

Mycotoxins Are Raging – Avoid These 8 Common Ingredients Now

High levels of these dangerous fungal chemicals are showing up in 2016 crops, and several of them are common ingredients in pet foods. Check your labels now and seriously consider upgrading your pet's food.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Heads up U.S. pet parents: Corn and grain crops are testing positive for high levels of mycotoxins
- Mycotoxins are toxic chemical substances produced by fungi that infect crops. U.S. pet food manufacturers are being advised to monitor the quality of these ingredients going into their products
- Mycotoxin poisoning is a true medical emergency, and your pet will need immediate treatment and hospitalization
- It's important to look closely at the ingredients in the food you buy your pet; avoid brands containing grains or corn in any form, as well as cereal grains like maize, sorghum, pearl millet, rice and wheat
- Consider transitioning your pet away from all dry food to a balanced, fresh food diet made from organic ingredients

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If you're still feeding your furry family member commercially available pet food containing corn or other grains, now might be a good time to think seriously about upgrading your pet's diet.

That's because according to survey results, corn and distiller's dried grain crops (cereal byproducts of the distillation process) are testing positive for high levels of mycotoxin contamination.¹

Mycotoxins (derived from the Greek words for "fungus" and "poison") are noxious chemical substances produced by certain types of fungi that infect crops, and U.S. pet food manufacturers are being advised to monitor the quality of these ingredients going into their products.

In 2016, a total of 387 corn samples and 79 distiller's dried grains with solubles (DDGS) samples from across the U.S. were tested. Results revealed that 90% of corn samples and 100% of DDGS samples were contaminated by at least one mycotoxin, and 96% of the DDGS samples contained more than one.

3 Major Mycotoxins Found in Corn and Grain Samples

The three major mycotoxins found in the tested samples are produced by the *Fusarium* fungi and included deoxynivalenol, fumonisins and zearalenone. All three toxins were present in harvested corn at higher levels than were measured in 2015 crops.

Deoxynivalenol (DON), a member of the trichothecenes family of toxins, is known to negatively affect the immune system of animals. It also causes digestive issues such as vomiting, diarrhea, refusal to eat and/or weight loss, as well as hemorrhaging.²

Fumonisin (FUM) are found mainly in corn and can cause organ damage. In horses, this toxin is known to cause deadly Equine Leukoencephalomalacia (ELEM), also called “hole-in-the-head-disease,” in which the neural tissue of the brain liquefies.³

Zearalenone (ZEN) is an estrogenic mycotoxin that is reported to cause reproductive abnormalities in all animal species.⁴

Symptoms of Mycotoxin Poisoning in Pets

The severity and type of symptoms your dog or cat displays depends on the amount and type of mycotoxin ingested. Some of the more common symptoms associated with mycotoxicosis include:

- Panting
- Weakness
- **Hyperactivity**
- Loss of coordination
- Vomiting
- Increased heart rate
- Lack of appetite
- Increased body temperature
- Dehydration
- Seizures
- Muscle tremors

Mycotoxin poisoning is a true medical emergency, and your pet will need immediate treatment and hospitalization. Your veterinarian must take early and aggressive action to remove the toxic substances from your pet’s body.

Most vets may not correlate these symptoms to mycotoxins in pet food, so make sure you voice your thoughts if you suspect your pet has been poisoned by her food.

Common Food Sources of Mycotoxins

- Corn
- Peanuts
- Wheat (bread, cereal, pasta)
- Cottonseed and cottonseed oil
- Barley (cereal)

- Rye
- Sugar cane and sugar beets (which also feed fungi)
- Sorghum (found in a variety of grain-based products)

The above foods can be found in many commercially available pet food formulas. Make sure to study the ingredients in the food you buy your pet, and avoid brands containing grains or corn in any form, including corn gluten meal, whole grain corn, corn flour, etc.

Also avoid formulas containing cereal grains like maize, sorghum, pearl millet, rice and wheat.

Consider transitioning your pet away from all dry food to a balanced, fresh food diet made from organic ingredients. You can make your pet's meals at home using recipes that are balanced nutritionally for either a cat or a dog.

You can also look into commercially prepared raw pet foods as well as dehydrated raw foods that are GMO-free. Or you can consider a mixture of homemade and commercially prepared organic diets.

Another Deadly Type of Mycotoxin — Aflatoxins

Aflatoxin contamination was responsible for a number of regional pet food recalls and several major disease outbreaks over the past 20 years.

Aflatoxins are naturally occurring mycotoxins produced by the *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus* fungi, and are the most extensively researched mycotoxins in the world.

Aflatoxins are known to cause acute toxic illness and cancer in animals and humans, and are considered among the most carcinogenic substances on the planet. Cats and dogs are more sensitive to aflatoxins than many other animals.

Aflatoxins frequently contaminate agricultural crops before they are harvested. Conditions that promote pre-harvest contamination include high temperatures, prolonged periods of drought and insect activity.

Aflatoxins can also be a problem after harvesting if the crop stays wet for too long. And they can grow on stored crops if the moisture level is too high and mold develops. The three plants with the highest rate of aflatoxin contamination are corn, peanuts and cottonseed.

Aflatoxicosis is more common in dogs than cats because commercial dog food formulas more often contain corn products. So if you're a dog parent, you should be especially vigilant.

Symptoms of Aflatoxin Poisoning

Aflatoxicosis is chiefly a disease of the liver, causing GI symptoms, reproductive issues, anemia and jaundice. Certain types of aflatoxins are linked to cancer in animals. If your dog or cat ingests food contaminated with aflatoxins, you can anticipate one or more of the following symptoms:

- Severe, persistent vomiting
- Sluggishness

- Bloody diarrhea
- Discolored urine
- Lack of appetite
- Jaundice, especially around the whites of the eyes, gum and belly
- Fever

If you think your pet has eaten contaminated food, even if he’s showing no symptoms of illness, get him to your veterinarian or an emergency vet clinic as soon as possible. And bring the food with you. It’s also best to talk with your **integrative vet** about ozone therapy, hyperbaric oxygen treatments and IV vitamin C as a means of naturally detoxifying the body and assisting in cellular repair.

Sources and References

[PetfoodIndustry.com February 10, 2017](#)

[PetMD, January 19, 2023](#)

[Natural News, April 1, 2013](#)

¹ [PetfoodIndustry.com, February 10, 2017](#)

^{2,3,4} [Nutriad](#)
