

**Update: KMR®  
December 28, 2009**

WildAgain Wildlife Rehabilitation continues to collect information regarding the 'new' Esbilac® powder manufactured after December, 2008. As with our other research projects, we try to provide information to the wildlife rehabilitation community that will support rehabilitators and their veterinarians in their decisions and practices.

**Key information in this update:**

- Sunny Aris of 575 Magazine, an online news publication, conducted an interview with PetAg President titled "KMR: Smell it First" about potential problems and action steps.
- Ms. Aris then interviewed an executive from PetSense, one of the pet supply companies that distributes PetAg products. PetSense has removed cans of KMR® powder with a lot number with some reported problems from shelves in their 31 stores.
- Rehabilitators are encouraged to listen to both short interviews at <http://www.575magazine.com/animals/1209/kmrsmellitfirst.html>.
- PetAg's website now describes storage considerations and asks anyone noticing an 'off smell or color' with their milk replacers to contact them. Those with concerns about PetAg milk replacers should certainly contact them.
- Since distributors of PetAg products may be becoming more involved, some people with concerns about KMR® and Esbilac® also may wish to contact the distributors about replacements or testing products.

**Interview with PetAg President about KMR®**

On December 18, 2009, Sunny Aris of 575 Magazine, an online news magazine in New Mexico, conducted a short interview with PetAg President Darlene Frudakis about reported rancidity problems with KMR® powder. The interview, "KMR: Smell it First," can be heard at <http://www.575magazine.com/animals/1209/kmrsmellitfirst.html>. Here's a brief summary of the interview:

At a local store, Ms. Aris purchased a can of the kitten milk replacer KMR® powder that smelled 'off'. She and the store management opened other cans of KMR® powder (lot 1469) and found they, too, appeared to be spoiled, even though their expiration date was May 2011.

Ms. Frudakis said KMR® was fine when it left the PetAg plant but may have spoiled if it was exposed to high heat. PetAg had heard of only a small number of containers with problems, she said, adding that complaints about the product did not surface until this year. PetAg notified 'accounts', she said, though she did not specify who had been notified.

Frudakis said PetAg recently changed the manufacturing process for KMR® and believes high heat will not affect it as much. PetAg began distributing the KMR® made with the new process as of October 1, 2009.

In response to repeated questions from Ms. Aris about how PetAg planned to prevent animals from getting sick from potentially rancid formula, Ms. Frudakis said the company would rely on customers to alert them to problems. PetAg, which believes very few customers have experienced problems, is encouraging those who notice an “off smell” to the powder or wrong color to read the company’s website or contact PetAg for a replacement.

### **Interview with PetSense VP about removing KMR® powder from store shelves**

On December 21, 2009, Ms. Aris conducted an interview about KMR® with vice president of operations for PetSense, Bill Lebers. PetSense removed the powdered KMR® with the lot number reported to have had the spoilage from shelves of its 31 stores nationwide. PetAg is sending new shipments of KMR® powder to PetSense stores, Lebers said. PetAg told officials at PetSense that the manufacturing process had been changed and heat-sensitive labels were being used to prevent the problem. Mr. Leber agreed to post notices in PetSense stores informing customers about the need to smell KMR® and check the color to make sure it is not spoiled.

### **More PetAg product issues**

Wildlife rehabilitators across the country have been discussing concerns about Esbilac® milk replacement powder, another PetAg product, since the summer of 2009. When rehabilitators expressed concerns to PetAg, they learned the company had changed its manufacturing process and facility for Esbilac® as of December 2008 to “improve product stability.”

PetAg posted a more extensive statement on its website about Esbilac® and KMR® storage issues, which are particularly important because these two products do not contain preservatives to maintain stability or shelf life.

WildAgain’s October 15, 2009, update included an alert that had been posted on PetAg.com for a few days that indicated some packages of KMR® had been exposed to excessive heat during transit and/or storage and should not be used if it had an ‘off odor’. That initial information was removed from the PetAg website and eventually replaced with another announcement [http://petag.com/news\\_detail.asp?RegID=15](http://petag.com/news_detail.asp?RegID=15)

### **Drawing conclusions**

Rehabilitators are encouraged to listen to the entire interview with the PetAg president (about 15 minutes), consider their experiences, and draw their own conclusions.

Since people have asked about WildAgain’s reaction, here are some initial thoughts:

- 1.) PetAg emphasizes there are no preservatives in KMR® and Esbilac®. Both of these milk replacement products are high in unsaturated fat, very sensitive to their surroundings, and considered perishable. They could be exposed to high temperatures in transit or storage without the customer being aware.
- 2.) PetAg acknowledged rancidity had occurred with some KMR® powder due to exposure to heat during transit and storage.

- 3.) The idea of placing heat-sensitive labels on the packages is a good idea – but those labels are not yet on the packages and will likely take a while to implement.
- 4.) Some of the KMR® that was exposed to high heat has an expiration date of 2011. So some people may have and may feed KMR® without realizing that it could be rancid – and cause problems.
- 5.) It is unclear if or how KMR® powder customers will be notified of the potential risk to the animal's health.
- 6.) It appears a couple of distributors, such as PetSense and Squirrels and More, are not selling KMR® powder with the lot number that had some cans of rancid product. It is unknown if and to what extent other distributors may be removing any PetAg products from their shelves or catalogs.
- 7.) Some rehabilitators who reported gastrointestinal issues in young wild mammals that were fed formula made with Esbilac® powder in the summer of 2009 asked PetAg why the company changed to the single-step dry process and the new manufacturing facility – and if they would 'change back.' The PetAg staff said the change had been to "improve product stability" and the company would not return to the old process.
- 8.) Finding a new plant and changing the manufacturing process takes considerable time and effort. PetAg began manufacturing Esbilac® in its new facility in late 2008 and began manufacturing KMR® in the summer of 2009. It would seem PetAg had planned these changes for some time. Since PetAg is adamant about continuing with the new facility and the new process, one could wonder if product stability had become a greater concern long before the recent manufacturing changes.
- 9.) The PetAg president clearly anticipates the KMR® changes reducing problems related to exposure to high heat. Yet some rehabilitators have reported problems in juvenile wild mammals that were fed Esbilac® powder that was made with the single step process at the new facility where the KMR® is now being produced. The rehabilitators have wondered if the digestive problems could be related to the new manufacturing plant and process, ingredients (including lack of preservatives), exposure to high temperatures during storage and transportation, or other factors.
- 10.) Other PetAg milk replacers, such as their Zoologic® line, include preservatives to help with product stability. The Zoologic® line has not appeared to have not same stability issues. This suggests further questions as to if and how preservatives, or the lack thereof, might affect stability and ultimately the effectiveness of the product.

WildAgain continues to recommend that people with concerns about PetAg milk replacers contact PetAg. Some also may wish to communicate with distributors of PetAg products where they were purchased about replacements, product testing, and so forth.

WildAgain continues to research these issues and expects to have more information available shortly.