

How to Select a Diet to Feed your Dog or Cat

- Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)
 - Officials regulating production, labeling, distribution, and sale of animal feeds
 - Establish canine and feline nutrient profile
- One of the most important pieces of information on pet food labels is the NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY STATEMENT
 - “[This food] is formulated to meet the AAFCO Cat Food Nutrient Profiles for all stages of a cat’s life”
 - -OR-
 - “Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that [this food] provides complete and balanced nutrition for maintenance of adult dogs”
 - Feeding trials are ideal
- Manufacturer of food
 - Want those with nutritionists, research & development, have their own manufacturing plants, have internal quality control standards
 - Want a well-known, reputable company (in no specific order):
 - ***Purina, Hill’s, Royal Canin, Nutro, Blue Buffalo, Merrick, Wellness, Canidae***
- Feed for the appropriate life-stage
 - Growth
 - Large or giant breed puppies should be fed puppy food until they are full-grown, or around 12-18 months of age
 - Calorie intake should be slightly reduced at the time of spay/neuter for all pets
 - Adult maintenance – intact vs. neutered
 - Gestation or Lactation
 - Performance – hunting, racing, sled dogs, show dogs, guard dogs
 - Geriatric/senior
 - No specific nutrient profiles for senior dogs/cats exist. They have the same requirements as for adults. Senior foods often include supplements such as omega-3 FAs and glucosamine/chondroitin
 - Disease-specific
 - Some diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, kidney disease, or urinary tract disease, are better managed with prescription diets
- Ingredients
 - Proteins – meat or meat by-products - should be one of the first 3 ingredients!
 - Carbohydrates – grains
 - Fats
 - Vitamins & Minerals
 - Preservatives
- ***But remember, each pet is an individual, and at the end of the day it does not matter what brand of food you are feeding as long as your pet is healthy and thriving on it!***

- Treats
 - Should be <10 % of total calorie intake per day

- Beware of marketing tactics
 - Grain-free ≠ better or more premium diet
 - Meat by-products are not all bad! They consist of cleaned lungs, spleen, kidneys, liver, blood, stomach and intestines free of their contents. They do not include hair, horns, teeth, or hooves.

- A note about food allergies
 - Most food allergies or intolerances in dogs and cats are caused by a specific protein in the diet (e.g. chicken, beef) and not carbohydrate sources like grain