

For veterinarian Dr. Tony Kremer and many of his clients, it has been a difficult week: along with the numerous phone calls, over 75 patients have come through his clinics with their pets,

"It has been really tough on our clients. Most of them are coming in for precautionary blood work, some animals have been sick; we are just trying to make the best of this awful situation." Kremer stated.

Menu Foods, a Canadian company based outside Toronto that produces pet food, said Saturday it was recalling dog food sold throughout North America 91 brands and cat food including Iams, Nutro and Eukanuba. Major retailers such as Wal-Mart, Kroger and Safeway distributed the food.

An unknown number of cats and dogs had suffered kidney failure and over ten have died after eating the affected pet food. As a precaution, two other companies — Nestle Purina PetCare Co. and Hill's Pet Nutrition Inc. are voluntarily recalling some products made by Menu Foods.

Cats seem to be the most affected by this with Acute Renal (kidney) Failure. The contaminated products contain toxins that specifically affect the kidneys, ultimately causing kidney failure and possible death. The most common symptoms of kidney failure are change in urination, vomiting, diarrhea, depression, listlessness, loss of appetite. Excessive thirst and excessive urination might also be present. This is a serious disease, and if not caught quickly can be fatal, Kremer reports.

Dr. Richard Quigg, Chief of Nephrology at the University of Chicago states, "Kidney failure in animals and humans is on the rise and has a worse prognosis than most cancers combined." Quigg states, "Adding a toxin to the already staggering statistic is indeed frightening."

Dr. Kremer said he had a patient come in over the past week who had regularly fed Iams cat food — the cat had stopped eating and did not appear well. Dr. Kremer determined she was in renal failure. "After this report came out we realized there could be a correlation and have taken the cat off the particular diet and brand."

A complete list of the recalled products along with product codes, descriptions and production dates was available from the Menu Foods Web site. The company also designated a phone number that pet owners can call for information — (866) 895-2708.

The FDA stated the focus of the investigation is on a new supplier of wheat gluten, which Menu Foods began using around the time the first complaints surfaced. However, it could be weeks before pet owners have answers.

Menu Foods' chief executive and president Paul Henderson has stated the company takes the complaints very seriously and they are looking for a specific cause. Menu Foods' has indicated they will do whatever is necessary to figure out what happened and continue to provide a high quality product.