



Pet Food



Are All Pet Foods The Same?



The truth is, pet foods are not all the same and ingredient labels can be deceiving. So how do you know which pet food is right for your pet? The cheaper the food, typically, the lower the quality of ingredients. Many commercial pet food manufacturers will often buy ingredients based on price or availability. One week that might be cornmeal, but the next week it might be cottonseed hulls. Many advertisers that say their food "exceeds" nutritional requirements are not doing your pet any favors. That's because removal of excesses in cheaper ingredients is costly, so the manufacturer allows the harmful excesses to remain.

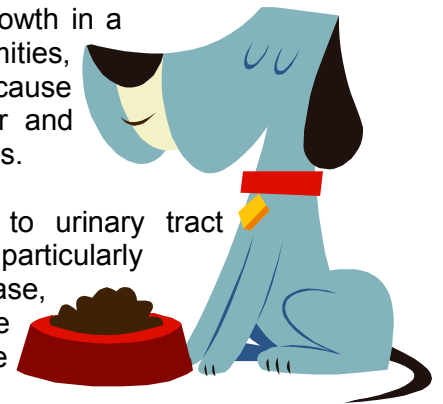
Why are excesses harmful?

Advertisers try to lure pet owners to buy their product by telling them their pet needs big, chunky diets of meat. But pets are not strictly carnivorous. They need a balanced diet, and too much meat means too much protein. Why is excessive protein dangerous? Because it can cause the kidneys to work overtime to rid the body of excessive wastes, which may eventually contribute to kidney failure. Too much phosphorus can cause bone problems and hasten the onset of kidney disease.

Dogs and cats like fat. It smells and tastes good, and our pets snarf down food laden with fat in a flash. Fat is important to supply the calories needed for active, high-energy working dogs and growing puppies, but too much fat causes obesity in inactive or obesity-prone adult pets. Other health problems crop up as a result. For example, obesity can aggravate hip and back problems, and force the heart to work overtime.

Too much calcium can actually retard growth in a puppy or kitten, cause skeletal deformities, contribute to skin problems, and may cause deficiencies in phosphorus, zinc, copper and iron, leading to a variety of health problems.

Too much magnesium can contribute to urinary tract problems in cats. Male cats are particularly susceptible to lower urinary tract disease, and a blocked urinary tract can be life-threatening without immediate veterinary intervention.



Doesn't the "Guaranteed Analysis" ensure quality?

The guaranteed analysis panel on a pet food product is simply the basic nutrient components broken down into crude protein, fat, fiber, and ash. However, it does not specify the source of these nutrients. Old leather shoes contain protein. Crankcase oil contains fat. Crushed coal contains ash. In addition, a guaranteed analysis only indicates the minimum or maximum levels of certain nutrients. A maximum level of a nutrient could actually contain less than the label. A minimum level could contain more. But as mentioned above, more isn't always better.

How do I know if my pet needs a special formula?

Puppies and kittens need more nutrients than adult dogs and cats. Obese animals need a lighter fare. Older pets (7 and up) need reduced protein, sodium, and other nutrients that may harm their vital organs and digestive functions over time. Of course, special health conditions like kidney disease or Feline Urological Syndrome will require prescription diets. That's why it is important to discuss your pet's dietary needs with one of our veterinarians.

How much should I feed my pet?

That will depend on the brand of pet food, the breed, the environment, the age, and his/her activity level. One of our veterinarians can take all these considerations into mind and help you determine the appropriate amount to feed your pet.

I know my pet needs a special diet, but the food seems so expensive.

On a pound for pound basis the Hills Prescription Diets and Science Diet foods are more expensive. But when you calculate the cost per feeding you will find that Hills is very competitive with most of the grocery or pet store brands. The reason for this is that you can feed a smaller quantity of Hills foods and still maintain your pet's optimal weight. Another important advantage of feeding a premium pet food is that your pet's stool volume will dramatically decrease. The prescription diets are also formulated to aid in the treatment of a variety of medical conditions, thus minimizing expensive medical treatment and keeping veterinary expenses down.

Important facts to keep in mind when choosing your pet's food:

- ♦ Puppies and kittens require foods specifically formulated for their increased nutritional needs.
- ♦ Senior pets do not have the same energy requirements as their younger counterparts and should be fed a diet formulated for their decreased needs.
- ♦ Most canned foods are 75-80% water and thus contain less nutritional value than an equal volume of dry food. Canned or moist foods are also more expensive.
- ♦ Cats and dogs have markedly different nutritional requirements and thus should not share foods.
- ♦ The most common medical problem in pets is obesity. Keep those treats to a minimum! Or ask us about our reduced calorie biscuits.

Cats and dogs both usually do better with dry food fed 1-2 times daily at the same time. Animals thrive on routine.

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