



**The Ultimate Outfitter
for 4-Legged Friends™**

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How to Choose a *Great* Pet Food

How many times have you heard the saying, “you are what you eat?” Just like us, our dogs and cats benefit greatly from proper nutrition supplied by foods with high quality ingredients. Since your dogs and cats can’t fend entirely for themselves, what YOU choose to feed them is a key factor in their quality of life!

Feeding cheap quality commercial foods to our pets has been implicated in many common health problems in today’s companion animals, including skin allergies, obesity, food intolerance, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic ear infections, bladder and kidney problems, pancreatitis, hip dysplasia, canine mammary cancer, bloat and diabetes. Pesticide and antibiotic residues, fungal toxins, high cooking temperatures, excessive vitamin and mineral levels, and poor quality protein sources such as grain fillers and bone meal are more prevalent in the production of low quality “mass market” pet foods and may play a role in the development of these ailments.

On the flip side, there are a number of great foods available that set a higher standard for ingredient quality and provide a solid foundation for your pet’s health! Here are some key things to consider when choosing a quality pet food:

- Understand that price is a good indicator of the quality of the ingredients in the food. As better quality ingredients are added, including human grade meats and fats, the price and quality of the food will rise.
- Make sure that your food has an “AAFCO guarantee” on minimum nutrition levels, as set by the American Association of Feed Control Officers.
- Pay particular attention to the quality of the first 5-10 ingredients on the label, since these are the predominant elements of the food by weight.
- Look for whole or single-source “named” meats on the label, such as “chicken meal” or “lamb” - especially as the first or second ingredient on the label.
- Look for “named” fats on the label such as “chicken fat,” rather than generic “animal fat.” Generic fat may include the cheapest source of fat available at the time.
- Look for whole, unprocessed grains, fruits, vegetables or other beneficial foods.

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- Avoid foods containing “by-product meal,” “meat and bone meal” or “animal digest” – especially when they are the only source of animal protein. These are very low quality protein sources that include blood, intestines, lungs and bone not fit for human consumption.
- Avoid foods that contain excessive amounts of cheaper, less digestible grains such as corn, wheat, soy and sorghum that can trigger allergies or gas. Rice, oatmeal and barley are generally considered to be easier on your pet’s digestive system.
- Avoid foods with artificial colors or added sweeteners such as corn syrup or sorbitol, which can aggravate diabetic conditions.
- Avoid foods with artificial preservatives such as BHA, BHT, and Ethoxyquin, which have been implicated in cancer and other health problems. Instead, look for foods that utilize natural forms of Vitamin E (typically “mixed tocopherols”) to preserve fats.
- Avoid foods with high levels of fillers such as peanut hulls and beet pulp, which have no nutritional value.
- Avoid generic or store brands, which may be repackaged seconds from big manufacturers or of lesser quality.
- Unless directed by a veterinarian, avoid “light,” “senior,” or “hairball formula” foods which may contain unnecessary additives.

Following these keys to finding a high quality food will put you well on your way to offering the best quality of life to your pet. Other benefits you may notice include...

- Reduced vet bills for problems such as skin allergies.
- Less waste to pick up in the yard (better quality food is more digestible!).
- Feeding less food per serving to your pet (cheaper food has to be offered in larger amounts to your pet for them to get the same amount of nutrients found in a smaller serving of a high quality food!).

At Northwest Pets, we have carefully screened all of the foods that we carry to make sure that they conform the principles listed above. Since there is no single “best pet food,” we are dedicated to helping you match the right food with the needs of your particular pet! Please call us or stop by the store for an individual consultation on finding the optimal diet for your 4-legged friend!

Bone appetite!

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