

WRITING /RESEARCH SAMPLE

Not for publication

*This was a research project
for a website called ConsumerSearch.com*

FULL STORY ON DOG FOOD

April 2006

There are an estimated 74 million dogs living in the United States and they consume an estimated \$9 billion worth of dog food every year. With that much revenue at stake, manufacturers scramble to compete, which is why the most trusted sources for information on dog food are people who are motivated by their love of dogs rather than their desire to sell something. Humane societies, veterinarians, breeders, discussion boards, dog clubs, trainers and pet owners will give reliable and unbiased reviews, as opposed to manufacturers with a vested interest in selling their own products.



The dog lover sites and articles generally fall into two categories: sites that tout an alternative idea, such as feeding raw or home-made foods, and sites that make an honest attempt to review and compare brands. An example of the first type is an article on njboxers.com called "B.A.R.F. for Beginners," which explains the basics of a raw food diet (B.A.R.F. is an acronym for Bones And Raw Food). An example of the second type is GoodDogMagazine.com, which features reviews of selected products that are tested by the magazine staff's own dogs. Another such site is Woodhavenlabs.com, which goes to great pains to dispel marketing myths and gimmicks.

Issues and trends in the dog food world are clearly defined... dry vs. canned, organic vs. highly processed, raw food, quality of top ingredients, and commercial vs. premium foods. Regardless of the type of diet you choose for your dog, it's always wise to buy the best food you can afford. Prepared, packaged pet food comes in many levels of quality, and naturally, the higher-quality foods come with a higher price tag.

In 1998, Consumer Reports tested dog and cat foods, but the results caused an uproar when it was discovered that the testing methods weren't scientific and the results weren't accurate. The report stated that "more than half the cat foods and a quarter of the dog foods were significantly lacking in at least one key nutrient." In response to manufacturers refuting these findings, Consumer Reports published a correction that stated, *"Our February report on dog and cat foods focused in part on whether major brands deliver all the necessary nutrients for the health and well-being of a pet... However, our report and Ratings contained errors stemming from mistakes in the measurement of some minerals and a fatty acid. As we promised last month, we have retested all the products described in the February report as being nutritionally unbalanced."* [From "Correction: Pet food retest," April 1998].

But an updated report has still not been published.

WHAT A DOG NEEDS

An article in the Chicago Sun Times recently suggested that there's a trend toward dog owners pampering their dogs by feeding gourmet and specialized foods. Bob Vetere, president of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association is quoted as saying, "The trend of humanizing dogs is especially true among empty-nesters. The house is suddenly quiet and because the pet is replacing the children, you tend to humanize them a little bit." The author adds that part of that trend involves feeding the dogs tastier food.

These "gourmet" foods, such as Purina's "Beneful Prepared Meals" have ingredient lists that would make any human salivate, like beef, turkey, green beans, carrots and wild rice. But a closer look reveals that these ingredients aren't that unique in the higher-quality dog foods, and there's nothing really gourmet about it except the packaging, the price and the marketing strategy.

So do dogs really need carrots and wild rice?

Proponents of organic and home-made diets for dogs vote a hearty “yes,” and overall, most of the websites we researched agree with this. Ingredients in the highest-rated foods sound a lot like Thanksgiving dinner, listing list meat (chicken, lamb, turkey, etc.) as the top ingredients, followed by things like brown rice, oatmeal, potatoes, carrots, apples... even cranberries.

Dogs love meat and they need protein, but it's surprising to learn that they can actually thrive on a vegetarian diet... if the right balance of nutrients is present. Unlike cats, who need very high amounts of protein and no carbohydrates at all, dogs need as much as 50 percent carbs. The best cat foods list meat as their top ingredient, with grains far down on the list, but dog food with some sort of meat meal at the top of the list, such as chicken or lamb meal, can qualify as a premium food. However, read the label carefully to make sure it's “whole” meat meal, because meat “by-product” meal is something entirely different.

WHAT ABOUT BY-PRODUCTS, CHEMICALS AND OTHER “IMPURE” INGREDIENTS?

There are two schools of thought when it comes to by-products. Some say that because a dog in the wild would eat the entire animal when killing prey, every part of the animal -- bones, skin, internal organs and even fur -- is fair game, so to speak. And that's what by-products are supposedly made from.

