

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA  
ALEXANDRIA DIVISION**

<p>MARS, INCORPORATED 6885 Elm Street McLean, Virginia 22101</p> <p>and</p> <p>MARS PETCARE US, INC. 315 Cool Springs Boulevard Franklin, Tennessee 37057,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Plaintiffs,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v.</p> <p>SIMMONS PET FOOD, INC. 316 North Hico Street Siloam Springs, Arkansas 72761,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Defendant.</p>	<p>Civil Action No. _____</p> <p><b>JURY TRIAL DEMANDED</b></p>
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**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiffs Mars, Incorporated and Mars Petcare US, Inc. (collectively, “Mars”) bring this action against Defendant Simmons Pet Food, Inc. (“Defendant”) and allege as follows:

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

1. This is an action for direct and contributory trade dress infringement, false designation of origin, unfair competition and related claims under the federal Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1051 *et seq.* (as amended) and Virginia law.

2. Mars is a leading manufacturer of pet food in the United States. Mars sells PEDIGREE-branded canned dog food, which features a trade dress that is unique and unusual in the marketplace. Mars has invested many millions of dollars in advertising the trade dress for

PEDIGREE canned dog food and has earned billions of dollars in revenues from the sale of the products featuring its well-known trade dress.

3. Defendant manufactures, distributes and sells a competing canned dog food under the name “Signature.” Rather than invest the time, money and resources to create its own distinctive trade dress, Defendant simply helped itself to Mars’s famous trade dress.

4. Defendant’s manufacturing, distribution and sale of dog food bearing the infringing trade dress is likely to cause consumer confusion and is irreparably harming the goodwill and reputation of Mars and PEDIGREE.

### **THE PARTIES**

5. Plaintiff Mars, Incorporated, is a Delaware corporation with a principal place of business in McLean, Virginia, and owns the trade dress for PEDIGREE canned dog food.

6. Plaintiff Mars Petcare US, Inc. is a Delaware corporation with a principal place of business in Franklin, Tennessee. Mars Petcare is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mars, Incorporated, and exclusive licensee of the trade dress for PEDIGREE canned dog food.

7. Defendant Simmons Pet Food, Inc. is an Arkansas corporation with a principal place of business in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Defendant manufactures canned dog food bearing labels that infringe Mars’s trade dress for its PEDIGREE canned dog food. Defendant distributes and sells those products nationwide to companies and retailers with actual knowledge that they in turn advertise and sell the products to dog owners at stores throughout the United States, including in Virginia.

### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

8. This Court has subject-matter jurisdiction under 15 U.S.C. § 1121 and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1338, and 1367.

9. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant manufactures canned dog food bearing infringing trade dress, which it distributes and sells to customers that Defendant knows have locations in Virginia and advertise and sell those products to dog owners in Virginia. Defendant's unlawful conduct is causing Mars to suffer irreparable injury in this judicial district.

10. Venue is proper because Defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction in this district. 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1), (c)(2), (d). Venue is also proper because Plaintiff Mars, Incorporated, the owner of the trade dress for PEDIGREE canned dog food, resides in this district and a substantial portion of the events or omissions giving rise to the alleged claims occurred in this district. 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

## **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

### ***I. Mars and the Famous Trade Dress for Pedigree Canned Dog Food***

11. Mars is a world's leading pet food manufacturer and PEDIGREE is among its most famous brands.

12. As of 2020, PEDIGREE is the best-selling dog food brand in the United States by revenues. Mars sells PEDIGREE canned dog food in various flavors.

13. Decades ago, Mars adopted a trade dress for the PEDIGREE canned dog food that was and continues to be unique and unusual in the field.

14. Samples of Mars's PEDIGREE canned dog food products bearing the distinctive trade dress are shown below:



15. Mars's trade dress for its PEDIGREE canned dog food features the following elements:

- a. a predominant yellow background;
- b. a white circular halo in the middle of the label;
- c. the image of a dog's head and neck with its mouth open and tongue sticking out positioned to the right of and adjacent to the circular halo;
- d. the image of a yellow, round bowl containing dog food at the bottom of the label positioned to the left of the dog's head and touching the dog's neck; and
- e. a unique color convention for different flavors of dog food, e.g., orange for Chicken flavor, teal for Chicken & Rice flavor, brown for Beef, Bacon & Cheese flavor.

The overall visual and commercial impression created by the combination of these elements of the trade dress for Mars's PEDIGREE canned dog food is referred to as the "PEDIGREE Trade Dress."

16. Mars's PEDIGREE Trade Dress is inherently distinctive because it has an overall visual impression that is unique and unusual in the field of canned dog food.

17. Mars's PEDIGREE Trade Dress has acquired distinctiveness nationwide through substantially exclusive use in commerce, substantial advertising and promotion featuring the PEDIGREE Trade Dress, and substantial revenues from the sale of canned dog food bearing the PEDIGREE Trade Dress.

18. Mars's canned dog food bearing the PEDIGREE Trade Dress is sold nationwide, including in grocery stores (e.g., Safeway, Kroger), big box stores (e.g., Target, Wal-Mart), pet stores (e.g., Pet Smart) and online (e.g., Amazon, Chewy).

19. Many millions of dog owners throughout the United States have purchased canned dog food bearing the PEDIGREE Trade Dress. Mars's PEDIGREE Trade Dress is widely recognized among consumers and dog owners nationwide as designating the source of dog food and was so before the acts of Defendant giving rise to this action.

20. Mars's PEDIGREE Trade Dress is non-functional. The PEDIGREE Trade Dress is not essential to the use or purpose of canned dog food and does not affect the cost or quality of the product. Affording trade dress protection to the PEDIGREE Trade Dress would not place competitors at a significant non-reputation related disadvantage because, among other things, there are an unlimited number of alternative, non-infringing trade dresses available for canned dog food.

21. Consumers and dog owners nationwide associate the PEDIGREE Trade Dress exclusively with a single source and did so before the unlawful acts of Defendant.

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