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Artificial Preservatives used in PetZest Products

The PetZest product range has historically been promoted as ‘All Natural’ and or “Preservative Free” pet foods. With the transfer of PetZest ownership, it has been discovered that artificial preservatives have been used in the majority of its manufactured products.

On 6 September, 2021, the previous corporate operator (owned by Tony and Sophie Koumi), transferred the PetZest business over to new owners Russell & Lisa Botten. After settlement, Russell was instructed by Tony Koumi that the artificial preservative, E220, was used in certain PetZest products. Through further investigation of their own it was subsequently discovered by the Bottens that the previous owner had also used additional artificial preservatives in certain other PetZest products.

The artificial preservatives used vary in each product, but combined over the PetZest range:

- E220 (Sulphur Dioxide) is used in a majority of all raw minces to reduce bacteria and enhance shelf life;
- Frischex C which contains artificial Acidity Regulators 262 & 331 and Antioxidants 301 & 316 is used in most raw minces and in meatloaves to promote colour, texture and decrease oxidization deterioration; and
- Petfood Premix D (containing artificial preservative E250) is used in PetZest cooked rolls.

The Australian Pet Food Industry has no regulatory requirement for preservative or ingredient disclosure, despite in 2021 the pet food industry being worth \$13 billion to the Australian economy*. Tony Koumi chose not to disclose the use of these artificial preservatives in PetZest products despite promoting its products as “all natural” and or “preservative free” pet food.

It was the Bottens’ desire prior to taking over the business to keep all PetZest products the same based on a belief that they were all natural and or preservative free. This was until they discovered the above.

Transparency in business is a core value of new owners, Russell and Lisa, and this information has been extremely difficult to comprehend and navigate. It has been of paramount importance to the Bottens’ moving forward with PetZest, that all ingredients be disclosed to improve transparency and product integrity.

Since discovery of the use of artificial preservatives in PetZest products, the Bottens have explored trying to find cost effective, safe, and natural alternatives to using those preservatives.

It is intended that legal action will imminently be commenced against the previous corporate owner and Tony Koumi for having engaged in allegedly misleading and deceptive conduct.

Bottens' acknowledge that their passionate PetZest staff and loyal customers will likely be concerned by this release. As of Monday, 27 June 2022 all staff have been informed of this news and customers will now find full ingredient disclosure on fridge product labels in PetZest's four stores.

Retail staff were unaware and have been fully supportive in the decision to be open and transparent with providing full product ingredients, and look forward to assisting in the development of providing preservative free alternatives in the near future.

This highlights how the current Australian Pet Food Regulations may not adequately support a framework for open or mandatory disclosure of ingredients used by manufacturers of petfood in their products.

We intend to lodge the details and outcome of the legal action to be taken against the previous corporate owner and its operators with Australian governing bodies who can advocate for change in Australian Pet Food Regulations and support the need for tighter regulatory control in ingredient transparency, on behalf of Australian pet owners and their animals whom we believe deserve better protection. The Bottens support and encourage all pet food brands to be 100% transparent about their product ingredients.

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should you wish to seek further clarification, submit an official complaint, or support PetZest in encouraging the reform of Pet Food Industry legislation. This information may be collated in aid of legal proceedings.

* "Australia's gourmet pet food industry worth billions" By 9News Staff; 6:59pm May 12, 2021
<https://www.9news.com.au/national/australias-gourmet-pet-food-industry-booming-following-rise-in-pet-ownership-during-coronavirus-pandemic/0181ba66-bd0c-43ef-a32b-c4b20a01ffa4>