

Nestle Faces Federal Countersuit over Pet Food

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A legal battle over pet food ingredients has escalated with a new federal lawsuit against the United States' largest pet food maker.

Blue Buffalo Co. Ltd. sued Nestle Purina PetCare Co. Wednesday in U.S. District Court in St. Louis, where Purina is based. The suit comes barely one week after Nestle Purina lodged its own complaint over ingredients in the same federal court.

Purina accuses its Wilton, Connecticut-based competitor of false advertising, disparagement and unjust enrichment. The counterclaim accuses Purina of some of the same deceits, as well as defamation.

Blue Buffalo advertises that its dog and cat food contain natural ingredients and do not contain chicken or poultry byproduct meals. The company also says the pet foods do not contain corn, wheat or soy — potential allergens for some pets. The company's complaint calls Nestle Purina's criticisms part of a "nationwide advertising smear campaign."

In addition to the court battle, both companies are also taking the fight straight to the masses.

"While the courts will be handling this matter in a deliberate way, we intend to remain very proactive in defending our company's integrity and product quality," Blue Buffalo founder and chairman Bill Bishop wrote Wednesday in an online letter to the company's "pet parents," as it calls its customers. "The truth is on Blue Buffalo's side."

Purina responded on its website that "Blue Buffalo's lawsuit today is exactly what we expected: a distraction from the real issues in the case and an attempt to stop Purina from being honest with the public about the ingredients in Blue Buffalo's pet food."

"We stand by our complaint. As detailed in our lawsuit, independent test results show that Blue Buffalo is not being honest with pet owners about the ingredients in their pet food. "

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