

SULPHITE PRESERVATIVES IN PET MEATS

C&T NO. 5395

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Sulphite preservatives (e.g. sodium metabisulphite) in pet meats and pet food rolls causing thiamine deficiency and resultant brainstem haemorrhage has been characterised for at least 20 years.

When we first see a cat at Paddington Cat Hospital (and at every annual visit), we ask the simple question: 'What does your cat eat?' and we are amazed to find a significant number of cats still being fed pet meats. We explain the problem and recommend that these owners feed alternatives to their cats.

The pet food industry in Australia is self-regulated via the Pet Food Industry Association of Australia (PFIAA) which sets its own standards using a voluntary code of practice. A major deficiency of this system is the lack of any legal requirement for full and accurate labelling of the ingredients in pet food, i.e. listing ingredients (including preservatives) is optional.

One very clever client of ours was shocked that pet meats that specifically claim on the label 'no preservatives' may indeed contain such a dangerous ingredient.

She obtained a sulphite test from <http://fedup.com.au/information/support/sulphite-tests> (2 test strips came with each card) and obtained a reading of approximately 60-200 ppm. See the picture: in real life, the colour on the strip was somewhat between the two panels, whereas in the photo it seems to be closer to the second one.

These results were from: <http://www.caninecountry.com.au/> feline roo meat. Their website prominently displays the words: 'Preservative Free'.

Low levels like this may not necessarily result in clinical signs, particularly if owners are feeding other foods also which may explain why we don't see more cases with neurological signs as a result of these preservatives. However, the levels should be zero (as labeled);



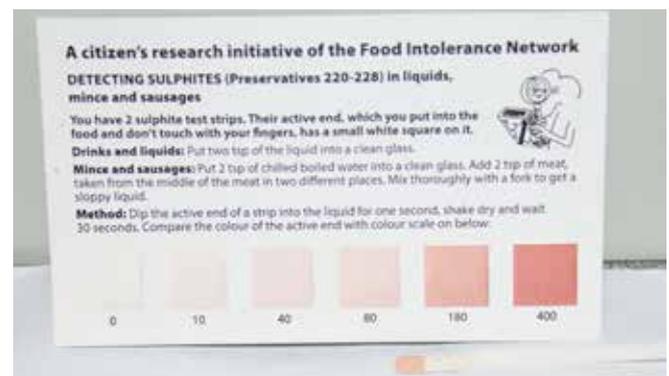
extrapolating from the human experience, many individuals may experience adverse effects – skin rashes, gastrointestinal issues and so forth (e.g. many people who get headaches from drinking red wine get them because of the high sulphite content in the wine) and we can ensure NO clinical cases if we ensure our clients don't feed these foods to their cats or dogs.



Canine Country Pet Food
(Images sourced from www.caninecountry.com.au/)

References

- Studdert, V. P., & Labuc, R. H. (1991). Thiamin deficiency in cats and dogs associated with feeding meat preserved with sulphur dioxide. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 68(2), 54-57.
- Steel, R. J. S. (1997). Thiamine deficiency in a cat associated with the preservation of pet meat with sulphur dioxide. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 75(10), 719-721.
- Malik, R., & Sibraa, D. (2005). Thiamine deficiency due to sulphur dioxide preservative in 'pet meat' - a case of déjà vu. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 83(7), 408-411.
- Singh, M., Thompson, M., Sullivan, N., & Child, G. (2005). Thiamine deficiency in dogs due to the feeding of sulphite preserved meat. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 83(7), 412-417.



Results for drinks and liquids: The reading you get is the sulphite content in parts per million (ppm) or mg/kg. No correction is required.

Results for meats: The reading you get is taken from the meat, so take 80 from the reading and then multiply by 2. So a first reading of 80 becomes 0 ppm. A first reading of 180 becomes 200ppm after correction.

Legal upper limits: (Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code 2005) People react to different levels. A label warning is required above 10ppm (to which some people react) except in beer and wine.

Beer	25	Beef mince	NONE	Cheese	300
Ice confections	25	Prawns cooked	30	Noodles, pasta	300
Fruit juice and drinks	115	Sausages	500	Biscuit, cakes, pastries	300
Wine dry	250			Sauces and toppings	350
Wine sweet	400			Sugars and syrup	450
				Dried fruit (apricots)	3000

Report your findings at www.fedup.com.au/information/support/sulphite-tests

Warning: this test method gives a rough indication of sulphite content but cannot be the basis for any legal claim nor is it intended as medical advice. The Food Intolerance Network and Sue DeWitte cannot be held liable for any errors and omissions arising from the performance or use of the results of this test.