



## Choosing the Right Food for Your Pet

Read the ingredients in your pet's food! This is really the best way to determine the quality of the food you're feeding your pet. As you read the ingredient panel, here are some things to look for:

- **The first ingredient is the most important** — because there is more of that ingredient than any other. All pet foods must list the ingredients present in their food, in order of weight. A good pet food will have real chicken, lamb, turkey, beef or fish as the first ingredient.
- **The top 10 ingredients usually comprise 80% or more** of a dry pet food's entire formula and give you a great perspective of its ingredient quality. The first ingredient in most leading dog food brands is ground yellow corn followed by chicken or poultry by-product meals and corn gluten meal. Foods with corn and "by-products" should be avoided.
  - Chicken(poultry) by-product meals consist of the ground, rendered, clean parts of the carcass of slaughtered poultry, such as necks, feet, and undeveloped eggs and intestines. Ingredients listed as chicken or poultry by-product meals are lower in cost than fresh meat but are not as good of quality.
  - Corn, wheat or soy (glutens) are all **incomplete sources of protein that have been linked to allergic reactions** in some dogs. Grain proteins do not contain the complete amino acid profiles specific for dogs or cats and are not as easily digestible as meat-based proteins. Many pet food companies use glutens to increase protein levels without using more expensive meat, poultry or fish.
- **Check the last few ingredients for preservatives and artificial colors.** Preservatives like BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin, propylene glycol provide no nutritional value and have been associated with possible side effects. Some pet food brands resort to artificial colors and flavors in an attempt to make food look and taste better.



**\*\* Whenever changing your pet's diet, you should gradually switch to the new food over the course of 7-10 days. For example, make a mixture that contains 25% of the new food and 75% of the old food and feed that for three days. Then make it 50-50 for three more days, then 75% new food and 25% old food for three more days. If your pet seems comfortable with this progression, you can start feeding 100% new food.**