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Industry Insights: Fit for Fido? The Rise Of 'Natural' Pet Food Claims

Sixty-eight percent of households in the United States — or approximately 85 million families — own a pet, according to the 2017 to 2018 National Pet Owners Survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association. Because most pet owners treat their pets as members of the family, it is no surprise then that what they feed their pets is as important to them as what they feed their family. As consumers shift toward "organic," "natural" and "clean" foods for themselves and their families, they are also making similar purchasing decisions when it comes to pet food. These "premium" pet foods come at a premium price, however — and consumers expect to receive a premium product. As sales of "premium" pet food have increased in recent years, so has the number of consumer class actions filed against pet food manufacturers, specifically those involving claims that marketing and labeling pet foods as "natural" is false and misleading when they contain artificial ingredients, synthetic ingredients, chemicals, heavy metals and/or toxins. Bisphenol A, or BPA, lead and arsenic are among the most commonly alleged "unnatural" chemicals contained in pet food. Pet food manufacturers argue that these lawsuits challenge truthful and accurate labeling by purporting to impose a standard of absolute purity for trace levels of "unnatural" contaminants. Manufacturers contend that trace levels of any alleged contaminants in their products do not exceed any maximum permissible levels for pet food as established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or other regulatory agency, and that their products are safe for pet consumption. Still, these class actions allege that the "natural" label is misleading and that manufacturers are required to disclose the presence and levels of the alleged contaminants contained in their pet food products. [Read the full article on Law360 here.](#)

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