

How Do I Pick the Right Pet Food?

Did you know that...



When a pet food says that it is a dog food with beef, it only contains 3% of actual beef?

Pet owners spend more than \$17 Billion a year on pet food in the U.S. alone?

Ingredients are listed on a pet food label by weight, the heaviest being

the first on the list and the lightest being the last AND that the ingredients are weighed when they are wet?

Just because the food says that it is chicken, i.e. chicken and rice, doesn't mean that it doesn't contain other proteins such as beef.

Association of American Feed Control Officers (AAFCO)

AAFCO has a set of regulations for pet food makers that many states use. These regulations cover guidelines for labeling including naming standards, guaranteed analysis and nutritional adequacy. An AAFCO nutritional adequacy statement is one of the most important aspects of a dog or cat food label according to the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine.

A food that is considered complete and balanced or 100% nutritional should have an AAFCO nutritional adequacy statement. There are two ways that AAFCO substantiates claims of nutritional adequacy in a food.

Chemical analysis – The food contains ingredients that AAFCO has determined provide the proper amount of nutrients for a particular animal. The statement will say: "ABC Dog/Cat Food is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog/Cat Food Nutrient Profiles."

Feeding test – The food has been tested on animals under AAFCO’s strict feeding protocols and was found to provide proper nutrition. A statement will say: “Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that ABC Dog/Cat Food provides complete and balanced nutrition.”

The statement will also say for what stage of life the food is appropriate. If there is no AAFCO statement and the food claims to be “complete” then the food may not have been tested and could be unsafe.



Therapeutic Diets

Most therapeutic diets do not contain an AAFCO nutritional adequacy statement but may carry a statement along the lines of “use under direct supervision of a veterinarian”. By not having an AAFCO statement, companies can continually modify formulas based on newer research. These diets are comprised of ingredients that have been developed and tested by researchers at the pet food producer. A therapeutic diet contains specific ingredients designed to treat certain conditions such as obesity or kidney problems and should not be fed to a dog or cat without a prescription from your veterinarian.

Raw Food Diets

Raw food diets have become increasingly popular in the last few years. However, these diets can cause a health risk not only to the pets that consume them but to their owners as well. A study published in the November/December 2003 issue of the *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association* found that these diets may cause a potentially fatal Salmonella infection.



Veterinarians from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine conducted a case study of two cats that developed salmonellosis (Salmonella infection) as a result of raw meat-based diet. The salmonellosis caused gastrointestinal upset, weight loss, and anorexia that resulted in the death of both cats. Tissue sample cultures were taken from one of the cats and compared to cultures from the raw beef used

in the cat’s diet. The cultures were identical and the resulting infection was confirmed as the cause of death in both cases.

The JAAHA study found that there are documented cases of infection due to direct and indirect contact with infected pets. People and pets with that have the

highest risk of infection are the very young, the very old or those with a compromised immune system. People can be exposed to disease causing organisms through petting, grooming, food preparation, water bowls and litter boxes.

How Do I change to a new food?

First, follow the guidelines previously discussed. Once you have chosen a new diet that is appropriate for your dog or cat, slowly mix it in with your pet's old diet. Start with a small amount of the new food mixed in with the old and, over approximately 5 - 7 days, mix more of the new food in and remove more of the old food. At the end of 7 days, your dog or cat should be completely on the new diet. If, at any time during the transition, your pet experiences vomiting or diarrhea, decrease the amount of the new diet and increase the amount of the old diet that your pet is getting. If vomiting or diarrhea persists, contact us immediately.

How do I know how much to feed my Pet?

When starting a new diet, check the packaging for feeding guidelines. The amounts listed are based on your dog or cats weight. Start by getting your pet's current body weight. Find the appropriate guideline for your pet's weight and start by feeding the lower amount. Do regular weight checks to ensure that your pet is maintaining their weight. If your pet is supposed to gain or lose weight, you may need to adjust the amount they are getting fed. Consult with one of our team members when you come in for your weight checks to see if your pet's food amount needs to be adjusted.

Our Recommendation



Find a food that contains an AAFCO Feeding Test statement. Also, get foods that are appropriate for the age and lifestyle of your dog or cat. Don't feed kitten food to a 7 year old cat that needs a mature adult diet. Please don't feed a therapeutic diet to your dog or cat unless it has been recommended by your veterinarian. Please do not feed a raw diet. Do regular weight checks when starting a new diet so that you know if your pet is maintaining their weight. If you are changing diets, do not suddenly change the food as it could cause vomiting or diarrhea.

For more information, go to www.healthypet.com