

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

Lauri A. Osborne, Individually and On Behalf)
of All Others Similarly Situated,)

Plaintiff,)

vs.)

MENU FOODS, INC.)

Defendant.)

No. 3:07cv469(RNC)

307CV00469
CLASS ACTION

RNC

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Lauri A. Osborne brings this class action complaint against Menu Foods, Inc. (“Menu Foods”) to seek redress for herself and other individuals injured by its sale of contaminated pet food throughout the United States.

NATURE OF THE CASE

1. Menu Foods, one of the largest pet food manufacturers in the world, recently issued a mass recall of 42 brands of cat food and 51 brands of dog food.
2. That recall was issued belatedly as a result of evidence that the pet food in question was contaminated with a potentially lethal agent.
3. When ingested by an animal, the contaminated pet food can cause immediate renal failure, resulting in complete shutdown of the animal’s kidneys and, ultimately its death.
4. Menu Foods’ actions in selling the contaminated food and failing to issue the recall sooner were reckless and in breach of its duties and warranties to its customers.

5. Those actions were a proximate cause of injury to and the deaths of currently untold numbers of pets, including plaintiff Lauri A. Osborne's cats, as described more fully below.

6. On behalf of a nationwide class, Lauri A. Osborne seeks redress for that misconduct.

PARTIES

7. Plaintiff Lauri A. Osborne is a citizen of Connecticut, residing in Terryville, Litchfield County, CT.

8. Defendant Menu Foods is the self-proclaimed "leading manufacturer of private-label wet pet food in North America." It is a New Jersey Corporation with its principal place of business in New Jersey. It does business throughout the United States and throughout Connecticut. It also has offices in Ontario, Canada.

JURISDICTION

9. The Court has original jurisdiction over this complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332 (a) because (a) plaintiff and numerous members of her putative class are citizens of states different from those of which Menu Foods is a citizen; (b) the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interests and costs; and (c) none of the jurisdictional exceptions contained in 28 U.S.C. § 1332 (d)(4)-(5) applies to the instant action.

VENUE

10. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c). The Defendant transacts business in this District, and many of the acts constituting the violations of law alleged herein occurred in this District.

FACTS

11. Menu Foods holds itself out to the public as a manufacturer of safe, nutritious, and high-quality dog and cat food.

12. It makes numerous express warranties about the quality of its food and its manufacturing facilities.

13. For example, Menu Foods touts the claim that it “manufacture[s] the private label, wet pet-food industry’s most comprehensive product program with the highest standards of quality” and it operates “state-of-the-art” manufacturing facilities in the United States and Canada.

14. Menu Foods intended for pet owners to believe its statements and trust that its pet food is of first-rate quality.

15. On or about March 16, 2007, Menu Foods announced a recall of approximately 42 brands “cuts and gravy” style dog food and 51 brands of “cuts and gravy” style cat food, all produced at Menu Foods’ facility in Emporia, Kansas, between December 3, 2006 and March 6, 2007.

16. Weeks before the recall, Menu Foods had received numerous complaints indicating that pet food originating from the Emporia plant was killing pets.

17. As a result of these complaints, Menu Foods tested its food on approximately 40 to 50 pets. Seven of those pets died after ingesting the food.

18. Despite having actual knowledge of both the complaints it received and its own study, Menu Foods delayed for weeks before issuing the notice of recall.

19. Even then, its recall was conducted in a negligent manner. For example, both its website and the toll-free number it provided to the public were frequently non-operational.

FACTS RELATING TO THE NAMED PLAINTIFF

20. On or about February 25, 2007 Plaintiff purchased a 24 can variety pack of IAMS adult cat food from a Walmart store for her thirteen year-old cat, Gizmo, her thirteen year-old cat, Ziggy, and her eleven year-old cat, Oreo.

21. Menu Foods is the manufacturer of IAMS adult cat food.

22. On or about March 4, 2007, shortly after ingesting Menu Food's cat food, Gizmo went into renal failure. Gizmo's kidneys shut down, and on March 5, 2007, she had to be put down.

23. Osborne incurred over \$1,200 in veterinary expenses relating to the attempts to save Gizmo's life and, in addition, to save her other cats. Specifically, another 13 year-old cat, Ziggy has been ill with problems since ingesting the same food, and Oreo, an 11 year-old cat owned by Osborne has also been sick.

24. Gizo had been with Osborne's family since 1994.

25. The loss of Gizmo and illness to her other pets has been devastating to Osborne.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

26. Osborne brings this action, pursuant to FRCP 23(b)(3), on behalf of herself and a class (the "Class") consisting of herself and all others who purchased pet food in the United States that was ultimately subject to the March 16, 2007 Menu Foods recall.

27. Upon information and belief, there are over 100,000 members of the Class such that joinder of all members is impracticable.

28. Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Class and predominate over questions affecting individual members. Common questions for the Class include:

(a) Did Menu Foods act negligently in failing to prevent contamination of its pet food?

(b) Did Menu Foods act negligently in failing to warn its customers in a timely and effective manner of the danger of its pet food?

(c) Did Menu Foods' breach express and/or implied warranties relating to the sale of its pet food?

29. Osborne will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class, her claims are typical of the claims of the members of the class, and she has retained counsel competent and experienced in class action litigation.

30. A Class action is superior to other available methods for fairly and efficiently adjudicating this controversy because, among other things, (a) joinder of all members of the class is impracticable, and (b) many members of the class cannot vindicate their rights by individual suits because their damages are small relative to the burden and expense of litigating individual actions.

COUNT I

(Breach of Warranties)

31. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the foregoing allegations.

32. Menu Foods breached express warranties to Plaintiff and violated the Uniform Commercial Code.

33. Menu Foods breached implied warranties to Plaintiff and violated the Uniform Commercial Code.

34. Menu Foods breached the implied warranty of merchantability.

35. As a proximate cause of this misconduct, plaintiff and her class suffered actual damages, including without limitation the cost of the contaminated pet food and resulting veterinary bills.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, on behalf of herself and the Class, prays for the following relief:

1. An order certifying the Class as defined above;
2. An award of actual damages;
3. Appropriate injunctive relief;
4. Medical monitoring damages;
5. Reasonable attorney's fees and costs; and
6. Such further and other relief the Court deems appropriate.

COUNT II

(Negligence)

36. Plaintiff incorporates by references the foregoing allegations.

37. Menu Foods owed its customers a duty to offer safe, non-contaminated products in the stream of commerce.

38. Menu Foods breached this duty by failing to exercise care in the producing, processing, manufacturing and offering for sale of the contaminated pet food described herein.

39. Menu Foods further breached this duty by failing timely and effectively to warn plaintiff and the class of contamination even after it had actual knowledge of that fact and of the resulting risks.

40. As a proximate cause thereof, plaintiff and her class suffered actual damages, including without limitation the cost of the contaminated pet food and any resulting veterinary bills.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, on behalf of herself and the Class, prays for the following relief:

1. An order certifying the Class defined above;
2. An award of actual damages;
3. Appropriate injunctive relief;
4. Medical monitoring damages;
5. Reasonable attorney's fees and costs; and
6. Such further and other relief the Court deems appropriate.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff requests trial by jury of all claims that can be so tried.

March 26, 2007

By: 

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