1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Gregory D. Helmer, P.C. (S.B. #150184) Andrew H. Friedman, P.C. (S.B. #15316 723 Ocean Front Walk Venice, California 90291 Telephone: (310) 396-7714 Facsimile: (310) 396-9215 Paul L. Hoffman, SBN 071244 Michael D. Seplow, SBN 150183 Michael S. Morrison, SBN 205320 SCHONBRUN DE SIMONE SEPLOW HARRIS & HOFFMAN LLP 723 Ocean Front Walk Venice, CA 90291 Telephone: (310) 396-0731 Facsimile: (310) 399-7040	CONTINAL FILED Los Angeles Superior Court MAR 2.7 7007 John A. Clark, Executive Officer/Clerk By Deputy		
10	Attorneys for Plaintiffs	• •		
11	CLIDEDIOD COLUDIO OD TIVE			
12	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA BC 368561			
13	FOR THE COUN	TY OF LOS ANGELES		
	LOIS GRADY, KAYE STEINSAPIR,) CASE NO:		
14	individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated.			
15	 	COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES:		
16	Plaintiff,	CLASS ACTION (Plaintiff Class) (California Code of Civil Procedure §382)		
17	v. (110004410 (502)		
18 19	MENTI ECODO DI DICONO TENTO	1. STRICT PRODUCTS LIABILITY		
20	MENU FOODS INCOME FUND, MENU FOODS, INC., MENU FOODS	2. NEGLIGENCE		
	LIMITED, MENU FOODS OPERATING LIMITED	3. BREACH OF		
21	PARTNERSHIP, MENU FOODS MIDWEST CORP., PETCO ANIMAL	WARRANTIES		
22	SUPPLIES, INC., NUTRO PRODUCTS, INC. and DOES 1 through 100,	4. UNFAIR BUSINESS		
23	inclusive,	PRACTICES BUSINESS & PROFESSIONS CODE		
24	Defendants.	§§ 17200 ET SEQ.)		
25	}			
26	\	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL		
27	\			
28	}			
20		1		
1.				
	COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES			

Plaintiffs Lois Grady and Kaye Steinsapir, individually on behalf of themselves, and on behalf all others similarly situated, and the general public, on information and belief, make the following allegations to support this complaint:

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiffs file this class action on behalf of themselves and similarly situated individuals whose pets died and/or became seriously ill after ingesting various brands of tainted wet, or "cuts and gravy" style, dog and cat food manufactured by defendant Menu Foods and distributed and sold throughout the State of California and the Country. The food, including popular brands such as Iams, Eukanuba, Nutro Natural Choice, Nutro Ultra, Special Kitty, Loving Meals, Winn Dixie, Science Diet and other labels that were marketed to consumers as healthy and nutritious food for their pets, was found to contain aminopterin – a chemical substance used to kill rats and other rodents. Although Menu Foods has issued what is purported to be one of the largest, if not the largest, recalls of products in the pet food industry's history, countless pets have died, experienced kidney failure and/or suffered other serious adverse health consequences as a result of eating the contaminated food.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

2. Plaintiffs bring this action on behalf of themselves and numerous others pet owners throughout the State of California whose pets became ill and/or died after having ingested tainted pet food which was manufactured and distributed by Defendants.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over the defendants because they are residents of and/or doing business in the State of California.

DEFENDANTS

2	7. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants		
3	MENU FOODS INCOME FUND, MENU FOODS, INC., MENU FOODS LIMITED,		
4	MENU FOODS OPERATING LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, MENU FOODS MIDWEST		
5	CORP. (the Menu Foods entities shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as "MENU		
6	FOODS"), PETCO ANIMAL SUPPLIES, INC. (hereinafter "PETCO"), NUTRO		
7	PRODUCTS, INC. and Does 1 through 100, are corporations or other business entities		
8	doing business in the State of California. Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and		
9	thereon allege that all named Defendants either manufactured, sold, re-sold, inspected,		
10	marketed, distributed and/or placed into the stream of commerce numerous brands of pet		
11	food, including, without limitation, Nutro Natural Choice, Iams, Eukanuba, Nutro Ultra,		
12	Special Kitty, Loving Meals, Winn Dixie, Science Diet and numerous other brands,		
13	which have since been recalled (hereinafter referred to as the "Pet Food" or		
14	"PRODUCT") that was ingested by pet animals belonging to Plaintiffs and others		
15	similarly situated, and caused these pets to become ill and/or die. As a result of		
16	Defendants' conduct, Plaintiffs, and all others similarly situated, sustained damages.		

8. Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and thereon allege that defendant PETCO's principal place of business and corporate headquarters are located in the State of California.

9. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendant Nutro Products Inc., which distributes Nutro Natural Choice and other pet foods, is a corporation duly registered under the laws of the State of California.

10. The true names and capacities, whether corporate, associate, individual or otherwise of defendants DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, are unknown to plaintiffs,

claims of all members of the class as they arise out of the same course of conduct and are predicated on the same violation(s) of the law. Plaintiffs, as representative parties, will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class by vigorously pursuing this suit through their attorneys who are skilled and experienced in handling matters of this type.

16. The nature of this action and the nature of the laws available to the PLAINTIFF CLASS make use of the class action format a particularly efficient and appropriate procedure to afford relief to the PLAINTIFF CLASS. Further, this case involves corporate defendants and a large number of individuals possessing claims with common issues of law and fact. If each individual were required to file an individual lawsuit, the corporate defendants would necessarily gain an unconscionable advantage since they would be able to exploit and overwhelm the limited resources of each individual plaintiff with its vastly superior financial and legal resources. Proof of a common business practices or factual patterns, of which the named plaintiffs experienced, is representative of the class mentioned herein and will establish the right of each of the members of the class to recovery on the claims alleged herein.

17. The prosecution of separate actions by the individual class members, even if possible, would create: (a) a substantial risk of inconvenient or varying verdicts or adjudications with respect to the individual class members against the defendants herein; and/or (b) legal determinations with respect to individual class members which would, as a practical matter, be dispositive of the other class members not parties to the adjudications or which would substantially impair or impede the ability of class members to protect their interests. Further, the claims of the individual members of the class are not sufficiently large to warrant vigorous individual prosecution considering all of the concomitant costs and expenses attending thereto. Plaintiffs are also unaware of any difficulties that are likely to be encountered in the management of this action that would

FACTS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS

- 18. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants manufactured, sold, re-sold, inspected, marketed, distributed and/or placed into the stream of commerce various brands of the Pet Food. The Pet Food was marketed and advertised by Defendants throughout the State of California as being safe and healthy for pets to consume. Moreover, the Pet Food was sold in pet stores throughout California, including stores owned and operated by Defendant PETCO.
- 19. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that consumers throughout California purchased the Pet Food, which was fed to their cats and dogs. Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and thereon allege that as a result of ingesting the Pet Food, thousands of pets became seriously ill and required extensive medical care. Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and thereon allege that numerous pet animals have died as a direct result of ingesting the Pet Food. On or about March 16, 2007, Defendant MENU FOODS, the principal manufacturer of the tainted Pet Food, issued a recall of the Pet Food (which was manufactured between December 3, 2006 and March 6, 2007). Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and thereon allege that prior to the recall, Defendant MENU FOODS and other defendants either knew or should have known that the Pet Food was defective and presented a serious risk to the health and safety of animals.
- 20. In or about March, 2007, Plaintiff Lois Grady fed Special Kitty cat food, one of the brands of tainted Pet Food, to her cat, Riley. Ms. Grady had purchased the Special Kitty food at a Wal-Mart store in Fresno, California. Shortly thereafter, Riley refused to eat his food, became lethargic and suffered from bouts of vomiting. Riley also

9

1011

12

13

15

16 17

18

19

20 | 21

22

24

25

2627

28

lost weight and appeared seriously ill. Ms. Grady became extremely concerned and took Riley to the veterinarian. After performing blood and uring tests, the veterinarian diagnosed Riley as suffering from kidney failure. Riley required extensive veterinarian treatment and will require a special diet for the remainder of his life. Prior to that time, Riley had been in excellent health. Ms. Grady is informed and believes that her cat's illness was directly caused by the ingestion of Special Kitty, which is one of the numerous tainted pet food products manufactured and distributed by Defendant MENU FOODS. As a result, Ms. Grady has sustained compensatory damages, including, without limitation, veterinary bills and related expenses.

Plaintiff Kaye Steinsapir fed her four-year-old cat, Lila, Nutro Natural 21. Choice cat food - one of the brands of tainted Pet Food - since Lila was a kitten. She continued to feed Lila Nutro Natural choice through and including March, 2007. Ms. Steinsapir, who had purchased the Nutro Natural Choice at a PETCO store in Santa Monica, California, believed she was feeding Lila one of the healthiest, nutritious cat foods available on the market. Prior to March, 2007, Lila was a healthy, vibrant cat without any medical conditions. However, in or about March, 2007, Lila became seriously ill after Ms. Steinsapir fed her Nutro Natural Choice foil pouches. Lila began vomiting repeatedly and drinking an excessive amount of water. Although Lila had always had a very healthy appetite prior to March, 2007, she stopped eating her wet food. Ms. Steinsapir brought Lila to her veterinarian, who diagnosed Lila with acute kidney failure. Lila was subsequently hospitalized and required extensive veterinary treatment, including, but not limited to, intravenous fluids and a urinary catheter that required her to be placed under anesthesia. Prior to ingesting the tainted Pet Food, Lila had been playful, full of energy and never suffered any illness whatsoever. Ms. Steinsapir is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Lila will require a special diet for the rest of her life and will also require veterinary care for the foreseeable future. Ms. Steinsapir is informed and