But there's also a strong anti by-product contingent that asks, “what, exactly, is in these by-products?”

The AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) is an organization that sets guidelines and definitions for animal feed, including pet foods. AAFCO defines beef by-products as: *“material from beef which results from chemical and/or enzymatic hydrolysis of clean and undecomposed tissue from non-rendered clean parts, other than meat, from cattle which includes, but is not limited to, lungs, spleen, kidneys, brain, livers, blood, bone, partially defatted low-temperature fatty tissue, and stomachs and intestines freed of their contents. It does not include hair, horns, teeth and hoofs (beef).”* And poultry by-products are defined as: *“material which results from chemical and/or enzymatic hydrolysis of clean and undecomposed tissue from non-rendered clean parts of carcasses of slaughtered poultry such as heads, feet, viscera, free from fecal content and foreign matter except in such trace amounts as might occur unavoidably in good factory practice.”*

In an article on newstarget.com, Jessica Smith writes, “The well-known phrase ‘*meat by-products*’ is a misnomer since these by-products contain little, if any, meat.” She points out that by-products can include zoo animals, road kill, and 4-D (dead, diseased, disabled, dying) livestock. Most shockingly, this can even include dogs and cats. In 1990 the American Veterinary Medical Association and the FDA confirmed that some pet food companies were using the bodies of euthanized pets as by-products in their foods. It turns out that this practice wasn't widespread, but limited to small rural rendering plants and a few other assorted links in the pet food manufacturing chain.

But questionable by-products aren't the only dangers. There are plenty of unsavory elements that can show up in pet food, including chemicals, molds, bacteria and a whole assortment of nasty stuff. According to an article on the Animal Protection Institute website, in 1995, Nature's Recipe recalled \$20 million worth of dog food after a mold-related fungus was found in the food. And in 1999, another fungal toxin triggered the recall of dry food made at a processing plant that produced 53 brands of food (25 dogs were killed as a result of the fungus).

So how can we protect our dogs from what might be in their food? Purists argue that the only way is to feed the most natural diet possible... raw meats and bones, prepared at home or packaged by a reputable company. This practice is rapidly gaining popularity, though it's expensive, messy and inconvenient. More on that later.

DRY VS. CANNED FOOD

If you can find a dog food manufacturer that produces dry and canned foods which are nutritionally equal to one another, then there are clear advantages to choosing the dry over canned (but only if your dog drinks adequate amounts of water). Dry food is definitely easier to store and serve, and far less expensive.

But canned food also has its advantages. It contains fewer preservatives because the canning process itself creates preservation, unlike dry food that sits in an opened bag for days, weeks or even months. Canned food has less grain in its ingredients, and of course it has more moisture, which helps keep a dog hydrated and benefits the urinary tract.

The key is in the ingredients. If the commercially-prepared canned and dry foods you're considering have the same ingredients in the same order, then it really doesn't matter which style you feed. It's all about the nutrition.

In the dry food category, Nature's Balance Ultra Premium is notable for its organic ingredients, quality meats and lack of by-products. On the Petco website, 13 out of 13 customers gave this product either 5 or 4.9 out of 5 possible points. Reviewers comment on their dogs' overall health, energy, shiny coat and lack of digestive problems with this food. Top ingredients include chicken, Brown Rice, Duck, Lamb Meal, Oatmeal, Pearled Barley, Potatoes and Chicken Fat, supplement with healthy extras like whole ground flaxseed, Dried Kelp and vitamins

Another top dry food is Innova, scoring an overall rate on eopinions.com of 4.5 out of 5 possible stars (based on 24 reviews). It also rated 4 stars (out of four) in a comparison done by animalark.com. The top ingredients Innova dry food are turkey, chicken and chicken meal, which far outranks typical grocery store dry foods such as Alpo, which lists ground yellow corn, beef & bone meal and soy meal as its top three. If you were a dog, which would you prefer?

The best canned foods we found were Canidae Canine Dog Food and Eagle Pack Holistic-Natural canned. These are definitely premium foods, and deservedly so. At least 3 meat sources are included in the top ingredients, and other ingredients are grains and supplements that are found in the very best of human diets.

