

the
honest
kitchen®



honest kitchen e-book

feed your way to a healthy pet



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way to a
healthy pet

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Feed your way to a healthy pet

Ear infections

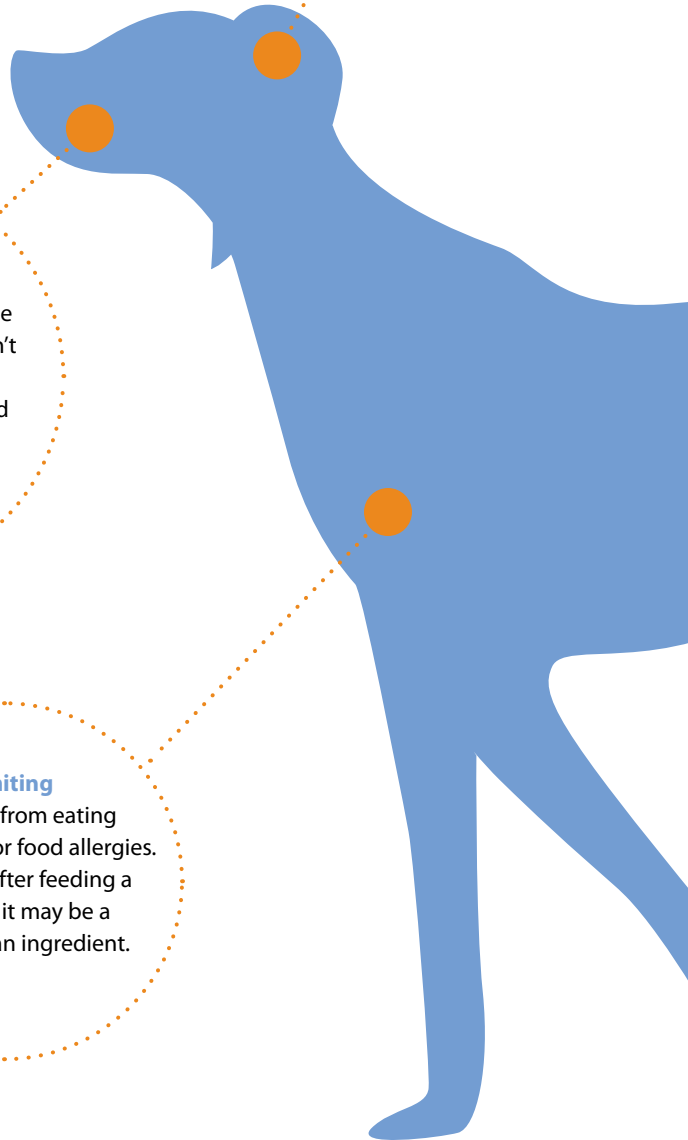
are often caused by a buildup of yeast in the ears, when there's too much grain or sugar in the system. Choose grain-free food with minimal sugar to help reduce yeast growth.

Dental issues

can be caused from kibbles loaded with sugars and simple processed carbs. Kibble doesn't clean a dog's teeth anymore than a crunchy pretzel would clean ours! And in fact most pets don't crunch their kibble anyway.

Vomiting

may result from eating spoiled food, or food allergies. If it occurs after feeding a new food, it may be a reaction to an ingredient.



Obesity & overweight

pets represent half of the total pet population. A healthy dog should have a lean body with a visible waist. You should be able to easily feel the ribs.

