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Cause of pets' deaths identified

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Royal Canin South Africa, which is at the centre of a pet food poisoning saga, has revealed that melamine was found in the small range of pet food that was tested.

Revealing the findings of its investigations in the cause of the pets' illness at a press conference yesterday, RCSA managing director Gregory Watine said melamine was found to be present in the range of Vets Choice food tested. Melamine is a chemical substance used in plastic products.

The affected Vets Choice products, which were manufactured between March 8 and April 11, were sold in South Africa and Namibia. But Watine said Vets Choice made before this date was safe for consumption.

The contaminated product was found in corn gluten that appears to have originated from China.

So far, not all products were affected, but as a precautionary measure, all Royal Canin and Vets Choice products have been recalled.

"We at Royal Canin want to express our support and condolences for pet owners whose pets may have fallen ill or passed away as a result of eating our food," Watine said .

Up to 30 deaths have been reported, with the cause being renal failure. Watine said that if a pet showed signs of "diarrhoea and drinking water excessively, immediate medical attention must be taken".

The Pet Food Institute and the SA Veterinary Association (Sava) are working closely with Royal Canin in the investigation.

"We will do our level best to help those whose pets were affected. As far as we know, no cats have died," Dr Gerhard Steenkamp of Sava told The Star.

Watine said there would be compensation for people whose pets were affected.

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