



Companion Animal Nutrition, FELINE

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) that 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 ensure nutritional balance and variety.

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

Feline Nutrition

#1 = Add canned food to your cat's diet! Canned foods are higher in fat and protein, and lower in carbohydrates, than dry foods. Their high water content increases the cat's overall fluid intake, which keeps the kidneys and bladder healthy. The higher fat contributes to skin and coat health. Because the ingredients are more easily digested and utilized by the cat's body, canned foods produce less solid waste in the litterbox.



Dry food is very dehydrating. Our feline friends descend from desert-dwelling wild cats that are well adapted to limited water resources. Their ultra-efficient kidneys are able to extract most of their moisture needs from their prey. However, the end result is that cats have a very low thirst drive, and will not drink water until they are 3-5% dehydrated. Cats eating only dry food take in only *half* the moisture of a cat eating only canned food. Chronic dehydration plays a factor in kidney disease, and is known to be a major contributor to bladder disease (crystals, stones, feline lower urinary tract disease, and cystitis).

If your cat is not used to eating canned food, add it to the diet slowly in small amounts. It is so different in composition from dry food that it may cause tummy upset at first. Some cats have a "dry food addiction," while others may simply not be hungry enough to try something new. Start by putting the cat on a meal-feeding schedule, leaving dry food out only an hour each, morning and night. Once accustomed to the schedule, put a little canned food down first. Most cats will be willing to try it at that point.

#2 = Mix it up! Another feature of the cat's natural diet is variety. A hunting cat doesn't one day decide to eat only purple finches! He will eat any small prey he can catch: chickadees, mice, grasshoppers, robins, or rabbits. Likewise, we should feed our cats a variety of foods. Variety keeps cats from becoming finicky and food-addicted, lessens the chance of dietary excess or deficiency of any single nutrient, and may prevent the development of food intolerances, allergies, and inflammatory bowel disease. Feeding the same dry food year after year greatly increases the risk of these problems. With canned food, it is easy to vary the flavors and protein sources.

#3 = Hold the carbs! Cats are true carnivores, and require meat for survival. Cats are attracted to food that has a strong meat or fat flavor. Pet food manufacturers go to great lengths to make their starch-based dry foods palatable to cats. They may coat the kibbles with fat or with "animal digest," a powder made of chemically or enzymatically digested animal by-products. The result may be a cat who overeats, not because he's hungry, but because he loves the taste of the food and doesn't want to stop.

The cat's natural diet includes prey such as rodents, lizards, insects, and birds. In the wild, a cat's "meals" consist primarily of water, protein, and fat (with less than 10% carbohydrate – the starch, sugar and fiber content). Research indicates that cats likely do best with no grains at all. Cats are instead exquisitely adapted to utilize fat and protein for energy. They are not at all like dogs and people, who are adapted to use carbohydrates for energy.

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. Slowly introduce the new diet while steadily using up the remainder of the old diet. Ideally, a diet change should occur over a 1-2 week period. 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
Before Grain: Grain-free diet by Merrick with high quality meat & bio-available nutrients
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
Merrick: Holistic diet including Before Grain kibble (BG) and various tasty canned foods for cats
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 nutrition, available in grain-free 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"
Timberwolf Organics: Rotational diets; grain-free available
Tiki Cat: yummy canned feline fare made from real poultry and fish
Wellness Canned: 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
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