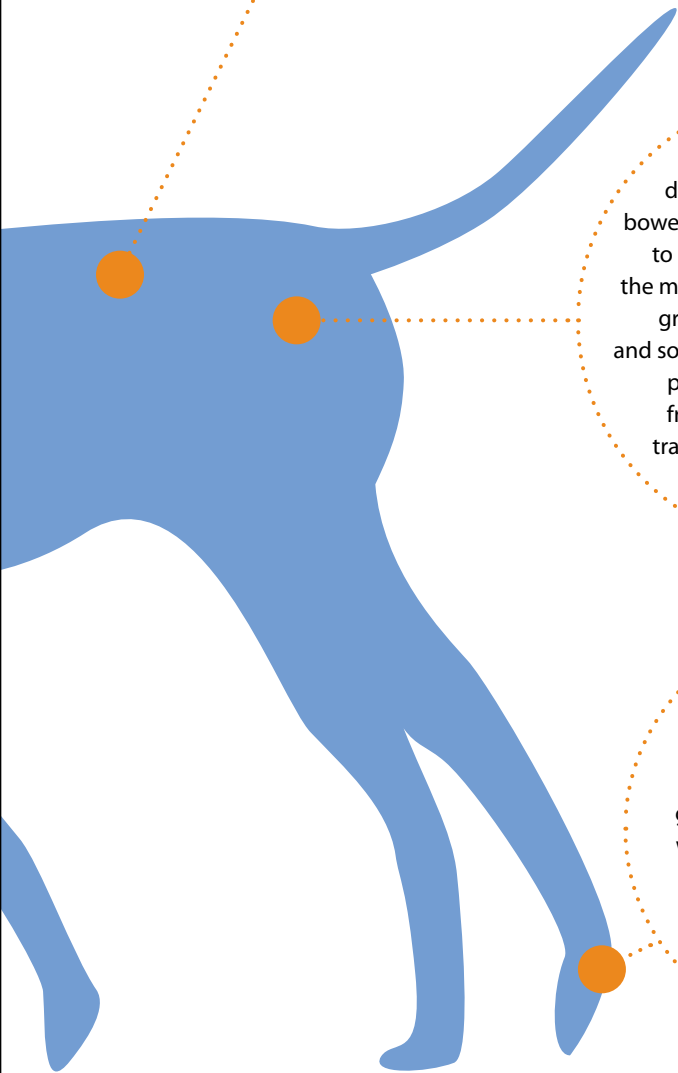
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Gastrointestinal upset,

diarrhea, colitis and irritable bowel are often related in some way to diet; grain and gluten being the most common culprits. Eliminate grains, especially wheat, corn and soy, beet pulp, as well as chemical preservatives and colorings from your pet's diet. Always transition to a new diet slowly, over 5-7 days.

Itchy skin,

hot-spots and chewing at the feet are classic signs of food intolerances. Remove glutenous grains like wheat, as well as corn, soy and 'warming' meats like lamb. Switch to a grain-free diet with a few veggies, and meats like duck, turkey or beef.



Why is nutrition so important anyway?

Nutrition is just one facet of a holistic approach to health, but it's an important, if not fundamental, cornerstone.

Simply feeding a natural, raw or home made diet, or adding supplements to your pet's bowl does not constitute 'holistic health care' in the true sense of the term. Other factors such as the choices you make about vaccinations, veterinary care, environment & lifestyle (as well as the inherited genetic makeup and predispositions your pet is born with) are also important to consider when giving your pup the best chance at great long-term health.

However, what we consume is more than just 'fuel'. It is a source of many vital compounds that can represent the difference between top health and disease. Food is a major factor in our total wellbeing and while investing in a good quality food may seem costly compared to many of the budget foods available on grocery store shelves, a wholesome diet can help to reduce or eliminate many of the unnecessary vet bills that are incurred when nutrition is poor.

Highly processed foods, which are produced under extreme heat and pressure, as well as diets that contain artificial chemical preservatives and hard-to-digest by products, can gradually deplete an animal's immune system over time and actually make him more susceptible to long term health problems. Chemical preservatives in particular, such as Ethoxyquin, BHA and BHT, have been directly linked to an increased incidence of cancer in pets.

In comparison, a minimally processed diet containing real whole foods, is rich in vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, antioxidants and amino acids that any living thing needs in order to remain strong, healthy and resilient to disease. Just as we would not expect to maintain optimal health on a long-term daily diet of junk food, nor can our pets.

Even if you feed a processed conventional type of pet food, incorporating at least some fresh real foods into your pet's meals (even if it's only a few times each week) will help to provide additional valuable nutrition, which will help to strengthen his immune system.

