offer for lunch. Leah told how, when she used to feed commercial foods, she had huge veterinary bills for her kennel of between ten and twenty pedigree dogs. She was spending around \$1000 per month on vet bills for a variety of ailments. From the day she started more natural feeding the ill health seemed to miraculously disappear. When asked what she now spends on vet bills, Leah responded: 'Oh, zilch!'

Diana Trickett has been feeding her Burmese cats and two small dogs raw meaty bones from the beginning. Simba, the 14 year old Burmese, chewed on a rabbit carcass for the benefit of the cameras. 'He's been eating this way since he was 12 weeks old, when I got him as a kitten' said Mrs Trickett. 'I wouldn't do it any other way . . . They are happy, they are contented. It doesn't cost me a fortune.'

At this point the picture cut to Dr Paul Hanson, President of the New South Wales division of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Dr Hanson was filmed in a Sydney veterinary hospital and the sound track goes thus:

Dr Paul Hanson (AVA representative) – Most GP [general practitioner], day to day vets, would advise caution in feeding a raw meaty bones diet as a sole diet.

Jane Hansen (reporter) – Dr Paul Hanson, from the Veterinary Association . . . Why should cats and dogs eat rice and corn and cereals and vegetables that you find in these canned foods?

Dr Paul Hanson – A lot of commercial diets are, particularly of the supermarket variety, are often formulated in a form to appeal to us rather than to our pets -- like any marketing program.

Jane Hansen – Yes, meat and three veg.

Dr Paul Hanson – Exactly.

Jane Hansen – So you would agree that there's some marketing trickery.

Dr Paul Hanson – Like any commercial product that's designed to appeal to a consumer, there is an element of that.

An element of ‘marketing trickery’ appears to be acceptable to Dr Hanson who endorsed the commercial offerings with the words: ‘If it’s an appropriate product, there’s no reason not to use it.’

Acceptance of ‘trickery’ and blandishments about ‘appropriate products’ seems an inappropriate stance for the Australian Veterinary Association. But when seen in the context of the pet food industry declining to speak in its own defence, the performance of the AVA seems even more problematic.

Rather than appear on the program, pet food company Uncle Bens of Australia (a division of Mars, Inc.) sent a statement. Here’s a transcript of the sound track as Jane Hansen, the reporter, reads to the camera:

Jane Hansen – The multi-national Mars Corporation and its Australian subsidiary, Uncle Bens’, has 65% of the local pet food market, but they didn’t wish to discuss Tom Lonsdale’s theories. They sent us this statement and it says, ‘there’s absolutely no scientific or other basis for the claims’.

We also received a fax from the Pet Food Industry Association of Australia and they say: ‘The raw food versus processed pet food debate has caused unnecessary alarm amongst pet owners, and on that basis alone, it is the debate that we no longer wish to take part in’.

Jane Hansen made no comment about the pet food industry’s reluctance to answer straight forward questions – their failure to appear spoke volumes. The Mars’ statement that ‘there’s absolutely no scientific or other basis for the [health risk] claims’ beggars belief.

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In RMB Newsletter 1:3 we reviewed two radio interviews featuring Dr Duncan Hall, External Affairs Manager, of the Mars Company, Uncle Ben’s of Australia.

Here are a couple of readers’ comments.

Tom,

The interviews are all very well, but no-one actually ever puts these dog food manufacturers on the spot, if you want my opinion. . . nor do their answers ever tell you much. . . it is what they DON’T say & list in their ingredients etc which is the important stuff. When I first investigated changing to BARF I rang a couple of major dog food companies & asked questions they didn’t want to answer!!

I kept hammering away until I got answers then asked more questions when they replied. they were NOT impressed I can tell you...they tried to put me off with long version names of BHT BHA ETHOXYQUIN etc etc. . .but I knew what they were talking about

& said oh yeah was waiting for the ethoxyquin one. . .their response oh but it is all safe levels. . . my next question. . .What is the safe level per 100gms of your product?

After all ethox. is a rubber stabilizer how can it be safe in the food chain at any level?