Eagle Pack formulas contain an impressive ratio of 65% to 75% meat/fish content and only 2% to 5% grain/carbohydrates. Canidae's chicken and rice formula lists Chicken, Chicken Broth, Lamb, Chicken Liver, Brown Rice, Barley and Egg at the top.

THE GOOD STUFF VS. THE BAD STUFF

Popular store brands such as Alpo, Kibbles & Bits and Purina Dog Chow received the lowest ratings on the Animal Ark Site, and aren't even listed in many of the reviews because they're apparently not even worth mentioning. Just about everything made by Purina rated low on RateltAll.com, along with other major brands like Ol' Roy (the Walmart brand), Diamond brand and Alpo. One reviewer had this to say, *"As a groomer, my fellow groomers & I usually can tell the dogs fed Alpo (or similar brands)...loose orange stools, gassy, horrible teeth and breath and nasty skin."* Another site, Dogma.com, offers a specific list of foods to avoid because of nitrates, high grain content and undesirable by-products. Included on this list are multiple Purina products along with Beneful, Bil-Jac and Pedigree.

The best foods contain meat or a whole meat *meal* as the primary ingredients. By comparison, Purina Puppy Chow contains NO MEAT at all. Its top ingredients are ground yellow corn, chicken by-product meal and corn gluten meal. The top ingredients in Alpo canned food are a bit better, leading with water, chicken and liver, but this is balanced out by the presence of chemicals like potassium chloride and tricalcium phosphate (which might have something to do with the orange stools and bad breath). In trying to locate ingredients for "Ol Roy" (the Walmart brand), it's interesting to note that this brand appears to have no website, and our searching could not turn up an ingredient list.

Now on to the good stuff. The highest rated foods, such as Natural Balance dry food, starts out with chicken, brown rice, duck, lamb meal, oatmeal, pearled barley, potatoes and chicken fat. Innova Dry Adult Formula lists turkey, chicken, chicken meal, ground barley, ground brown rice and chicken fat, at the top. Eagle Pack Natural Canned food is based on beef, beef broth, beef liver, ocean fish, oat bran, carrots, peas, potatoes and dried egg product. A quick glance at these ingredients compared to the lower-priced brands makes it obvious which are better. But price may not be as big a hurdle as you think.

On the surface, the nationally-advertised grocery store brands are cheaper, no doubt about it. Comparing a 40-pound bag of Natural Balance at \$36.99 to a 35-pound bag of Alpo at \$19.99 appears to be a slam dunk. But remember... the more nutritious the food is, the less a dog needs to consume. So if your dog eats twice as much of the cheap stuff, you're not really saving any money and you're not taking the best possible care of your dog.

The bottom line? The better foods are clearly higher-quality and worth every penny of the higher price.

A WORD ABOUT LIFE STAGES

Choosing the proper food got even more challenging when manufacturers started labeling their foods as being suited for certain life stages, such as puppy, large adult or senior. It turns out that there are only two true designations, and they are best explained by Linda Bren in her article, "Pet Food: The Lowdown on Labels."

Bren writes, *"AAFCO has established two nutrient profiles each for dogs and cats--growth/lactation and maintenance--to fit their life stages. A product intended for growing kittens and puppies, or for pregnant or lactating females, must meet AAFCO's nutrient profile for growth/lactation. Products that meet AAFCO's profile for maintenance are suitable for an adult, non-reproducing dog or cat of normal activity level, but may not be adequate for an immature, reproducing, or hard-working animal. A product may claim that it is for "all life stages" if it is suitable for adult maintenance and also meets the*

more stringent nutritional needs for growth and reproduction. Growth/lactation and maintenance are the only nutrient profiles authorized by AAFCO and CVM, so terms like "senior" or 'formulated for large breed adults' mean the food meets the requirements for adult maintenance--and nothing more."

