



WHAT SHOULD MY PET EAT?

With all the pet food choices available, it can be confusing to determine which ones are quality products. We would like to discuss some common points of confusion such as ingredient lists, grains, meat-by-products, trend terms, raw food diets, and home-prepared diets.

INGREDIENT LISTS

You can't assume a pet food is right for your pet by reading the ingredient list because appropriate amounts of precisely formulated nutrients are just as important. Despite aggressive marketing campaigns, the ingredient list according to The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) should not impart any information regarding quality, nutritional balance, or digestibility of the pet food product.

Ingredients in pet foods are listed in descending order by weight. Ingredients such as chicken, beef, or lamb contain more than 50% water which makes them weigh more than dry ingredients, so they are listed first.

PET NUTRITION FACTS	
Ingredients: Chicken, Whole Grain Wheat, Corn Gluten Meal, Animal Fat (preserved with Mixed Tocopherols and Citric Acid), Brewers Rice, Wheat Gluten, Chicken Liver Flavor, Dried Beef Pulp, Dried Egg Product, Calcium Sulfate, Lactic Acid, Potassium Chloride, DL-Methionine, Chlorine Chloride, Fish Oil, Soybean Oil, Calcium Carbonate, Iodized Salt, Taurine, vitamins (Vitamin E Supplement, L-Ascorbyl-2-Polyphosphate (source of Vitamin C), Nicotinamide, Thiamine Mononitrate, Vitamin A Supplement, Calcium Pantothenate, Riboflavin Supplement, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Folic Acid, Vitamin B3 Supplement), L-Lysine, minerals (Ferrous Sulfate, Zinc Oxide, Copper Sulfate, Manganese Oxide, Calcium Iodate, Sodium Selenate), Oil Fiber, Mixed Tocopherols added to retain freshness, Citric Acid added to retain freshness, Phosphoric Acid, Beta-Carotene, Rosemary Extract, Dried Apples, Dried Broccoli, Dried Carrots, Dried Cranberries, Dried Peas.	
Guaranteed Analysis:	
Crude Protein.....	Min. 31.0 %
Crude Fat.....	Min. 20.0 %
Crude Fiber.....	Max. 3.5 %
Moisture.....	Max. 8.0 %
Phosphorus.....	Min. 0.5 %
Phosphorus.....	Max. 0.8 %
Vitamin E.....	Min. 500 IU/lb
Taurine.....	Min. 0.10 %
Ascorbic Acid (Vitamin C).....	Min. 85 mg/lb
Omega-6 Fatty Acids.....	Min. 2.5 %
*Not recognized as an essential nutrient by the AAFCO Cat Food Nutrient Profiles.	
AAFCO Statement: Science Diet® Adult Optimal Care® Original Cat Food is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Cat Food Nutrient Profiles for maintenance of adult cats.	
Protect from moisture. Store in a cool, dry place.	

GRAINS



Corn, rice, barley, and sorghum are grains that provide carbohydrates for energy and essential nutrients. They are not "fillers" and do contribute useful dietary components. For example, corn delivers carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, and protein.

Recent research has shown that grain free diets can lead to heart failure from a condition called dilated cardiomyopathy. This is a life threatening disease.

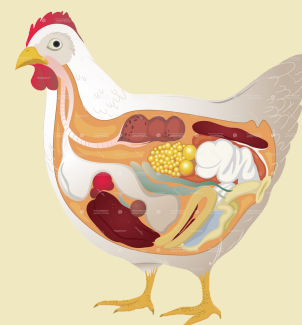
Food allergies are generally uncommon. The most common allergens for dogs and cats are beef and dairy.

Modern dogs are actually evolved to eat a high starch diet. Furthermore, well-done digestibility studies have clearly demonstrated that both dogs and cats digest more than 95% of the starch in a properly cooked diet containing 50% corn or rice.

MEAT BY-PRODUCTS

According to AAFCO, meat by-products "include some of the parts people eat (such as livers, kidneys and tripe), but also parts that are not typically consumed by humans in the US. Some by-products, like udders and lungs are not deemed 'edible' by USDA for human consumption, but they can be perfectly safe and nutritious for animals not inclined to be swayed by the unappealing nature of these parts of animals."

We only recommend brands that use nutritious and digestible meat by-products.



TREND TERMS

While there are legal definitions for the terms "organic" and "natural" according to the USDA and AAFCO, there are no legal definitions for pet foods labeled "holistic" or "human grade." These terms can be false and misleading.