believes and thereon alleges that her cat's illness was directly caused by the ingestion of Nutro Natural Choice, which is one of the numerous tainted pet food products manufactured by Defendant MENU FOODS. As a result, Ms. Steinsapir has sustained compensatory damages, including, without limitation, veterinary bills and related expenses.

22. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that there are thousands of pets throughout California who ingested the Pet Food and, as a result, became ill and/or died and required their owners to incur substantial veterinarian and other related expenses.

- 23. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the Pet Food was defective due to a defect in design, manufacturing, reconditioning, inspection and/or warning. In particular, Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the Pet Food was contaminated with dangerous substances, including aminopterin, which is a form of rat poison and which causes death and/or serious illness when ingested by dogs or cats.
- 24. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants, and each of them, knew or should have known that the Pet Food was defective and posed an unreasonable safety risk to the safety of animals who would consume it. Plaintiffs are further informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants concealed from members of the consuming public, including Plaintiffs and others similarly situated, the nature and scope of the product defect.
- 25. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that in furtherance of their active concealment and suppression of information concerning the product

28

10

12 13

14 15

16

17 18

19

20 21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

STRICT PRODUCTS LIABILITY

(Against All Defendants)

28. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 28, inclusive as though set forth herein in their entirety.

Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all times 29. herein mentioned, said defendants, and each of them, and their successors, designed, manufactured, built, assembled, adjusted, repaired, inspected, re-sold and/or introduced into interstate and/or intrastate commerce for sale therein, sold, distributed, supplied, maintained, controlled, cared for, supervised, attended to, inspected, engaged in testing, labeling, transporting, storing, advertising, marketing, selling and recommending the Pet Food to the general public and other ultimate users (including Plaintiffs and others similarly situated) within the State of California. Defendants represented to the general public, including Plaintiffs and others similarly situated, that the Pet Food was safe and healthy for animals to eat.

Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the Pet Food 30. was defective, unsafe, hazardous, perilous, insecure, unfit, and dangerous for its intended use, and the purposes for which it was intended, by reason of defect(s) in its design, assembly, adjustment, manufacture, construction, maintenance, installation, operation, control, care, supervision, attention to, servicing, upkeep, repair, inspection, testing, processing, producing, packaging, labeling, storing, advertising, warning, recommendations and sale, in that the Pet Food was contaminated and therefore failed to meet the reasonable expectations of the ordinary consumer when the Pet Food was used for its intended purposes, and/or its reasonably foreseeable uses, as heretofore mentioned.

31. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all relevant times, Plaintiffs, and others similarly situated were using the Pet Food in a manner consistent with its intended purpose, and/or its foreseeable use and in the manner recommended by Defendants, and each of them, as heretofore mentioned. As a direct and proximate result of the defects as aforesaid, the Pet Food failed to perform as safely as the ordinary consumer would expect which caused illness to Plaintiffs' pets, thereby directly and proximately causing the resulting damages to Plaintiffs and others similarly situated.

32. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that as a direct and proximate result of the acts and omissions of Defendants, and each of them, as herein alleged, Plaintiff's suffered the damages alleged herein in an amount within the jurisdiction of this Court.

33. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the aforementioned acts of Defendants, and each of them, were willful, malicious, intentional, oppressive, fraudulent and despicable and were done in willful and conscious disregard of the rights, welfare and safety of Plaintiffs and others similarly situated, thereby justifying the awarding of punitive and exemplary damages in an amount to be determined at time of trial. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and on that basis alleges that officers, directors and/or managing agents of each of the defendants acted in conscious disregard of Plaintiffs' rights and the safety of Plaintiffs' pets by designing, distributing, or selling the Pet Food, despite the known defects in the Pet Food, which the officers, directors and/or managing agents of Defendants knew would injure persons such as Plaintiffs. To the extent that any officer, director and/or managing agent of each of the Defendants did not personally commit the malicious, oppressive or fraudulent acts described above, each such defendant authorized or ratified the malicious, oppressive and/or fraudulent act.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

NEGLIGENCE

(Against All Defendants)