Important Features Reviewers say the following about shopping for dog food:

- . Look for certification by the AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials). The official statement on the label says: "Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that [this product] provides complete and balanced nutrition." According to the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine, "An AAFCO nutritional adequacy statement is one of the most important aspects of a dog or cat food label. A 'complete and balanced' pet food must be substantiated for nutritional adequacy by one of two means. The first method is for the pet food to contain ingredients formulated to provide levels of nutrients that meet an established profile. The alternative means of substantiating nutritional adequacy is for the product to be tested following the AAFCO Feeding Trial Protocols."

- . Choose a food that has whole meat or whole meat meal (lamb meal, chicken meal, etc.) as its top ingredients. Grain sources should also be whole grains, as opposed to meat or grain by-products.

- . Avoid BHT, BHA and Ethoxyquin as preservatives. A better choice would be foods preserved with tocopherols (vitamin E) or vitamin C. These may not keep the food quite as fresh for quite as long, but they're a lot safer.

- . If your pet is overweight, be cautious if you're buying 'light' foods. This description can be misleading, and most labels don't give calorie breakdowns. If you want to know the calorie count, contact the manufacturer. The phone number or web address should be on the label. According to Linda Bren, "A pet food can claim to be "light" or "lean" only if it meets AAFCO's standard definitions for these terms. These definitions differ for dog and cat food and also depend on the moisture content of the food. The words "light," "lite" and "low calorie" all have the same meaning. The words "lean" and "low fat" also mean the same. But "less calories" and "reduced calories" mean only that the product has fewer calories than another product, and "less fat" and "reduced fat" mean the product is less fatty than another one.

- . To help curb hyperactivity in your dog, cut down on protein. Too much protein can turn your dog into a hyper hound, and some foods have as much as a 35%. Check the label. Anything higher than 25% is too much.

Consensus Report

# of picks	Brand/type	Summary of Benefits
6	Eagle Pack (dry or canned)	Not as widely available as some of the other products, but clearly preferred by experts and consumers.
5	Natural Balance Ultra Premium	Both canned and dry are highly praised, and now a frozen raw formula is available in some locations
4	Raw food of any kind, either home-made or commercially prepared by companies like Steve's Real Food for Dogs or Dr. Billinghurst's B.A.R.F. DIET™ This is overwhelmingly the preferred diet for dogs and cats.	The most natural, toxin-free foods possible to feed pets.
4	Innova, dry or canned	Highest-rated among commercially prepared foods for its high content of real meat and organic ingredients

4	Canidae brand foods, dry or canned	Top-rated by consumers and dog experts for real meat contents and nutritional value
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Alternative Considerations

RAW FOOD

By far the most popular and most effective alternative to processed, commercial foods is a raw food diet. Raw food is the most natural thing a dog can eat, because in the wild, a dog (or wolf) would eat a live animal, bones, fur and all. We've all heard that it's bad to feed bones to our dogs because they'll splinter and harm the stomach, but raw food proponents say that this only applies to bones that have been cooked. Raw bones *will not splinter*.

Raw food diets are often referred to as "B.A.R.F.", which stands for Biologically Appropriate Raw Food (though some folks refer to it as "Bones and Raw Food"). It generally focuses on chicken with bone in, beef with bone in, veggies and fruits, and there's a lot of information on it out there. In short, you can throw your dog a whole raw chicken or a whole fish and a bunch of carrots every day and he'll thrive. One of the leading experts on B.A.R.F. diets is an Australian veterinarian named Ian Billinghurst, whose website, barfproducts.com, offers a wealth of information and products.

Billinghurst suggests that a dog eat 2% of its body weight per day, so for example, a 50-pound dog would eat about one pound of food per day (this varies of course, in terms of how active the dog is, how old, metabolism, general health, etc).

The products sold on Billinghurst's site are delivered in freezer packs, with 24 pounds of food per pack. They sell by the case (48 8 oz. patties) for about \$85. The ingredients are certainly sterling, and include tasty tidbits like beef hearts, lamb hearts, chicken, pork, finely ground beef bones, beef liver, kidneys and tripe are among the main ingredients, with fruit and vegetables among the lower ingredients. Exotic things like bok choy and dried kelp powder make this truly unique. But expensive!

Shipping is \$25 for 48 pounds, so the consumer is advised to buy at least 48 pounds to make shipping costs efficient. Bottom line? To feed a 50-pound dog for 48 days, the cost would be about \$110. By contrast, a commercially prepared food, even the premium foods, would be closer to \$40. With all the packaging and shipping, a dog owner would be better off financially to buy the meat products at the grocery store or butcher and make raw meals at home.

