The Companion Animals Symposium titled “Companion Animals and Sustainability: Today’s Impact on the Future” was held at the Joint Annual Meeting of the American Dairy Science Association and American Society of Animal Science in Kansas City, MO, July 20 to 24, 2014. The pet industry has annual revenue of US$5 billion, and it is integrated with livestock production and human food supply systems (APPA, 2014). Owner preferences and industry decisions greatly influence future agriculture and livestock supply through several facets, including the type of diet chosen (i.e., dry, canned, fresh, or frozen), ingredient selection (i.e., plant vs. animal protein and local vs. imported), formulation, packaging, and waste (food and fecal), to name only a few. Therefore, the objective of the symposium was to discuss the development of sustainable systems for the companion animal industry, which is of utmost importance to produce safe, high-quality, yet sustainable products. This symposium organizing committee invited some of the field’s most reputable speakers, who directly manage and consider sustainable practices related to the companion animal industry. The symposium comprised 5 invited presentations, which are subsequently discussed.

The symposium began with an invited presentation by R. A. Carter (The Nutro Company, Franklin, TN), who discussed the nutritional sustainability of pet foods (Carter et al., 2014). Nutritional sustainability is defined as the ability of a food system to provide sufficient energy and the amounts of essential nutrients required to maintain good health of the population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their nutritional needs. Several factors can influence the sustainability of food systems. These may include ingredient selection, nutrient composition and digestibility, and consumption rates of diets. The sustainability of the pet food industry relies on the nutritional quality and safety of ingredients and on pet health and taking into consideration the complexities of this evolving industry (e.g., pet humanization, human-grade foods, etc.). According to Dr. Carter, nutritional sustainability will be the key enabler to maintaining responsible pet ownership in the future (Carter et al., 2014).

The second invited presentation, by D. L. Meeker (National Renderers Association, Alexandria, VA), focused on the impact of sustainability on ingredient sourcing, quality, and safety. The rendering industry processes approximately 22.7 billion kg of animal byproducts annually in the United States (Meeker and Meisinger, 2015). A variety of raw materials from food animal production can be rendered, including offal from slaughterhouses, whole animals, bones, feathers, and blood. Rendering enhances the sustainability of food animal production and reduction of waste. In addition, the rendering industry plays an important role in the prevention of disease and microbiological control and in the provision of safe feed ingredients for production and companion animals. Dr. Meeker emphasized that the rendering industry has welcomed the new regulatory policies being implemented by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with a focus on food safety. He further clarified that the rendering industry already meets many of these rules, which shows its proactive nature. Critical problems with alternative disposal methods of biological materials are related to the in-