



Laura Lanese
State Representative, District 23
Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 560
June 27, 2018
Before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Chairman Hill, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Patterson, and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony for House Bill 560, legislation which will provide pet owners some assurance that their pet food does not contain the remains of other cats and dogs and that it does not contain pentobarbital, the drug used to euthanize cats and dogs.

Many pet owners haven't spent a lot of time thinking about what is in their pet's food. Some assume, incorrectly, the pricier the food the better the quality. However, in the past two years there have been a couple of high profile news stories about dogs who have died after eating tainted dog food. In February of this year, Fox 8 in Cleveland reported that the FDA recalled several brands of pet food after pentobarbital was found in the samples from an Ohio-based pet food company. Just a year earlier, another news station tested a variety of dog food samples after the death of a pug in Washington. That station also found pentobarbital in the samples they tested. This prompted a recall, which covered sales in Ohio. Pentobarbital is a barbiturate and is usually only found in animals like cats, dogs and horses who have been euthanized by veterinarians. While the news stories are recent, the concerns are not. For years veterinarians have noticed the need to use increasing amounts of pentobarbital to euthanize dogs and cats. The suspicion was that these family pets were building up a tolerance to the euthanasia drug. Nearly twenty years ago a study by the FDA indicated the presence of pentobarbital in pet food, but the conclusion at the time was that the amounts found weren't significant enough to be fatal. However, the FDA has not analyzed pet food for the drug in the intervening years despite receiving thousands of complaints reporting pet illness and even pet deaths.

How dangerous is pentobarbital? The Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation published a case report of two dogs who were diagnosed with pentobarbital poisoning. The source was a decaying carcass of a horse that had been euthanized more than two years prior. The dogs, who lived in a remote area, had eaten the improperly buried remains. The fact that the horse carcass was lethally toxic for two years after it was euthanized with pentobarbital should

reinforce the danger of feeding pet food containing this drug. Yet rendering plants are legally permitted to sell these products to manufacturers. Under current Ohio law, a commercial feed is adulterated if *it bears or contains any poisonous or deleterious substance that may render it injurious to animal or human health, except that when the substance is not an added substance.* Since the drug is not added during processing, the feed may not be considered an added substance and therefore permissible.

The second concern to arise from these deaths is the belief that there are euthanized dogs and cats in our pet food. Pets from animal shelters are thought to be one of the sources of meat used in rendering plants. While most rendering plants and pet food companies will deny this use, the presence of pentobarbital gives credence to this belief as does a decades-old pronouncement by the president of the national feed control organization confirming the possibility. Most pet owners do not want to feed their family dog or cat the remains of other dogs and cats. Even if a consumer actively tries to make an informed decision by reading the label, terms like animal meal and meat meal make it hard to decipher what exactly is in our pet's food. Guardrails to ensure that our pets are not eating other pets and ingesting euthanasia drugs is one small token we can offer consumers, especially since pet food companies are denying they are part of the pet food they sell.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify on House Bill 560. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.