Raw food recipes are time consuming and messy to make at home however, but for the very determined, it certainly can be done. A typical raw food meal might include chicken backs, necks, or wings, a couple of beef ribs and an egg. Fish is also highly recommended, an entire raw fish is considered a real treat (but you might want to serve this smelly feast outdoors).

Another popular brand of raw food is *Steve's Real Food for Dogs*, which is packaged in either frozen or freeze-dried nuggets. In terms of nutrition, this food is about equal to Billinghurst's, and so is the price, with a 10-pound bag of frozen food at about \$30, and a 7-pound bag of freeze dried at about \$15.

Best Research

1. DogAware.com
<http://www.dogaware.com/dogfeeding.html#TopCanned>
 Dog Feeding Info
 Author: "Mary"
 4/7/06
 5 stars

A very complete, comprehensive site about feeding. It breaks down categories (canned, dry, lifestages, commercial, organic, raw, home-made, supplements, etc.), and even gives contact information for manufacturers along with specific food and brand recommendations. An all-around excellent source for a good overview of feeding, the site is owned by a self-proclaimed "dog-o-holic" with good credentials and a lot of knowledge to share.

2. NJBoxers.com

<http://www.njboxers.com/faqs.htm>

B.A.R.F. for Beginners

Author: Unidentified

March 12, 2006

5 stars

B.A.R.F. is an acronym for Biologically Appropriate Raw Food (sometimes referred to as "Bones and Raw Food"), and this site is one of the most complete sources of information we found. A must for anyone interested in learning about raw food diets for dogs, it's clearly been researched and written by experts who are passionate about raw food. The site has an excellent question-and-answer page and covers everything from vegetarian raw food diets to the myth about feeding raw food causing a dog to develop "blood lust" and start stalking other animals for food.

3. AnimalArk.com

[http://animalark.eapps.com/animal/PetFoods.nsf/\\$\\$PetFoodsByRating?OpenForm](http://animalark.eapps.com/animal/PetFoods.nsf/$$PetFoodsByRating?OpenForm)

How Does Your Pet Food Rate? -

Author: The staff of Animal Art

Not dated

4 stars

This site belongs to a no-kill animal shelter in Minnesota, and is clearly driven by a love of animals. With the help of Dr. Linda Wolf, DVM, the publishers of this website to evaluated various dog and cat foods and rated them on a scale of 1 - 4 stars, with 4 stars being the best possible rating. The most common, commercially-available foods were included in the test, and a click on each product name reveals ingredients, nutritional details and price. Foods with a meat-based protein source as the first ingredient, plus at least some organic ingredients, were rated highest. Negative points were given for the presence of chemical preservatives, unidentified animal products and ingredient splitting got a reduced rating.

4. PETCO.com

<http://www.petco.com/Shop/ProductList.aspx?PC=productlist&Nav=344&N=22+10219+30+4866>

Top Rated Dog Products

Author: Unidentified

Not dated

4 stars

Petco has a remarkably informative site that features customer reviews and listings of top selling brands and products. Many of the dog foods rated either 4 or 5 out of five possible points, and although there were not always a large number of reviews (as few as two and as many as 20), the top rated products were consistently and unanimously at the top of the scale.

5. The Animal Protection Institute

<http://www.api4animals.org/facts?p=359&more=1>

What's Really in Pet Food? -

Author: API staff

Not Dated

4 stars

This is the site of the Animal Protection Institute, and the article focuses on by-products, chemicals, molds, bacteria and other toxins present in dog foods. The article goes into great detail about how pet food is manufactured and advises consumers to "stop buying commercial pet food or reduce the quantity of commercial pet food and supplement with fresh foods."

6. Dogma

www.4dogma.com

Choosing a Healthy Dog or Cat Food

Author: The owners of Dogma, a pet store in Southern California

Not dated

4 stars

This site is owned by a pet store with two locations in Orange County, California. The owner Jerry Carter is a die-hard dog lover who opened these stores to provide consumers with better choices in terms of food and supplies. The site has all

the usual sales links, such as toys, bowls and treats, but has one page devoted to nutrition, which is well-researched, fair and trustworthy, since Jerry doesn't have his own brand to sell.

