

OUR CHARGE TO MARS — Mars’s planned campaigns recruit pet owners and reassure them about industrial feeding. Animals may suffer while owners pay for the food and then for treatment. What did Mars’s executives and family owners know about preventable harm, and what did they tell the public? If evidence establishes knowing cruelty or deception, those responsible should face prosecution, however powerful.

Selling Reassurance While the Dental Question Remains

Owner anxiety, corporate reassurance and the animals who bear the risk

Tom Lonsdale BVetMed MRCVS | Publication draft | 25 September 2026

A dog cannot challenge the evidence behind its food. Its owner must rely on the people who manufacture that food and speak with apparent authority about its effects. On 9 September 2026 Mars published a commissioned survey claiming that 44 per cent of American pet parents feel daily anxiety or guilt about feeding correctly. Mars answered that anxiety with reassurance about kibble, scientific authority, seven of its brands and an invitation to consult veterinarians. These elements were assembled and published by people in a company that profits from the feeding decision. Their accountability cannot disappear behind a corporate logo. [1]

Anxiety becomes an opportunity to speak with authority

Morning Consult surveyed 3,029 US adults for Mars from 10 to 13 July 2026. Mars then selected an anxiety finding to introduce a story about the benefits of the products it sells. The full questionnaire, cross-tabs, commissioning instructions and results are not supplied on the page. The published statistic concerns the feelings Mars chose to highlight; it provides no clinical evidence that its foods prevent dental disease or maintain lifelong health. That gap should be conspicuous to anyone authorising the article. [1]

Mars’s answer is an expansive explanation of why kibble is simple, reliable and nourishing. It calls “complete and balanced” the gold standard of pet food and then claims crunchy kibble scrubs a dog’s teeth and reduces plaque, while adding that it is no substitute for dedicated dental care. It promotes the breadth of the Mars portfolio, including PEDIGREE, IAMS, EUKANUBA, ROYAL CANIN, ORIJEN and ACANA. [1]

This is planned persuasion. Someone commissioned the measure of anxiety, chose the framing, approved the health language and published the brand list. Mars offered the owner relief from uncertainty and a daily purchasing routine. The accountability question is what evidence those decision makers had, including any adverse findings, when they authorised the reassurance.

What the nutrition label cannot establish

AAFCO explains that a nutritional adequacy statement identifies the life stage for which a food claims to be complete and balanced. AAFCO says it does not approve, certify or endorse individual pet foods or review each company’s label. Turning that designation into a broad impression of lifelong health asks a limited nutrient statement to bear weight it cannot carry. It says nothing by itself about whether a dog’s gums remain healthy, whether painful disease develops, or whether another feeding and chewing arrangement produces better outcomes. [2]

Mars’s general dental statement needs more than a reference to crunchy texture. A six-month comparison published in 2002 found a specially formulated dental food more effective than ordinary dry food in

reducing plaque and gingivitis. Two of the authors worked at the Hill's Science and Technology Center, a commercial competitor's research facility, so this study also requires scrutiny of its commercial setting. The Veterinary Oral Health Council separately sets product-specific standards for claims to reduce plaque or calculus. Neither source establishes that every ordinary kibble confers meaningful protection against periodontal disease. Some formulations may perform differently; the product, mechanism, endpoint and duration all matter. [3][4]

The animal can suffer while the owner feels reassured. Ordinary kibble's dental effect must be demonstrated for each product and meaningful outcome, including gingival health. Nutrient completeness and a casual assertion about crunch cannot substitute for a serious comparison with appropriate chewing and biologically relevant diets. Selling confidence while leaving that comparison undone is a conscious institutional choice.

A past regulatory warning raises the standard of care

In 2016 the United States Federal Trade Commission settled charges against Mars Petcare concerning Eukanuba advertising. The FTC said Mars could not substantiate the advertising claim that a ten-year study showed its food extended dogs' expected lifespan by 30 per cent or more. The final order prohibits misleading or unsupported pet-food health claims and misrepresentation of scientific evidence. Mars was formally put on notice of the need for competent, reliable substantiation. The settlement addressed specified claims; it does not establish that the 2026 article breaches the order. [5]

Yet the September article again raises a health proposition in a piece promoting the company's brands. Who signed off on the statement that crunchy kibble scrubs teeth and reduces plaque? What product-level studies did that person review; what endpoints, comparators and duration did they examine? Which named Mars products have independently verified dental efficacy? Those questions seek a record of individual and institutional decisions, not a public-relations answer about how much Mars loves pets.

An animal pays for any false reassurance

Our earlier papers argued that periodontal disease is a sentinel signal, potentially connecting the physical character of diet to wider health. That hypothesis is contested and needs rigorous testing. Mars has the money, research institutes, veterinary hospitals and diagnostic data to conduct meaningful comparisons. A corporation with such resources cannot credibly treat the fundamental question as someone else's problem while broadcasting confidence in its industrial feeding model. The article presents owner anxiety and reassurance, not a published lifetime comparison with an appropriately selected alternative diet and chewing regime. [6]

A dog cannot read a claim, demand the missing study or leave a painful feeding arrangement. The owner buys the food and may later pay again for treatment, while the dog bears the disease. A business that knowingly sells a harmful practice and then sells relief has the economics of a protection racket. Did Mars's decision makers possess material warnings and substitute reassurance for evidence? The internal record must answer. A polished corporate campaign deserves at least the scrutiny we would give a crude act of cruelty against a single cat. [1][5]

The documents Mars should release

Publish the complete Morning Consult survey and instructions; the September article's drafting and approval trail; the precise evidence for its dental claim and each product covered; internal reviews of periodontal outcomes in animals eating Mars diets; and the individuals or committees who decided what

owners would be told. Commission an independent, longitudinal comparison including suitable non-industrial feeding and chewing arrangements. Publish adverse and null results. A family-owned corporation can direct its vast resources towards finding uncomfortable truths and preventing harm, or continue paying people to manufacture confidence. The owners and animals bearing the risks deserve to know which choice it has made.

Sources and evidence

[1] Mars, Feeding Your Dog with Confidence, 9 September 2026. [Original source](#). Primary source for 44 per cent anxiety figure, survey dates, brands, AAFCO characterisation and general dental claim.

[2] AAFCO, Labeling and Labeling Requirements. [Original source](#). Primary explanation that AAFCO does not approve or endorse individual products and that nutritional adequacy is tied to life stage.

[3] Logan and colleagues, Effects of a Dental Food on Plaque Accumulation and Gingival Health in Dogs, 2002. [Original source](#). Six-month comparison with authors from Hill's Science and Technology Center; not a lifetime diet trial.

[4] Veterinary Oral Health Council, About the VOHC. [Original source](#). Product-specific standards for retarding plaque and calculus; the council is not a certifier of the nutritional adequacy of all pet foods.

[5] FTC final Eukanuba consent order, December 2016. [Original source](#). Official summary of specified allegations and order; it does not adjudicate the September 2026 article.

[6] Mars and the Industrial Pet Food Experiment. [Original source](#). The existing investigation and the missing-comparator argument, presented as a question requiring independent testing.