Some foods, like onions, raisins, grapes, macadamia nuts and chocolate are highly toxic to dogs, but many people-foods can be mixed right in with your pet's meals. Examples include plain yogurt, eggs, cottage cheese, blueberries, almonds, mango and leafy greens. Consider sharing your own healthy meals with your animal companion once in a while, to offer her a different array of nutrients that will complement her usual fare!



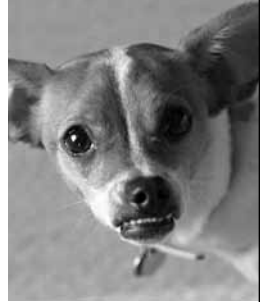
How exactly does diet relate to illness?

Has your pet been receiving long term medication for a chronic (non life-threatening) health problem for months or even years, without a true cure ever taking place?

Of course some health conditions do require long term drugs in order to be properly and safely managed – but if the medications for issues like itching and ear infections or GI upset are simply hiding the symptoms and not bringing about real healing at the root of the problem, it may be time to consider diet as the culprit. Open up to the idea of taking a fresh look at food, and the role it can play in wellbeing.

Of course, it's important to always get a vet's diagnosis on what's going on with your pet, but it's worth considering Food as Medicine, if a constant supply of prescribed medications only seems to suppress the symptoms without providing a long term sustainable cure.

Several of the top reasons that cats and dogs are taken to the vet, are often directly related to the foods they eat. Here's a quick look at how food and disease are interrelated, and some factors to consider in your journey towards complete and lasting pet health.



- 1. Ear infections** are often caused by a buildup of yeast in the ears. Did you know that yeast usually 'over-grows' when there is an overload of sugar in the system? This sugar is usually caused by excess grains in the diet as well as an excess of sugary fruits and simple carbohydrates in the food and treats you provide.

What should you do? Topical products from your vet (or a homemade blend of apple cider vinegar and water, or other natural solutions) should be used to remove any buildup from the ears. Then, think about removing all grain from the diet – including treats. Many guardians see some improvement after just a few weeks of going grain-free!

- 2. Urinary tract and/or renal problems** plague a surprising number of cats and dogs. Extruded, kibble diets are starting to be called into question for their role in the ever-increasing rate of urinary tract problems including crystals, stones and bacterial infections of the bladder and urinary tract as well as kidney disease and full-blown renal failure.

The reason? These types of diets are not 'biologically appropriate' in the true sense of the word because they contain nowhere near the moisture levels of these animals' natural prey. In fact, they are so devoid of necessary moisture that some pets become chronically dehydrated and thus more prone to urinary tract problems.

What should you do? Try feeding a canned, raw or other higher moisture diet because pets fed these tend to experience less urinary tract infections and crystals over all, and holistic vets recommend a moist diet for cats in particular.



The pH (level of acidity or alkalinity) can also play an important role in maintaining urinary tract health. Urine that is too alkaline can allow bacteria to over-grow and struvite crystals to develop; urine that is too acidic can cause calcium oxalate crystals to develop.

The balance of minerals as well as total protein, are also important factors to consider when choosing a diet for an animal prone to urinary tract problems.

- 3. Itchy skin**, as well as **hot-spots (pyoderma)** and chewing at the feet, are classic signs of food intolerances. Some of the most common allergens for pets include glutenous grains like wheat, as well as corn and soy and 'warming' meats like lamb.

What should you do? If hot spots and other skin irritation just suddenly occurred, think back to whether you recently changed to a new food. If you've been battling the problem for a long time without improvement, consider a switch to a very simple diet with no grain, a few veggies and a cooling or neutral meat like duck, turkey or beef.

Diets made with lamb should be avoided for pets who are prone to hotspots and generally hot, itchy skin conditions. In traditional Chinese medicine, lamb is a warming (yang) food that can aggravate these issues. Instead, a cooling (yin) food should be fed. Avoid by-products, chemicals like BHT, and any foods with wheat, corn, soy or rice. Often, removing these few things from the diet has a tremendous positive impact on skin health.

