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MAFF Highlights Proper Labeling and Game Meat Risks at Interpets Tradeshow

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Report Highlights:

The 6th annual Interpets Asia Pacific tradeshow set record highs for exhibitors and attendance, highlighting the value of the Japanese pet care industry. Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) underscored the importance of Japanese language labeling for imported products during an informational seminar. MAFF may establish new regulations for pet food products produced from 'game meat' to ensure safety, following recent production growth.

General Information:

Tokyo hosted Interpets Asia Pacific, the largest tradeshow for pet food and pet-related products in Japan, from March 31 to April 3, 2016. Now in its sixth year, the show continued to grow, setting new highs in both the number of exhibitors and the physical space of the event. Over the course of four days, nearly 30,000 visitors learned about a wide range of products on display from some 350 exhibitors representing Japanese and international firms.

On the first day of the show, the lead pet food safety regulator from Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) held a seminar on the [Pet Food Safety Law](#) and the regulation of pet food products in Japan. Of concern to U.S. pet food exporters, the official reminded the audience that labels on pet food products must be clearly written in the Japanese language. Post reminds U.S. companies that while affixing the Japanese language label is ultimately the responsibility of the Japanese importer, the U.S. exporter will be expected to provide the necessary labeling information to the importer. As many imported products continue to fail to meet Japan's requirements, the official used the conspicuous absence of a Japanese language "best before date" (賞味期限 - *shomikigen*) as an example to call attention to the importance of the regulation.

Figure 1: Example of Pet Food Label



Source: Japan Pet Food Association

The MAFF official also commented on an emerging trend in the Japanese pet food market: use of game meat as an ingredient. As deer and wild boar numbers continue to increase in the absence of natural predators (it is believed that the last Japanese wolf, *canis lupis hodophilax*, was killed in 1905 and bear numbers continue to decline), the annual tally of agricultural damage inflicted by these natural pests has been estimated as high as \$225 million. With local, prefectural, and national government support for increased harvest of game meat, a number of game meat pet food products are being developed in Japan. Following reports of pet fatalities linked to game meat products, MAFF is considering more stringent monitoring and testing of pet food products made from game meat, as wild game animals often

have higher rates of bacterial infection and parasitic infestation. In May 2015, MAFF issued a [safe handling notice](#) (Japanese language only) to alert pet food manufacturers of the risks associated with game meat.

The Pet Food Safety Law only applies to pet food for dogs and cats; there are no pet food standards for food for other pet animals. Importers of pet food for animals other than dogs and cats are advised to consult with MAFF's animal quarantine office when they plan to import any such pet food products into Japan. For more information on Japan's pet food market, see [GAIN JA5713](#).

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