RAW FOOD DIETS

We strongly oppose raw food diets due to the known risk for food poisoning and related diseases, despite some decontamination claims. Also, raw food diets can provide pets with improper levels of nutrients such as protein, calcium, and phosphorus.

HOME PREPARED DIETS

While home-prepared diets are not typically recommended, they can only be endorsed if formulated by a board-certified veterinarian.

RECOMMENDED BRANDS

We only recommend dog and cat food that is manufactured by companies that employ veterinarians, have well-researched products, use quality ingredients and facilities.



WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee: Guidelines on Selecting Pet Foods



Pet food labels include a lot of required and useful information for veterinary teams and pet owners. They may also include marketing images and phrases that are designed to promote product sales rather than relay nutritional information. This means that some of the information, including unregulated terms such as 'holistic' or 'premium', is of little practical value for nutritional assessment. The veterinary team has a vital role in helping pet owners make informed decisions on the optimal diet for their dog or cat.

What to look for in a brand

1. Do they employ a Nutritionist?

- ♦ Appropriate qualifications are either a PhD in Animal Nutrition or Board Certification by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition (ACVN) or the European College of Veterinary Comparative Nutrition (ECVCN).
- ♦ What are the Nutritionist's name, qualifications and employment status? Consultants may have limited influence compared to a staff Nutritionist.

2. Who formulates the diet?

- ♦ Is the recipe developed by an experienced pet food formulator (MS or PhD in Animal Nutrition), a veterinarian, or a pet owner/breeder/trainer?
- ♦ Recipe development is a complex process requiring knowledge of nutrition, raw materials, and processing not taught in veterinary school programs.
- ♦ Trained and experienced formulators may have a degree (MS/PhD) in food science and technology to help guide ingredient selection and nutrient levels for health or disease management.
- ♦ An individual with Board Certification by ACVN or ECVCN may also be cross-trained in pet food formulation or work in collaboration with experienced pet food formulators to help guide ingredient selection and nutrient levels.

3. What is the quality control process for ingredients and finished products?

- ♦ Diets formulated to meet Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) or European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) guidelines should meet their nutrient profiles. Does the diet meet the profile based on analysis using a nutrient database or on chemical analysis of the finished product?
- ♦ Manufacturers and pet food providers should have adequate quality control to ensure companion animal and owner safety. This should include ingredient (food and supplement) validation, final diet nutrient analysis, toxicology, bacteriology, and packaging/shelf-life screenings prior to, during, and after manufacturing.

4. What kind of product research or nutrition studies have been conducted? Is it published in peer-reviewed journals?

- ♦ Pet food companies are not required to conduct or sponsor nutritional research in order to produce and sell a food, but when they do, it indicates a commitment to animal health and wellness.

What to look for on a label

1. Nutrition Adequacy Statement?

- ♦ Is it a complete diet? Foods should be labeled to indicate if they provide a "complete" diet with all required nutrients. The label might also specify if this was determined via life stage feeding trials vs formulation to meet requirements. Those labeled as intended for "short-term", "intermittent", or "complementary" feeding should only be fed as a small portion of the diet (10% or less), or under veterinarian supervision if feeding a therapeutic diet.
- ♦ Does the food match the nutritional needs of the individual dog or cat? AAFCO and FEDIAF provide pet food manufacturers with recommended nutrient levels for different life-stages (reproduction, growth, and adult) for healthy dogs or cats. Diets labeled "for all life-stages" are formulated for reproduction and growth.

2. How many calories per gram or serving of food?

- ♦ Obesity prevalence is increasing in pets in many areas of the world. Having access to accurate pet food caloric content can help prevent unintended overfeeding. Calorie information is only required on pet food labels in the US. Where it is not provided on the label it should be available by contacting the manufacturer or calculating from label nutrient analysis.

3. Does the company provide immediate contact information such as a phone number or email address?

- ♦ Company representatives should be easily accessible for additional questions, such as the level of specific nutrients not on the label. Pet food companies should be able to provide an "average" or "typical" analysis for all essential nutrients in their food.

4. Who makes the food?

- ♦ Companies may make their own food (i.e., "Made by") or use a third-party manufacturer (i.e., "Made for" or "Distributed by").

If the manufacturer cannot or will not provide any of this information, veterinarians and owners should be cautious about feeding that brand.