- 4. Gastrointestinal upset** (diarrhea, colitis, irritable bowel): most chronic GI issues are related in some way to diet.

Grain is one of the most common culprits. Eliminating grains, especially those like wheat, corn and soy or beet pulp, those with gluten and those which are genetically modified, can have a truly beneficial effect on chronic intestinal problems.

Many pets suffer with ongoing, intermittent diarrhea for years before the connection to diet is made, and their owners are often astounded when a simple switch to a grain-free, more pristine diet is made. Chemical preservatives, cheap fillers and colorings can also aggravate sensitive tummies.

What should you do? It takes some care to transition a sensitive pet to a new type of food. Overnight or 'cold turkey' changes should be avoided unless absolutely necessary, as this can actually exacerbate the upset. Instead, try transitioning slowly over a few days, which will allow his 'good' gut flora to adjust. You could also add a tablespoon or two of plain yogurt or a probiotic, to help ease the transition. (Be cautious supplementing with a probiotic for extremely sensitive animals however, as it can sometimes make matters worse if you add more than one new thing at a time – in these cases it's better to move to the new food first and then supplement after the transition has been successfully completed).

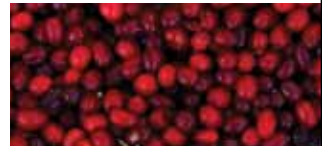
5. Vomiting or enteritis can also correspond with food. The consumption of spoiled food or other unsavory objects (such as stones, dead animals or food wrappers!) can trigger a bout of vomiting, but a food allergy can also cause a dog or cat to regurgitate their meal soon after eating.

What should you do? If you recently switched to a new diet and your pet vomits, take a look at the ingredient panel and see what new ingredients are present in this diet, and which he wasn't consuming before. It may take time to transition to a new food, and mixing the old and new diets together for a few days can help your pet adjust – but if vomiting occurs each time he eats, consider the possibility of a food allergy, and try another recipe that's free of the 'suspect' allergen to see if that helps.

If you have a pet with a condition that's among the top reasons pets visit the vet, do look at diet as a possibility. Just as one food can be the cause of a problem, another can be the 'medicine' your animal companion needs. Many pet owners find it helpful to keep a journal of what they're feeding and how their animal's symptoms change. Cut out ingredients panels to save writing everything down and over time you may be able to identify a pattern of what makes things better or worse.

Of course, food and diet are not always directly related to health problems, but it's quite surprising what a little investigative work can dig up. If food doesn't seem to be the cause, a truly holistic approach will help you look at every other aspect of your pet's life: the laundry detergents you use for her blankets; floors cleaners used in the home; chemicals sprayed in the yard or park where you walk, or maybe the treats that someone else is sneaking your pet's way.

Leave no stone unturned in your quest to find the true cause, and you may be on the way to eliminating the need for long term medications, many of which can have horrible side effects. Prednisone, for example (one commonly prescribed veterinary drug,) can cause the following adverse side effects (among others): Excessive itching; hives, inflammatory bowel disease, allergies, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, ulcers, & tumors. Not really ideal, when many of these 'side effects' correlate with the very things Prednisone is prescribed for!



Food allergies explored: What exactly are pet food allergies?

Pet food allergies are defined as immune system or inflammatory responses triggered off by certain foods. Other pets may not have true allergies but are still sensitive to certain ingredients, on a less severe level. While often referred to as ‘allergies’, these types of lower-grade long term reactions to diet are more accurately described as food sensitivities.

A food allergy or sensitivity is entirely specific to the individual animal and a food that is ‘non allergenic’ for one pet may cause severe reactions for another. Just as a cake may be labeled ‘hypoallergenic’ for most human beings because it’s made without nuts, dairy and gluten, it could cause a severe and even fatal reaction for a person with a strawberry allergy, if it is made with strawberries. Similarly, a “hypoallergenic” pet food made with, say, lamb and rice or duck and potatoes, will not even come close to improving the situation for a dog who’s allergic to lamb, or potatoes.



