



## 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  
**Eagle Pack Holistic Select:** Formulated on holistic principles with holistic supplements  
**Evo:** Grain-free, red-meat or poultry-meat varieties available  
**Fromm's:** Formulated on holistic principles, grain-free available, produced in Wisconsin  
**Innova:** Formulated on holistic principles, incorporates ingredients from 5 food groups  
**Merrick:** Holistic diet with a variety of protein sources  
**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:** High protein, low carbohydrate, grain-free, biologically-appropriate diet  
**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  
**Timberwolf Organics:** Rotational diets; grain-free available  
**Wellness Canned:** High quality meat, grain-free and allergy formulas available  
**RAW DIETS:**  
**Companion Natural Pet Food:** Fresh, frozen dog & cat food  
**Honest Kitchen:** Organic, holistic, dehydrated raw pet foods; grain/gluten-free available  
**Primal:** Wholesome raw frozen foods for dogs & cats  
**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



## Companion Animal Nutrition, CANINE

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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.

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### Canine Nutrition



**#1, #2 and #3 = Variety, spice of life!**

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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, and 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).

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**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 with a variety of protein sources  
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