34. Plaintiffs hereby incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs

- 1 through 33 inclusive at though set forth herein in their entirety, and further alleges:
- 35. Defendants, and each of them owed a duty of care towards Plaintiffs and others similarly situated and the general public in which they were required to use reasonable diligence and due care in the manufacturing, design, marketing, distribution, inspection, storage and/or sale of The Pet Food. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants, and each of them, breached their duty of care by causing contaminated Pet Food to enter stream of commerce where it was consumed by thousands of pet animals, many of whom became seriously ill and/or died and by concealing from and misrepresenting to the general public the defective condition of The Pet Food.
- 36. As a direct and legal result of the negligent acts and omissions of Defendants, and each of them, plaintiffs and others similarly situated have suffered damages, including, without limitation, veterinarian bills and related expenses.
- 37. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all relevant times, Defendants, and each of them, and their successors, so negligently, carelessly, recklessly and unlawfully designed, manufactured, built, sold, distributed, supplied, assembled, adjusted, constructed, installed, maintained, operated, controlled, cared for, created warnings for, supervised, attended to, serviced, repaired, inspected, tested, introduced into interstate and/or intrastate commerce for sale therein, advertised, recommended and stored the Pet Food, thereby direct and proximately causing the

resulting damages to Plaintiffs and others similarly situated as alleged herein.

38. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that as a direct and proximate result of the negligent acts and omissions of Defendants, and each of them,, Plaintiffs and others similarly situated suffered the damages alleged herein in an amount within the jurisdiction of this Court.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION BREACH OF WARRANTIES

(Against All Defendants)

- 39. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 38, inclusive as though set forth herein in their entirety.
- 40. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all times herein mentioned, and prior thereto, Defendants, and each of them, and their successors, designed, manufactured, assembled, adjusted, introduced into interstate and/or intrastate commerce for sale therein, sold, distributed, supplied, constructed, maintained, controlled, cared for, supervised, attended to, serviced, inspected, engaged in testing, processing, producing, packaging, labeling, transporting, into interstate and/or intrastate commerce for sale therein, storing, advertising, selling and recommending the Pet Food to the general public and other ultimate users and for use with all knowledge and intent that it be used by the general public and other ultimate users, and said defendants, and each of them, including all fictitiously named defendants herein, and their successors impliedly represented that the Pet Food was fit for the purpose and uses for which it was intended.
 - 41. Plaintiffs and others similarly situated relied upon said representations

and warranties and had no knowledge of the dangerous, unsafe, hazardous, and unfit quality of The Pet Food.

42. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the Pet Food as unsafe, hazardous, perilous, insecure, dangerous and unfit when used for the purposes for which it was intended and in the manner recommended by Defendants, and each of them, and their successors, which resulted in damages and injuries to Plaintiffs and others similarly situated, as alleged herein.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

UNFAIR COMPETITION AND BUSINESS PRACTICES (CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 17200, ET SEQ.)

(Against All Defendants)

- 43. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 42, inclusive, as though set forth herein in their entirety.
- 44. Defendants' unlawful and unfair practices as alleged herein violate California law and constitute ongoing and continuous unfair business practices within the meaning of Business and Professions Code §17200. Such practices include, but are not limited to, Defendants making false representations as to the safety of the Pet Food and Defendants' concealment from members of the public the danger that the Pet Food posed to dogs and cats while continuing to manufacture, market, sell and distribute The Pet Food.
- 45. California Business and Professions Code §17200 prohibits unfair competition and unfair business practices, including, "any unlawful, unfair or fraudulent

i		
1		restitution based on Defendants' unjust enrichment, according to proof
2	6.	For cost of suit;
3	7.	For attorneys fees pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure Section 1021.5
4		and other applicable provisions of law;
5	8.	For interest at the legal rate; and
6	9.	For such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.
7		
8	Dated: March	26, 2007
9		HELMER • FRIEDMAN, LLP Gregory D. Helmer, P.C. Andrew H. Friedman, P.C.
10		Andrew H. Friedman, P.C.
11		SCHONBRUN DE SIMONE SEPLOW
12		HARRIS & HOFFMAN LLP Paul L. Hoffman
13		Michael D. Seplow Michael Morrison
14		
15		
16		By: Gregory D. Helmer, P.C.
17		Attorneys for Plaintiffs
18	//	
19 20	//	
21	//	
22	//	
23	//	
24	//	
25	//	
26	//	
27	//	
28	//	
	-	18.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiffs hereby demand a trial by jury on all claims.

3 Dated: March 26, 2007

HELMER • FRIEDMAN, LLP Gregory D. Helmer Andrew H. Friedman, P.C.

SCHONBRUN DE SIMONE SEPLOW HARRIS & HOFFMAN LLP Paul L. Hoffman Michael D. Seplow Michael Morrison

By: Gregory D. Helmer, P.C.

Attorneys for Plaintiffs

19.