There are lots of different theories about how and why pet food allergies occur. Most holistic practitioners agree that true allergic reactions are usually the result of an underlying health problem or system imbalance. All dogs and cats are exposed to a variety of allergens in daily life and never have a reaction of any kind. Pets don’t actually develop allergies as a result of exposure to allergens, but because they have suddenly become susceptible or vulnerable in some way.



Feeding a single type of food long-term without any dietary variety, is also thought to be linked with an increased risk of food-intolerances developing. Pets who enjoy a varied, whole-food diet, develop far fewer food allergies than one-food pets.

Bad quality food in itself may deplete the immune system over time, because they are laden with toxins and other substances that place unnecessary burden on the body, or because they lack important nutrients, antioxidants, enzymes and so on. Many such nutrients may not be included in AAFCO nutrient profiles but are still vital for the long terms optimal health and vitality of a cat or dog. Vaccines, chemicals, medications like antibiotics or steroids, stress and genetics, can all predispose a pet to pet food allergies as well.

It’s true that certain ingredients have a much higher incidence of causing allergic reactions than others but the key is to uncover what your own pet can and cannot tolerate. For many pets, the most common culprits are wheat, corn, soy, rice and sugar beet pulp – as well as various preservatives and by-products.

Steps to take for pets with food allergies: The Elimination Diet

For many lucky pets, eliminating the high-risk ingredients of wheat, corn, soy, rice and beet pulp and usually identifying single proteins that they are able to tolerate, are the only steps needed to manage pet food allergies, and they go on to be free of allergies for the rest of their lives. In other cases, cutting out all glutenous grains from the food and also treats, brings about a dramatic improvement. A "hypoallergenic pet food" *per se*, is never actually required.

In other cases, feeding a food that's very minimally processed with a single protein source, can make a vast difference. Many pets seem sensitive to beef in the form of a beef flavored kibble but can actually tolerate lightly cooked hamburger or a piece of raw steak very well. High heat processing used to make kibble, can alter the amino acid structure of proteins, making them unrecognizable to the body and triggering off a pet food allergy that vanishes when the human food equivalent is fed.

Genetically modified grains are also thought to be involved. Wheat, corn, and soy are among the most genetically modified crops in the USA. Avoid these, and make sure any other grains you do feed, are certified organic.

Sometimes, an elimination diet or 'feeding trial' is needed to uncover the cause of pet food allergies. This involves feeding an extremely simplified diet for about weeks – say, fish and sweet potatoes or bison and millet – until allergies subside – and then gradually adding in one new ingredient each week thereafter, to observe for any sign of intolerance such as itching or diarrhea. Laboratory based allergy testing is another option but can be costly – and occasionally the results are inconclusive or inaccurate.

In many chronic cases, real commitment is necessary to uncover what is causing a pet food allergy. Scrutiny of the label for everything that passes your pet's lips, including snacks and treats, is crucial. Patterns often emerge where for example, diarrhea occurs every week after a dog returns from daycare and the cause is the cookies he receives there.

In addition to determining what foods the pet cannot tolerate – and committing to avoid them long-term, detoxification and support of the immune system with herbs can be immensely helpful. Supplementation with digestive enzymes and probiotics can help get the body back on track and ensure proper absorption of the foods being fed.



Dental health for cats and dogs

Unfortunately, many pet guardians take their pets' dental health for granted and assume that no proactive care is necessary – only to discover that years down the road, a serious dental health concern has arisen and costly veterinary bills are on the horizon. In fact, it's vitally important to play a proactive role in managing your pet's dental health, if decay and veterinary dental intervention are to be avoided or at least delayed.

Many pet food manufactures promote their dry, crunchy kibble products as capable of cleaning the teeth. There are a couple of flaws with this. The first is that in the majority of cases, dogs and cats don't actually even crunch up their kibble with their teeth. Have you ever seen your animal companion vomit or regurgitate his kibble? Almost without exception, that kibble returns to the world in the exact same form as it was consumed – round pellets. There's no way those pellets could have cleaned the teeth because they were never even chewed, and simply got swallowed whole!

