

***Spin Doctors: Junk Pet Food Partners in Crime* by Dr Tom Lonsdale.**

**Review by Dr Michael Cole FRACP LLB**

*Spin Doctors: Junk Pet Food Partners in Crime* is the latest book from veterinary author Dr Tom Lonsdale. The book documents ten years of his courageous fight to improve the dental and overall health of our pets by looking through the lens of his newsletter the *Raw Meaty Bones Newsletter*.

Vet Dr Tom Lonsdale's thesis is simple. Carnivores clean their teeth and gums by using the whole length of the tooth to rip meat and fibres off the bones of their prey. The action is like 'flossing' with tendons and fibres. The same action is not available from pet food, no matter how nutritionally balanced. The build up of tartar leaves the teeth and gums inflamed. And just like it does in humans, inflamed gums cause damage to other organs and a decline in overall health. Inflamed gums require repeated visits to the vet for an anaesthetic and teeth clean, which is not without cost and risk.

The alternative is to feed pets raw meaty bones or, especially for cats and similar pets, small carcasses or parts of a carcass.

Giant corporations manufacture pet food, and they owe a duty to their shareholders to make them a profit. They engage in marketing their products including providing sponsorship and research grants to prestigious university veterinary departments, and free pet food to the RSPCA and other animal shelters, and they sell their products through vets. In Dr Lonsdale's opinion that must be a conflict of interest. Vets, veterinary departments, the RSPCA and struggling pet shelters show adverts for their sponsoring petfood companies, including online; they see things from the giant petfood corporation's point of view.

Dr Lonsdale soon found out what every whistleblower organisation knows. Journalists are a tremendous help when the story is big, especially if it is already before the court, but their interest is the big easy scoop, and they are not generally altruistic. The Australian Veterinary Association expelled Dr Lonsdale in 2004 after an anonymous complaint for bringing the Association into disrepute by exposing its relationship with pet food manufacturers.

I think readers of this book will be amazed at the strength of Dr Lonsdale's character and at his persistence at the task of improving the health of pets. It is a tale told by a whistleblower who suffers reprisals (that go with the territory) but still works and frets for pets thirty years on.