

McLEOD



VETERINARY
HOSPITAL

Choosing the
Right Diet
for your Cat
or Dog



Choosing the Right Diet

Finding the right diet for your dog or cat can be an overwhelming experience. Walking into any pet store you are faced with many aisles of options and all companies claiming to be the best for your pet. Television commercials can also be very persuasive and misleading.

Unfortunately most manufacturing companies aren't very transparent. They don't inform consumers of research and development, information on feeding trials, quality control, or the quality of the ingredients that go into their diets. This important information isn't present on animal food labels, causing a lot of misconceptions and confusion for pet owners and even veterinarians!

What Information is on the Label?

Ingredient list:

The ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. This can be misleading! Chicken contains more than 50% water. Just because it's listed first, doesn't mean it's more nutritious or of better quality. Poultry meal may be lower on the ingredient list of a diet, but may contain more quality protein than a diet that has chicken listed first.

Guaranteed analysis:

AAFCO (the Association of American Feed Control Officials) sets standards for pet foods in the United States and is also recognized by Canada. These standards offer a minimum and maximum level of only certain nutrients: protein, fat, fibre and moisture. They do not indicate actual amounts! They also don't standardize all nutrients, for example: some dog foods may be very high in calcium and can lead to bladder stones or some cat foods may be high in sodium and phosphorus and can be detrimental to a senior cat.

Nutritional adequacy statement:

This information indicates if the diet is nutritionally balanced for certain lifestages. Growing puppies and kittens have different nutritional needs than adult dogs and cats. A diet that is labeled as nutritionally adequate for “all lifestages,” will often contain excessive levels of some nutrients for adult or senior pets.

Formulation vs feeding trial method:

AAFCO defines 2 methods for manufacturers to determine the nutritional adequacy of their diets.

- **Formulation:** This method is less expensive and faster for pet food manufacturers. Basically they have not conducted any feeding trials to research or develop their diets. Formulated diets do not conduct appropriate testing and gives no indication of:

- Excessive amounts of nutrients
- The presence of toxic substances that may exist
- Acceptability by pets
- Nutrient availability (how the food is digested)

- **Feeding trials:** AAFCO has a standardized feeding trial protocol for pet food manufacturers. The food being tested must be the sole source of nutrition during the feeding trials and meet nutritional adequacy. Again this label claim does not guarantee that the food is a great formula. Food manufacturers that have conducted these trials should have more information such as digestibility and nutritional adequacy.

Manufacturer's Name and Toll-Free Phone Number:



This can be the most useful information on the bag! There is no way to determine the actual nutrient content or quality of the ingredients by the label... so call and ask the right questions.

So now that we've really confused you...what can you do to find the right food for your pet?

AAHA (the American Animal Hospital Association) has created a series of questions for pet owners to ask pet food companies, to help them choose the right diet:

1. Do you have a Veterinary Nutritionist or some equivalent on staff in your company? Are they available for consultation or questions?
2. Who formulates your diets and what are their credentials?
3. Which of your diet(s) is AAFCO feed trial tested? Which of your diets meet AAFCO nutritional requirements?
4. What testing do you do beyond AAFCO trials? What kinds of research on your products have been conducted and are the results published in peer reviewed journals?
5. What specific quality control measures do you use to assure the consistency and quality of your product line? What safety measures do you use?
6. Where are your diets produced and manufactured? Can this plant be visited?
7. Can you provide a complete nutrient analysis of your bestselling canine and feline pet food including digestibility values?
8. Can you give me the caloric value per can/cup of your diets?



Did you know?

- AAFCO establishes nutritional standards, however, does not regulate, test, approve or certify pet foods.
- One study showed 90% of home-made pet foods were found to be nutritionally unbalanced and incomplete for pets.
- Cooked corn is a highly digestible carbohydrate and contains an essential fatty acid.
- 68% of dog food allergies or reactions are caused by beef, dairy or wheat, 25% are caused by lamb, chicken, chicken egg or soy. Corn is not a common cause of food reaction.
- The term “by-product” does not indicate an inferior product. It is defined as “something produced in the making of something else”.
- Pet food terms:
 - Organic:**
Is legally defined and must meet regulations.
 - Natural:**
Is legally defined and must meet regulations.
 - Holistic:**
Not legally defined and any manufacturer can make unsubstantiated claims.
 - Human Grade:**
Not legally defined and any manufacturer can make unsubstantiated claims.
- Diets that have added glucosamine, chondroitin, omega fatty acid, or other nutraceuticals do not have to supplement to a therapeutic level and may have no benefit to your pet.

For more great information on pet nutrition visit:
www.petfoodnutrition.com
or call McLeod Veterinary Hospital with any questions
at **204-661-3334**.

Happy to Assist You

It is our hope that the information in this brochure has been helpful. If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please contact our hospital at **(204) 661-3334** and we will be happy to assist you.

Hospital Hours:

Monday – Friday.....8:00am to 9:30pm
Saturday & Sunday.....8:30am to 3:00pm
Appointments are necessary.



880 McLeod Avenue
Winnipeg MB R2G 2T7

Ph: (204) 661-3334
Fax: (204) 661-0979

www.mcleodvet.com
Email: info@mcleodvet.com