7. NewsTarget.com

<http://www.newstarget.com/012647.html>

The True Horrors of Pet Food Revealed: Prepare To Be Shocked By What Goes Into Dog Food And Cat Food

Author: Jessica Smith

2005

4 stars

In this article, the author speaks out against by-products in pet foods, and makes a darn good case. She points out that by-products can include zoo animals, road kill, and 4-D (dead, diseased, disabled, dying) livestock. Most shockingly, this can even include dogs and cats. She also addresses chemical additives, herbicides and other dangerous substances. Her article contains numerous references, links and research sources and is a good place to start doing serious research on this topic. Her conclusion? But the most organic, chemically-free, by-product free food you can find, and don't settle for anything less.

8. U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine

<http://www.fda.gov/cvm/petlabel.htm>

Interpreting Pet Food Labels

Author: David A. Dzanic, DVM, Ph.D., DACVN.

Not dated

3 stars

This site goes into great detail about labeling regulations and AAFCO standards. A great resource for devout label-readers, the article gives guidelines for spotting label trickery, for example, the "95% rule," which states that products that use meat, poultry or fish in their names (such as "Tuna Cat Food") must contain at least 95% of the named ingredient. Another example is the "25%" or "dinner" rule.... if the named ingredients comprise at least 25% of the product but less than 95%, the name must include a qualifying descriptive term, such as "Beef Dinner for Dogs."

9. Good Dog Magazine

https://www.gooddogmagazine.com/articles/issue.asp?ID=q_dept02

New Dog Foods Product Review

Author: Good Dog magazine staff

Not dated

3 stars

This on-line magazine was a print publication for 13 years but is now a 100% online subscription site. Visitors are required to register in order to read the articles, but the free registration gives you a generous six-month subscription. The site compares and reviews dog foods and a plethora of other dog products, and the magazine staff actually does their own testing on their in-house "test dogs." Food articles cover new product reviews, news updates from manufacturers, and product test reports covering everything from palatability to stool consistency. Although the articles are thorough, there are no side by side comparison charts. But it's still a fun site, with a healthy dose of humor.

10. U.S. Food and Drug Administration FDA Consumer magazine

http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2001/301_pet.html

Pet Food: The Lowdown on Labels

Author: Linda Bren

2001

3 stars

The author asks -- and answers -- some very important questions, including "Is my dog old enough for "adult formula"? Does my cat really need "premium"? Will Fido be healthier on "natural" food and will Fluffy fully appreciate "gourmet"? She explains that pet food packaging may carry descriptive words as "senior," "premium," "super-premium," "gourmet," and "natural," but these terms have no standard definition or regulatory meaning.

11. Woodhaven Labradors

<http://www.woodhavenlabs.com/dogfoods.html>

Dog Foods: Help in making the choice easier
Author: The owner of Woodhaven Labradors
Not dated
2 stars

This site belongs to a Labrador retriever breeder, and the article is informative -- and strongly opinionated -- about how to make good food choices. It looks at gimmicks and labeling with a critical eye, for example, the author considers the term "large breed adult dog food" to be a marketing gimmick. If you're dog is full grown, adult" food of any kind is appropriate regardless of breed (though in puppy food breed size may matter). Another gimmick is the presence of Glucosamine/Chondroitin in food. The levels present in most foods aren't enough to make a difference, and adding these separately as supplements is more effective. Lite or diet formulas and dental formulas are also gimmicks, with a few exceptions being the kibbles that come in larger chunks which force the dog to actually *chew* the food. Diet formulas cut back on fat and protein and replace them with fillers, so aren't replacing lost calories with viable nutrition. If your dog is overweight, the author suggests feeding smaller quantities of regular formulas and adding green beans to the food as a filler that actually has some food value. The author also cautions consumers not to get sucked in to buying food that claim to be "human grade" because "your dog won't care and there is no scientific proof that the human grade foods are better than any other premium food."

