

Nutritional Information and Recommendations from Little Friends of Ferndale

Choosing an appropriate diet for your furry family member can be overwhelming with all the choices available. Hopefully, the information below will help guide you in the decision process.

- Dogs are omnivores, meaning that they can eat meat and plants as their primary food sources. Cats require high-quality fat and protein in their diet as they're obligate carnivores; they can not be vegetarians because their bodies require essential nutrients, such as taurine, from meat.
- Not all foods will agree with every pet; they may have a sensitivity or allergy to a specific protein source or similar. This can manifest as vomiting, diarrhea, excessive gas, chronic ear infections, constant scratching and poor coat, etc. Food trials may be necessary to find the right diet. A 5-7 day transitioning period is always recommended when switching to a new food; some pets may need a more gradual transition.
- Commercially available food is nutritionally balanced, so supplementation is typically not necessary. Supplements are recommended on an individual basis (extra joint support for senior pets, for example).
- Homemade and raw diets can be nutritionally deficient and unbalanced if prepared and fed without appropriate research. Home preparation usually requires the addition of supplements. Raw diets should be carefully considered and utilized under specific recommendations. If you prefer to feed a homemade or raw diet, it's best to do it under the guidance of a veterinary nutritionist and use an appropriately prepared commercially available product. While proponents of raw diets claim that meat and bones more closely resemble the diet that dogs would eat in the wild, there is a lack of scientific evidence to support their ability to properly consume and digest such raw variations. Dogs' digestive tracts have been altered through domestication, lacking certain enzymes and bacterial flora found in those of wild canids. What's more, raw diets carry the risk of contamination with bacteria such as Salmonella, which is transmissible to humans, and bits of bone can break teeth and perforate the digestive tract if not properly processed. **Commercially available raw/B.A.R.F varieties have been subjected to dehydration or freezing to reduce these risks.**
- We recommend that cats have daily or routine canned food helpings to increase the water content in their diets. More moisture aids in kidney and urinary health. Dry kibble typically contains an excess amount of carbohydrates that cats don't need, so monitor portions.
- There are many pet food myths circulating, here's a few truths:
 - Grain-free is not advised, unless a dermatologist or internist has deemed it necessary for medical sensitivities. In recent findings, grain-free diets have led to cardiac concerns in dogs.
 - Meat by-products are not necessarily bad; they are essentially extra protein concentrate (excluding hair, teeth, horns, hooves). The ash content gives you an idea of by-product quality; a high ash-to-protein ratio indicates a poor-quality protein with less digestibility.
 - Antioxidants, the primary agents used in preservatives, are necessary to prevent bacterial contamination, deterioration of nutrients and rancidity. Naturally derived antioxidants are difficult to use as a sole source due to their instability, poor carry-through, and quantity required, thus increasing cost of particular brands.
 - Corn has proven to be a very useful ingredient because of its high digestibility, low allergenic tendency, and excellent nutrient content, including antioxidants, protein, carbohydrate, and essential fatty acids. Quality pet foods may complement highly digestible animal protein with a natural plant protein source, such as corn, to deliver all the essential amino acids that pets need.
- **Treats**
 - An excess of table scraps and treats can result in unbalanced nutrition and commonly leads to obesity. Such "treats" can also upset the gastrointestinal tract, resulting in vomiting and diarrhea. Fatty treats, especially, can lead to pancreatitis, which can require hospitalization, medications and dietary restriction. Pieces of certain fruits/veggies are acceptable: apples, carrots, green beans, melons, bananas. Consider Cheerios!
 - Milk should be avoided as dogs and cats can become lactose intolerant after being weaned. A dairy alternative that most pets enjoy and digest more easily is non-fat plain yogurt (it's also a good probiotic).
 - Foods that are toxic to pets include: chocolate (especially baking cocoa/dark chocolate), yeast/uncooked dough, onions, grapes and raisins, garlic, avocado, macadamia nuts, alcohol, coffee, caffeine, and candy (especially containing xylitol). Watch for xylitol in peanut butter too!!!

Quality Foods We Recommend

(no particular order)

****We advise against grain-free varieties due to recent findings unless a specialist has indicated otherwise****

- Royal Canin
- Purina Pro Plan
- Hills Science Diet
- Fromm
- Wellness
- Nature's Variety
- Solid Gold
- Stella and Chewy's
- Weruva
- Acana / Orijen
- Zignature
- Taste of the Wild
- Natural Balance
- The Honest Kitchen
- Nature's Recipe
- NutroMax, Nutro Ultra and Natural Choice
- Canidae/Felidae
- Nature's Logic
- Holistic Selects
- NutriSource
- Dr. Gary's Best Breed
- Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul
- Eukanuba
- Iams
- Costco's Kirkland brand
- B.F.F, Tiki Cat, RAD cat (cat only)

- ****Hills Science Diet is Dr. Burke's first recommendation of dry kibble for cats**

Dog Foods to Avoid

- Kibbles and Bits
- Pedigree
- Old Yeller / Ol' Roy
- Purina Products:
 - Dog Chow / Puppy Chow
 - Beneful
 - Alpo
 - Chef Michael's
 - Mighty Dog
 - Moist and Meaty
- Various grocery store brands

* These particular types of food as the main diet are not advised due to inadequate nutrients, high fat content and artificial fillers

Cat Foods to Avoid

- Meow Mix
- 9 Lives
- Purina Products:
 - Cat Chow / Kitten Chow
 - Friskies
 - Whiskas
 - Kit & Kaboodle
- Various grocery store brands

* These particular types of food as the main diet are not advised due to lack of nutrition and the likelihood of disturbing urine pH, causing crystals to form and urethral blockage (a medical emergency)

Legitimate and informational website : www.petnutritionalliance.org and www.wsava.org

Pet weight loss aid : www.petobesityprevention.org

Resource to appropriately feed home-made diet, generates meals : www.balanceit.com and www.acvn.com

Veterinarian created 'raw varieties' : www.darwinspet.com and www.desertraw.com