

# **Beware!**

## **Are you Giving Your Pet Tainted Products or Fraudulent Supplements?**

**A 2013 study by the Canadian government estimated that there are more than 65,000 dietary supplements and nutraceuticals on the market, consumed by more than 150 million Americans and their pets. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says that dietary supplements and nutraceuticals are a \$40 billion per year industry, and yet these products are exempt from the FDA's strict safety and effectiveness testing and approval policy that is required of prescription drugs.**

**And there's more bad news: A 2013 research study conducted by the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, found that the majority of herbal products on the market do not contain what is on their labels - 12 companies were tested and only 2 of them provided authentic products without substitutions, contaminants or fillers. Some of the contaminants were plants that have known toxicity. The tainted products sold because of this widespread labeling fraud can be very dangerous for both people and their pets.**

**The University of Guelph study prompted the New York State Attorney General to do some sophisticated testing, including DNA testing of products to verify their contents versus what was stated on the label. By doing what the FDA should be doing- if the agency's hands weren't tied**

**down by the Dietary Supplement Health and Education (DSHEA) Act of 1994 - the attorney general found evidence of widespread fraud in the supplement industry.**

**The federal DSHEA legislation was passed by politicians with strong financial ties to the supplement industry. It allows companies to make general health claims about their products without providing evidence about their effectiveness. It also protects supplements from the strict approval rules that apply to prescription drugs, as I mentioned above. The industry is basically allowed to operate on an honor code and suffers from widespread unethical behavior by many of the manufacturers. This was brought to light by the fact that the attorney general's investigation concluded in 2015 and reported multiple fraudulent products on the shelves of major retailers, such as Target, Walmart, Walgreens and GNC.**

**Dietary supplement expert Dr. Peter Cohen, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, says the FDA "completely dropped the ball" in its responsibility to prevent the inclusion of dangerous ingredients in supplements. Nutritionist David Schardt of the Center for Science in the Public Interest said the tests show that the supplement industry is in urgent need of reform. Unfortunately, due to the way Congress has tied its hands, the FDA is reactive and has to wait until there is serious harm, such as death, organ damage and transplants, until they can investigate and, hopefully, take action.**

**Veterinarians have been aware of this for years as a result of a study the FDA completed on the common supplement glucosamine a little over 10 years ago. That study found that of approximately 300 different glucosamine products bought in different locations all over the country, only one of them contained 100 percent**

**of the ingredients that were listed on the label. The rest were from 14 percent up to 80 percent. A repeat study five years later revealed that the same product that ranked highest was still at 100 percent. Four other products were up to 95 percent, but the worst offender was down to 13 percent.**

**There is a recent addition to the veterinary glucosamine market in the United States that comes from Australia. The good news is that Australia requires much more stringent regulation on supplements manufactured in their country. The manufacturers have to prove that their products contain exactly what is on their label before they are allowed to sell them. I suspect that this product, Glyde, will become quite popular among veterinarians and pet owners in our country.**

**To recap:**

- 1. Vitamins and supplements may not contain what the manufacturer claims.**
- 2. Vitamins and supplements may contain ingredients that are not claimed on their labels.**
- 3. Vitamins and supplements may contain harmful levels of certain contaminants.**

**It is wise to discuss supplements with your veterinarian before giving anything to your pet. Working in concert with your veterinarian to monitor your pet's overall health**

**and using your veterinarian as a resource for information on the highest quality products available is your best protection against supplement fraud and tainted products. There are definite advantages to some supplements that can improve the quality of life for your pet. Your veterinarian can help you avoid problems and get the most benefits.**