Secondly, most kibbles are so laden with processed simple carbohydrates, that any that is chewed, will actually impact starches and sugars into the gum line, thus increasing the likelihood of periodontal disease over the long term. In contrast, most home-prepared diets do not seem to contribute to the same levels of tartar buildup as processed dry foods and a fresh, minimally processed pet food diet causes almost no tartar buildup in most cases.

In *The Holistic Dog Book*, Jan Allegretti & Katy Sommers, DVM, describes dental disease this way: "Tartar buildup not only causes bad breath, it allows bacteria to become trapped at the edges of the gums, where the invading organisms release toxins that injure oral tissue. The inflammation that follows allows bacteria to move deeper into tissues and loosen teeth. Bacterial toxins can enter the bloodstream, possibly infecting kidneys, lungs, liver and heart. Over time, the chronic accumulation taxes the immune system, too. Obviously, minimizing tartar buildup can maximize health. By practicing some basic home dental care for your dog, you decrease the need for professional cleaning and extractions."



One of the best tools for cleaning the teeth enjoyably and without a fuss, is a raw beef marrow bone. Most dogs adore having a fresh raw bone to chew on; it will provide hours of gnawing enjoyment and the abrasive action of teeth against the bone, as well as pulling off any scraps of meat, can scrape off tartar and even clean between the teeth. Results aren't usually seen overnight but offering a good bone to chew on a couple or three times a week will almost always help with dental health. There are some concerns about a risk of tooth fracture in more 'aggressive chewers' when gnawing on raw bones so it is wise to discuss this with your veterinarian. Deer antlers are another great choice, for those concerned by raw bones.

A canine toothbrush or finger-toothbrush is also a great investment and can help delay or completely avoid the need for professional dental cleanings. You can get your animal companion used to a toothbrush by applying a meat-flavored toothpaste to it and just allowing him to lick it off. Once he is comfortable with this, you can begin gently brushing the teeth. Most canine tartar buildup actually occurs on the sides adjacent to the cheeks and not inside, by the tongue. Ultimately, you can work up to cleaning the teeth two or three times a week. If tartar buildup is very severe, a professional cleaning may be necessary to give you a 'clean slate' to work with but as with most things, if you can get into good habits early on, or incorporate fresh foods and bones when appropriate, prevention far outweighs the cure!



Variety is the spice of life!

Did you know that pets actually benefit from dietary variety just as humans do? Even though you don't have to add anything to our diets (except for our foundation diet, Preference), your pup or kitty would love a little something different, once in a while!

Here's our list of ideas to mix in along with your pet's Honest Kitchen meals:

Ground meat (beef and turkey are readily available from human food markets), as well as chicken, rabbit, buffalo, and lamb can be served raw or cooked depending on what you are comfortable with.



Raw meaty bones such as chicken necks or backs. We recommend grinding RMB's or pre-grinding them to begin with to allow your pet to get used to them. Never feed cooked bones!

Raw (or lightly cooked) organs are also popular, once or twice a week. We suggest ½ to one cup of meats for each dry-measured cup of the food.

Raw or cooked fish such as cod, mackerel, sole, haddock (Salmon should be cooked).

Plain yogurt, cottage cheese, kefir.



Fresh fruits such as melon, blueberries & peach (not grapes or raisins), as well as dried fruit such as cranberries or pitted dates.

Vegetables such as kale, yams, pumpkin, parsnips (root veggies should be lightly steamed or pulped to aid digestibility).

Fresh herbs such as parsley and dandelion

Ground nuts such as almonds also make an interesting add-in – although macadamia nuts should be avoided.

Recreational bones such as raw beef marrow (soup) bones can be offered once or twice a week in between meals, to help maintain dental health and keep your dog mentally stimulated.

