



Companion Animal Nutrition, CANINE

The Facts on Pet Food

Selecting nutrition for your cat or dog is a very personal decision. The nutritional choices you make have a lifelong impact on the life and health of your pets, so we would like to provide you with information to make informed choices, and properly read and understand pet food labels. A large variety of the popular brands contain chemical preservatives and by-products that are unfit for human consumption.

Probably the ideal diet for your pet is a home-cooked diet, balanced for the species, and nutritionally complete. This takes a great deal of dedication, and is not for everyone. If you don't adopt this method of feeding, there are some wonderful alternatives. In the past few years the pet food industry has grown dramatically. Some of the newer foods have more wholesome ingredients and natural preservatives. A high-quality meat source of protein, such as chicken, beef, lamb, turkey, or ocean fish, must be the first ingredient (exception would be for a dog on a vegetarian diet). Additionally, the diet should not include corn, as it is poorly digested, and may cause GI problems and/or induce allergies in some dogs and cats. Wheat or soy may also cause similar problems. Many of the foods we recommend have no grains at all, but instead use ingredients such as potato, tapioca, or peas as a source of carbohydrates. Lastly, reject foods with artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, and added sweeteners; there are plenty of good natural preservatives (such as rosemary extract and vitamins E and C) can be used instead.

Another way to help your pet's diet be "complete and balanced" is to switch the food in regular intervals. Different foods may contain widely divergent amounts of nutrients and so should be rotated every few months to insure nutritional balance and variety.

Pet foods are regulated quite differently than human foods; the minimum requirements for an "acceptably nutritional" pet food are set by an overseeing agency called AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials). Foods that are considered "complete and balanced" have either passed AAFCO "feeding trials" or meet a specific AAFCO-established formulation. If a label has meat by-products listed as an ingredient, AAFCO guidelines say these can consist of: "lungs, spleen, brain, liver, kidneys, partially defatted low temperature fatty tissue, stomachs, and intestines." Poultry by-products include: "necks, feet, undeveloped eggs, and intestines." "Animal fat" is a euphemism for a low-quality, cheap mix of fats of uncertain origin. "Meat meal" could be practically anything.

Lastly, there is no "best" food for all companion animals. Each animal is unique, and what works well for one may not work well for another. We will work closely with you to pick the best food for your pet.

Canine Nutrition



#1, #2 and #3 = Variety, variety, variety! (the spice of life!) As mentioned, different commercial foods may vary greatly in amounts and sources of nutrients, so rotation of diets every few months is recommended (for most dogs) for nutritional balance and variety.

Dogs, like wolves, are omnivores, meaning that they readily consume both plant and animal sources of food. We recommend adding fresh vegetables (especially yellow-orange or green leafy), and smaller amounts of fruits (and grains if you choose), for your canine companions. Lower fat wholesome meat can also supplement kibble nicely. As a rule-of-thumb, if you feed a commercial diet, 10-20% of the daily offering should be as fresh food. Most dogs do fine when fresh foods, whether raw or cooked, are added to their diet. Occasionally, diarrhea or digestive upset can occur so you should go slowly when starting new foods; sometimes a given food will agree differently with an individual pet based upon how it is prepared (raw vs. cooked). Some options include:

Vegetables – preferably pureed raw, freshly frozen, or steamed (whole vegetables are not harmful but can't

be digested by dogs so they don't get any nutritional value from them). Good choices include carrots, celery, broccoli, all kinds of greens (kale, cabbage, spinach, lettuce), brussel sprouts, zucchini, asparagus, & turnips.

Fruits – fruits are high in sugar and carbohydrates and should be fed in moderation. Choices include bananas, apples, pears, blueberries, and papaya.

Other– Eggs: raw or cooked, such as lightly scrambled, soft- or hard-boiled ♦ Yogurt or Kefir – plain ♦ Cottage or Ricotta cheese – low-fat, plain ♦ Canned Pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix) – great for digestion, helps both diarrhea and constipation (caution to gradually work up amount, as too much can cause diarrhea) ♦ Fish oil – contains beneficial omega-3 fatty acids and trace minerals; found in fish body oil, *not liver oil* (recommended amount: 1,000mg capsule per 10-30 lbs. of body weight)

☠**Foods to avoid**– onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, raw salmon or trout, chocolate, caffeine, avocado pits and rinds, and Xylitol (a sweetener used in many sugar-free products).

Recommended Commercial Diets

Please keep in mind that there are many high-quality foods available, and **not all are listed here**.

**Remember, when changing pet food be sure to allow a gradual shift from the old formula to the new one. Over a 1-2 week period ideally, slowly introduce the new diet while steadily using up the remainder of the old diet. Sudden food changes can cause GI upset, including vomiting, diarrhea, poor hair coat, or poor appetite. Please call if any of these changes occur.*

Azmira: Formulated on holistic principles, contains no rice by-product or wheat gluten

Blue Buffalo: Formulated on holistic principles with natural ingredients

California Natural: Contains limited ingredients to help with food sensitivity issues

Canidae/Felidae: Good all-around food with high quality ingredients, grain-free available

Evo: Grain-free, red-meat or poultry-meat varieties available

Fromm's: Formulated on holistic principles, grain-free available, produced in Wisconsin

Holistic Select: Formulated on holistic principles with holistic supplements

Innova: Formulated on holistic principles, incorporates ingredients from 5 food groups

Karma: Organic food for dogs; 95% of ingredients USDA certified organic

Merrick: Holistic diet including Before Grain (BG), Whole Earth, and the "Cowboy Cookout" family of foods

Natural Balance: Grain-free & limited ingredient allergy formulas available (Duck, Venison, Lamb, Fish)

Natural Planet Organics: Premium certified organic dog & cat food with supplements

Nature's Variety Instinct: Grain and gluten-free diets with high quality ingredients

Nature's Variety Prairie: High quality food with no corn, wheat, or soy products

Nutro Natural Choice: Natural ingredients with added vitamins and minerals

Orijen / Acana: Local sources used, high protein, low carbohydrate, grain-free, biologically-appropriate diets

Petcurean: "Wholesome foods for a healthy life"

Pinnacle: Holistic pet food formulas

Royal Canin: A large variety of diets available with nutrition driven by science

Solid Gold: Grain-free available; all natural, holistic, and no chemical preservatives

Taste of the Wild: "The balanced diet that nature intended"

Tiki Dog: Various yummy canned canine foods made from real poultry and fish

Timberwolf Organics: Rotational diets; grain-free available

Wellness: High quality meat, grain-free and allergy formulas available

Ziwi Peak: Ingredients are fished, or ranch-raised, free of antibiotics and hormones

RAW DIETS: **Bravo Balance:** Fresh frozen raw food for cats and dogs

Fresh is Best (formerly "**Companion**" raw food): Fresh, frozen dog & cat food

Honest Kitchen: Organic, holistic, dehydrated raw pet foods; grain/gluten-free available

Nature's Variety Instinct: Frozen raw patties or freeze-dried raw (just add water)

Primal: Wholesome raw frozen foods for dogs & cats

Sojo's: Freeze-dried raw food (available as "add-your-own-meat" or "complete with meat", just add water)

Stella & Chewy's: All-natural frozen and freeze-dried raw pet food for dogs and cats

Steve's Real Food: Raw foods; 100% complete and balanced; 100% USDA inspected