



## Diamond Pet Foods: Pet Food Recall

### Situation

As one of the nation's leading manufacturers of super-premium dog and cat food for breeders, sporting and working dogs and family pets, Diamond Pet Foods relied on its excellent reputation to build its brand and customer loyalty. In late 2005, after tests confirmed aflatoxin contamination in dog food originating from its South Carolina manufacturing facility, the company initiated a broad voluntary product recall in 23 states east of the Mississippi River in an effort to quickly isolate the problem and save as many pet lives as possible. In total, 800,000 bags of Diamond dog food products were pulled from retailer shelves.

### Challenges

Since Diamond Pet Foods had never before experienced an issue requiring a product recall, they had never established protocols for managing such a situation. Our challenges were to:

- Stabilize the situation by establishing necessary protocols;
- Provide accurate, thorough information that would help customers and pets in the affected areas as quickly as possible;
- Minimize damage to the company's reputation and business; and
- Restore the company's reputation following the recall.

### Solution

Our goals were simple:

- Provide as much factual information as possible to help save pets that were affected by the recall.
- Prevent more pets from eating contaminated food.

Our issues response team acted quickly using a variety of communications techniques to reach audiences as broadly and quickly as possible, including:

- A comprehensive recall Web site.
- A customer information center, staffed with veterinarians 16 hours/day, seven days/week to answer customer and veterinarian's pet health questions and to facilitate customer reimbursement of veterinary costs associated with aflatoxin exposure.
- Communications through distributors and retailers, as well as state and national veterinary associations, to establish a collection and disposal process for contaminated products and to provide accurate facts and recall procedures.
- An aggressive national and regional media outreach program that accepted all interview requests and proactively urged the media to cover the story accurately, responsibly





and quickly. This effort included the development of key messages, media training of company spokespersons, the establishment of a media hotline, and frequent updates issued to the media as updates became available. We also monitored the media to ensure its accuracy, and followed up with media, as needed.

- A post-recall news bureau to help repair company reputation and create goodwill.

**Results**

- More than 500 local, regional and national media outlets followed the recall, including the Associated Press, “NBC Nightly News,” “CBS Morning Show,” “CNN American Morning,” and the *New York Times*
- Extensive, live interview on CNN re-directed news coverage to facts and key messages helping gradually dispel the inevitable misinformation that is relayed during crisis situations
- More than 22 million positive media impressions have resulted from post-recall media outreach



*The New York Times*

**“Do the right thing  
by acting responsibly and  
communicating transparently.”**