12. Chicago Sun Times
<http://www.suntimes.com/output/business/cst-fin-pooch27.html>
Doggie Meals Going Upscale
Author: Jim Salter
April 27, 2006
2 stars

This article in the Chicago Sun Time examines the trend toward gourmet, upscale dog foods. The author suggests that for many people, dogs have replaced children, and the dogs get doted on. One way that people show their love and caring is by feeding their dogs high-priced, human-quality foods, and selected brands are referenced, including a new line called Beneful Prepared Meals (by Purina), which features eight entrees in flavors such as roasted chicken recipe with pasta, carrots and spinach and turkey medley with corn, wild rice, peas and barley. What the author doesn't mention is that these brands aren't really gourmet...they're just high-quality, and compare to many of the other top brands.

13. About.com/dogs
http://dogs.about.com/od/dietandnutrition/f/dog_food_why.htm
Why Worry About Dog Food?
Author: Krista Mifflin
Not dated
2 stars

This site is recommended for its an enormous "dog food database" comparing all the major and minor brands, listing ingredients and other important details. The down side is that the site doesn't have much text or many articles, but if you're looking for information on a specific brand of food, this is the place to go.

14. RateItAll.com
<http://www.rateitall.com/search2.aspx?searchstring=dog%20food>
Dog Food Ratings -
Author: Unidentified
Not dated
2 stars

This site features consumer ratings of a wide range of dog food types and offers an at-a-glance overview of high vs. low-rated foods. It's a useful site if you have plenty of time to navigate around looking for answers, but the big drawback is that there's no options for sorting the listings according to rating.

COMPARISON CHART

Brand/Price	Size and weight	Top Ingredients
DRY: Natural Balance	17 pound bag	Chicken, brown rice, duck, lamb meal,

Ultra Premium Dog - Typical price: \$21		oatmeal, pearled barley, potatoes and chicken fat, supplement with healthy extras like whole ground flaxseed, dried kelp and vitamins.
DRY: Innova Adult Dry Dog Food Typical price: \$19.95	15.5 pound bag	Turkey, chicken, chicken meal, whole ground barley, brown rice, steamed potatoes, chicken fat, vegetables, sprouts, whole eggs.
CANNED: Canidae Canine Dog Food Typical price: \$27.99	24 - 13 oz. cans	Chicken, chicken broth, lamb, chicken liver, ocean fish, brown rice, sun cured alfalfa meal, egg, sunflower oil, lecithin, rosemary, plus vitamins and minerals.
CANNED: Eagle Pack Holistic-Natural Canned Dog Food Typical price: \$15.99	12 - 13.2 oz. cans	Beef, beef broth, beef liver, ocean fish, oat bran, carrots, peas, potatoes and dried egg product. flaxseed oil, cranberry powder, dried kelp, and assorted vitamins & minerals.
RAW: Dr. Billinghurst's B.A.R.F. DIET Frozen Patties Typical price: \$85	48 8-oz frozen patties	Beef hearts, lamb hearts, chicken, pork, finely ground beef bones, beef liver, egg, cultured kefir, broccoli, celery, spinach, carrot, ground flax seed, bok choy, dried alfalfa meal, beef kidney, unbleached beef tripe, apple, pear, grapefruit, orange, dried kelp powder,
RAW: Steve's Real Food for Dogs Typical price: \$30	10-pound bag of frozen food	Beef, beef hearts, broccoli, romaine lettuce, carrots, apples, beef kidneys, beef livers, cooked bonemeal, flaxseed, rice bran, safflower oil, sardine oil, anchovies oil, dried kelp.

Alpo Dog Food:	www.alpo.com
Beneful:	www.beneful.com
Bil-Jac:	www.biljac.com
Canidae Dog Food:	www.canidae.com
Dr. Billinghurst's B.A.R.F. Diet:	www.barfworld.com
Eagle Pack Dog Food:	www.eaglepack.com
Innova Dry Dog Food:	www.naturapet.com
Kibbles 'n bits:	www.kibblesnbits.com
Natural Balance Dog Food:	www.naturalbalanceinc.com
Pedigree:	www.pedigree.com
Purina Pet Foods:	www.purina.com
Steve's Real Food for Dogs:	www.stevesrealfood.com/