

Not all pet foods are created equal!

With all the pet food scares in our recent history, owners are looking to make better decisions about what they pour into the dish each day. But there are so many foods to choose from that it seems to be an overwhelming decision. ***How can you know which pet foods to trust?***

RULE #1: Turn the bag around!

Don't make decisions based on the brand name or cover photos. The front of the bag may feature beautiful dogs or cats, show ribbons, and delicious cuts of meat and veggies. But, this ***may have nothing to do with what's inside the bag.*** The truth comes out in the ingredients list!

RULE #2: Know how to read an ingredients list!

For the most part, the things in your pet's food should be things that are appetizing to you. Keep in mind however, that dogs & cats (especially cats!) are ***designed to eat MEAT.*** Domestic pets are biologically identical to wild canines & felines. Therefore, they should consume the same foods.

Beware of:

- **By-products**. These are "leftover" parts not fit for human consumption. This can include feet, feathers, beaks, etc.
- **"Meat" meal**. This is mystery meat at its finest since the protein source is not identified at all. This could be any type of mammal sometimes including even roadkill and dog/cat carcasses.
- **Corn, Wheat, & Soy**. These three ingredients are often difficult for our pets to digest. It is also quite common for pets to develop allergies to these products and they are most often put into the food as a cheap filler.
- **Gluten**. Mainly this is more filler. A lower quality source of protein. Whole grains are a much better ingredient.
- **Artificial preservatives**. BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin are three preservatives used in pet food and also some human foods. These products have been shown to cause cancer.
- **Mill run**. The remnants of grain after it has been processed and depleted of most nutrients
- **Artificial Colors**. Red 20, Yellow 5, etc. These are present in the food only to make it more appealing to our eyes. It is a potential allergen and completely unnecessary for the animal's nutrition.
- **Salt or sugar**. Although a certain amount of salt is healthy for all animals it does not usually need to be added to the food. It should especially not be very high on the ingredients list as this means that it is in the food in greater quantity than many of the important vitamins.

Look for:

- **Identified protein sources**. You should know what type of meat you are feeding. Whole and meal forms are acceptable.
- **Natural Preservatives** such as Vitamin E and citric acid.
- **Whole grains**. If you choose a food with grains it should contain whole grains.
- **Fruits & Veggies**. These should be fewer in quantity than meat but still present.
- **Herbs & Supplements**. Some foods have herbal supplements (chamomile), added glucosamine & chondroitin, and probiotics (dried Lactobacillus acidophilus, dried Enterococcus faecium fermentation product). These are added to improve your pet's health through better digestion, joint function, circulation, etc. Great bonuses!

Below are two sample ingredients lists from popular dry dog foods.
Note the differences. Which one would you prefer to eat?

Ingredients List Breakdown:

Brand A	Brand B
<p>Fresh deboned chicken, chicken meal, turkey meal, russet potato, fresh deboned pacific salmon (a natural source of DHA and EPA), herring meal, sweet potato, peas, fresh deboned lake whitefish, fresh deboned northern walleye, chicken fat (naturally preserved with vitamin E and citric acid), chicken liver, salmon meal, fresh deboned turkey, fresh whole eggs, fresh deboned herring, sun-cured alfalfa, salmon oil, chicory root, dehydrated organic kelp, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, apples, cranberries, saskatoon berries, black currants, choline chloride, psyllium, licorice root, angelica root, fenugreek, marigold flowers, sweet fennel, peppermint leaf, chamomile flowers, dandelion, summer savory, rosemary, sea salt, vitamin supplements (vitamin A, vitamin D3, vitamin E, niacin, vitamin C, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, vitamin B5, vitamin B6, folic acid, biotin, vitamin B12), mineral supplements (zinc proteinate, iron proteinate, manganese proteinate, copper proteinate, selenium), dried Lactobacillus acidophilus, dried Enterococcus faecium fermentation product.</p>	<p>Ground Whole Corn, Meat And Bone Meal, Ground Whole Wheat, Corn Gluten Meal, Animal Fat (preserved With BHA and Citric Acid), Wheat Mill Run, Chicken By-product Meal, Natural Flavor, Salt, Rice, Potassium Chloride, Vegetable Oil (source of Linoleic Acid), Vitamins (DI-alpha Tocopherol Acetate [source of Vitamin E], Choline Chloride, L-Ascorbyl-2-Polyphosphate [source of Vitamin C*], Vitamin A Supplement, Thiamine Mononitrate [Vitamin B1], Biotin, D-Calcium Pantothenate, Riboflavin Supplement [Vitamin B2], Vitamin D3 Supplement, Vitamin B12 Supplement), Dried Vegetables (Peas, Carrots), Minerals (Zinc Sulfate, Zinc Proteinate, Copper Sulfate, Copper Proteinate, Manganese Proteinate, Potassium Iodide), Added FD&C Colors (Red 40, Blue 2, Yellow 6, Yellow 5).</p>

* Our premium brand example is Orijen. This is a food we are very excited to carry as it has won Pet Food of the Year for both 2009 & 2010.

Think of the benefits!

Those who feed their pets premium all-natural food experience many benefits such as: cleaner teeth, smaller and fewer stools, fewer vet visits, healthy skin and hair with less shedding, feeding less, more energy and better focus from their pets.

More Questions?

Feel free to come to us with any questions or concerns. We love pets and we love helping their owners find solutions.

Guide presented by Lovable Pets Bakery & Boutique in Billings, MT