What do you consider a safe level/per 100gms of your product??? they could NOT tell ME!!!!

So how the hell do they know it is within safe levels???. . .Who determined what level of any of these things is safe??? The pet food companies scientists??? What TOTALLY INDEPENDENT studies have been done? By whom? When? How do the public access the information?

THEY CAN'T OR WON'T ANSWER THOSE SORTS OF QUESTIONS WILL THEY?

The response when they first answered the call & I asked can you please tell me what is in your products was also enlightening..their response immediately was: Why?

Me: Because I want to know exactly what i am feeding my animals.

Who am I speaking to?

Me: That doesn't matter . . .

What is wrong with your dog?

Me: Nothing! (followed a long list/q of complaints my dog may have had . . .

Me: No nothing!

Then why are you asking . . . ?

Me: Because like I said I want to know!

Which one of our products are you using. . .?

Me: Various ones . . .

What's the problem. . .?

Me: Haven't got one as such just want to know what is in it!

You wouldn't understand if we told you . . .

Me: TRY ME!

Then I got the long version of BHT BHA ETC

Me: Where do you source your protein? etc etc...no satisfactory answers to any of it.

They tried their best to fob me off but I wouldn't go away until they answered my questions . . .had them running in circles & putting me from person to person & finally there is no-one avail to answer that. re the 'safe'level of ethox./100grms of their product!!!! How convenient for them!!!!!! I went to BARF immediately with 4 dogs, aged 18mths to 14yrs & litter of pups due...donated 40 kgs of dry food to animal welfare. I would never go back to commercial food. There has been no commercial dog products of any kind in this house since . . . 7yrs ago now. . .

BARF is easy, cheap, effective,..dogs hardly ever go to vet these days...in fact my vet thought I had changed vets he hadn't seen me for so long. . .

IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO FEED YOURSELF & YOUR KIDS A NUTRITIONALLY SOUND DIET YOU CAN DO THE SAME FOR YOUR DOG/CAT.

YOU DON'T NEED A SCIENTIST TO DO IT FOR YOU. NOR DO YOU NEED A DEGREE IN ANIMAL SCIENCE, BIOLOGY, OR VETERINARY SCIENCE TO FIGURE IT OUT!

THAT IS DOG FOOD MANUFACTURER SPEAK FOR WE ARE CLEVERER THAN YOU! WE WILL BRAIN WASH YOU INTO BELIEVING YOU CAN'T DO WHAT WE CAN! BULLDUST!

I DON'T NEED A DR OR NUTRITIONIST TO PLAN MY FAMILY'S MEALS SO WHY DO I NEED ONE TO FEED THE ANIMALS SENSIBLY? . . .

(Name and address supplied.)

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My main comment is on why pet owners feed commercial food and I doubt that most even give it any thought - they are shown on television and on posters in the shops that dogs and cats live healthy active lives being fed out of bags and tins, so that is what they do. When their pets get skin problems, joint problems, teeth problems, etc. it doesn't occur to them that the diet is the cause, any more than they link their own processed food diet with their own health problems. Their vet is not going to tell them that the reason they are living in his surgery is because of what they are feeding their pet. He can make lots of money selling them special diets instead.

I find it interesting that Pedigree Pet Foods have this year actually come out and said that dogs are carnivores. And this is after years of feeding dogs soya, peanut hulls, grains, etc. If pet food companies were interested in what was best for dogs and cats to eat, they would not need to carry out laboratory research but just look at what wild carnivores eat. What they are really doing is finding ways they can use up the garbage from other processes they would otherwise have to find ways of chucking away. As it is, instead of having to pay for disposal, they charge pet owners for it. Since they said at the start that their foods were complete and all that a dog or cat would need, how come they keep changing them?

(Name and address supplied.)

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The Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney is a leading source of postgraduate education for veterinarians. Dr Michele Cotton, Associate Director of the Foundation has reviewed the book Raw Meaty Bones:

[http://www.pgf.edu.au/dc/dc223\\_d.cfm](http://www.pgf.edu.au/dc/dc223_d.cfm)