



Choosing a Commercial Pet Food for Your Healthy Dog or Cat

The dizzying array of pet foods available today can be overwhelming when trying to decide what food is best for your pet. We've compiled a list of factors to consider when choosing what to feed. Please keep in mind that these factors may change when there are health concerns, such as skin allergies, chronic GI disease, or kidney disease.

- **Does this diet fit with your own personal nutrition philosophies?**
Everyone has different considerations and priorities when deciding what to feed themselves and their families. Some of these factors include where and how the ingredients are sourced (local, organic, fair trade, etc.), inclusion or exclusion of specific nutrients, availability, and cost. Fortunately, the wide variety of options at the store means there are commercial diets to fit nearly any feeding philosophy. There is one critical point that we insist on, however: you should always feed a species-appropriate diet for your pet. This means that even if you are vegan, we cannot condone the same diet for an obligate carnivore, such as a cat.
- **Is the diet appropriate for the species and life stage of your pet?**
Pet foods are either available for specific life stages (i.e., puppy, adult, lactating mothers) or for all life stages. Check the label to make sure that the diet is appropriate for the age and species of your pet.
- **Does your pet have well-formed stools and a healthy coat?**
Chronic soft stools or a dry, flaky skin and coat are potential indicators that a pet isn't absorbing or utilizing nutrients well from their diet. Each animal is an individual: one pet may thrive on a grain-free food, while another may struggle with chronic diarrhea on a grain-free diet. If your pet's stools and coat are not healthy-looking, consider trying a different type of food.
- **Does your pet enjoy eating his food?**
Mealtime should be enjoyable for everyone! Your pet should find his diet palatable, without the need for top-dressing with extra goodies.
- **Is your pet able to maintain a healthy body weight on the food?**
Dry pet foods can range widely, from 250 calories to over 500 calories per cup. If your pet tends to be overweight and you find it difficult to feed him smaller meals, it may be necessary to find a food that is lower in calories to help him maintain a healthy weight.

Food for Thought

- Choose a species-appropriate diet.
- Small meals bringing big blues? Try a low-calorie food.
- Need more help? Make an appointment with your veterinarian for a nutrition consult.

Good nutrition can make a world of difference for your pet's health—just like it can for us, humans! If you'd like more help with choosing the right foods for your pet, please make an appointment with your veterinarian to discuss the subject.