

RMB Newsletter Vol 1:2 By Crikey 7 November 2001

Dear Reader,

It's summer in Australia and it's hotting up. In the pet food struggles things warm up a bit on the commercial TV stations too - despite their dependence on the pet food dollar. (The tax payer funded ABC TV stays mute on the \$1.5 billion scandal.)

In this second edition of the RMB Newsletter the stories by Crikey come from the newsletter at <<http://www.crikey.com.au>>

Although strong on Australian flavour, the stories are relevant to the situation everywhere. For that's where the multinational pet food monster intrudes – everywhere.

Until next time,

Best wishes,

Tom Lonsdale and the Raw Meaty Bones crew

By Crikey

Crikey Newsletter am 1/11/01

DODGY DOGGY TUCKER

Speaking of dead and dying animals, Crikey was delighted to see that A Current Affair picked up on our piece (the ACA producer rang to thank us) by vet Tom Lonsdale and gave his story about dodgy dog food a really good airing last night [31/10/01] on prime time national television.

The story alone will wipe millions off the annual \$1.5 billion in sales that pet food companies like Uncle Bens reap each year. The argument really is compelling. Dogs are carnivores being made to eat crappy grains based product by hugely profitable multi-nationals who fund the Vets and any other interest group who'll talk up pet ownership and pet food sales. And these crappy diets lead to a lot of sick puppies which keeps Australian vets nice and busy.

All the dog owners and breeders featured on A Current Affair feed their animals raw meaty bones and never have to visit a vet as a result.

Uncle Bens have 65 per cent of the market and is owned by the Mars Corporation which is the world's biggest family company controlled by the eccentric American Mars brothers. Yes, they own Mars bars.

They are also incredibly secretive so it was no wonder that Uncle Bens and the Australian Petfood Association refused to co-operate with ACA.

It remains a shame that the newspapers are so worried about all that pet food advertising and refuse to give Tom Lonsdale's book the decent airing it deserves.

These multi-nationals have used devious tactics to grow their sales way beyond what is good for Australian pets and pet-owners and it is about time we saw a bit of a downward trend. Boycott Uncle Bens everyone and feed your pets Raw Meaty Bones.

Check out Tom's original article here:

<http://www.crikey.com.au/media/rawmeatybones.html>

Crikey Newsletter pm 1/11/01

DODGY DOG FOOD

A subscriber writes:

"I was interested in your reference to Tom Lonsdale's book and remember some years ago a NSW vet published an article indicating that a form of immuno deficiency was emerging in pets and that cause was a diet filled with commercial dog food. His advice was the same as Lonsdale's but he wasn't having much success selling his message.

As an ABC radio producer at the time we followed up the story but also found it difficult to get a response from pet food manufacturers and some veterinary organisations.

It is also interesting that one of the first people to successfully sell a program idea to the ABC, after it decided to outsource most of it's light entertainment programs, was a vet working for one of the major associations who were sponsored by a pet food company. From memory there were concerns about the independence of the vet and the implications for the programs content. I believe she resigned from the association short after getting the nod from the ABC.

Regards, John"

Crikey Newsletter am 2/11/01

CROOKED CAT FOOD

A well-connected subscriber writes:

"There was an article on Tom Lonsdale a few years back in the Fin Review on the ABC pet series and the conflict of interest trip with industry. It might be in Tom's book but interesting when you look at Pal/Pedigree brand from Mars (Effem was/still is I think the holding company in Australasia) you'll find a classic front group on petfood packaging from Mars claiming "developed with Waltham the world's leading authority on pet care and nutrition". Was bankrolled and controlled by Mars a few years ago unless they have got clever with the money trail. You'll also find a little tactic of Uncle Ben's sales reps is to eat Mars petfood to prove its quality. While they'll do that on the premium cat and dog brands, they steadfastly refuse for Pal/Pedigree. Top breeders still recommend it though."

ENDS

We've also picked up that the "ABC journalist, former vet" is Jonica Newby, none other than Robyn Williams' girlfriend. Questions were asked at the time about how Robyn was able to use his impeccable Science Show credentials to convince RN management to get a 4 -part series of people and their pets for a lightweight fluffy PR piece for a multi-national. At that time Jonica was working for the doggie food people - Media Watch picked it up.

But this did not stop her career and some cynics would suggest it is Robyn's ABC clout that sees Jonica appearing each week on Catalyst these days which is a far cry from the old Quantum.

We welcome copies of correspondence/emails/faxes for possible inclusion in future *RMB Newsletters*.

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