What not to feed:

The following 'people foods' should never be fed to pets:

Grapes

Raisins

Onions

Macadamia Nuts

Xylitol (a sweetener used in many 'sugar free' candies and gums)

Chocolate

Pigments: What are they are how are they linked to health?

All natural plants and the produce they provide us with, contain pigments – colorful hues of green, orange, yellow, red and purple. These pigments are indicators that a plant contains valuable compounds like leutine (green) carotenoids (orange), zeaxanthin (yellow) and lycopene (red) which give plants more than their pretty colors – colored fruits and vegetables have powerful antioxidant properties.

Antioxidants help to slow the signs of aging, and ‘clean up’ the products of oxidation within the body’s cells. Antioxidants are vital for health and the consumption of brightly colored produce has been linked with a reduced risk of various types of cancer, heart disease and other illness.

When produce is cooked under extreme heat and pressure (as with canning and extrusion), the natural, colorful pigments are destroyed and the end product turns brown. Food that is brown, lacks life and vibrance and is lacking in many of the compounds a body needs to stay healthy.

Color is a key component in identifying the nutritional integrity of food. Food that has ben processed so much that it turned brown, also is devoid of many of the natural enzymes it started off with. When a plant is harvested, it is bursting with living components, which aid in its own digestion and support a multitude of actions within the body.

Animals in the wild eat an array of colorful foods to support life. A great example is the dark red and purple stained scat from coyotes who supplement their diet by foraging wild berries. Just because our dogs and cats have been domesticated and live with us in houses, doesn’t mean they don’t have an innate, physiological need for colorful, healthy whole foods.





the good,
the bad and
the ugly of
pet food
ingredients

The following table can be used as a 'clip-and-carry' watch list to help you negotiate the shelves of your pet food store! Try to choose foods with ingredients that only appear in the 'Good' Column. Discard products with lots of ingredients tagged 'Bad' and 'Ugly'.

Meats

Good	Bad	Ugly
Named meats	Meat meal (un-named species)	Meat & bone meal (unspecified)
Beef		Meat by-products
Chicken, Turkey	Poultry meal (un-named species)	Poultry by-products
Venison, Duck		Poultry digest
Salmon	Fish meal (un-named species)	Fish protein digest
Lamb		Animal digest (intestinal contents)

Fish & oils

Good	Bad	Ugly
Safflower Oil	Soybean oil	Rendered animal fats
Flaxseed Oil	Corn oil	Poultry fat
Olive Oil	Cottonseed oil	Vegetable oil (unspecified type)
Salmon Oil	Fish oil (unspecified type)	

Other protein

Good	Bad	Ugly
Eggs	Egg product (dried)	Poultry hatchery by-product
Yogurt, Keffir	Buttermilk (residue from churning cream)	Soy protein isolate
Cottage cheese	Cheese product	Blood meal Plasma protein

Vegetables & fruits

Good	Bad	Ugly
Leafy greens, Sweet potatoes, Carrots, Broccoli, Zucchini, Celery, Green beans	Tomato pomace (A by-product of ketchup production)	Onion (toxic), Potato product, Potato starch
Potatoes, Yams		Grapes (toxic), Raisins (toxic)
Apples, Melon, Banana, Papaya, Mango	Apple pomace	Peanut meal, Peanut hulls, Sorghum
Cranberries, Blueberries		

Preservatives

Good	Bad	Ugly
Rosemary	Citric acid, Mixed tocopherols	BHA, BHT, Ethoxyquin, TBHQ

Grains

Good	Bad	Ugly
No grain	Glutenous grains	Husks, Hulls, Middlings
Organic whole grains	Wheat	Corn gluten, Rice gluten
Non-gluten grains – Quinoa, Amaranth, Millet	Soy, Soybean meal	Peanut meal, Peanut hulls, Sorghum
Teff, Spelt, Oats, Barley, Rye	Rice, Beet pulp	Rice gluten, Brewer's rice

Vitamins & minerals

Good	Bad	Ugly
Amino acid chelates	Mendadione sodium bisulphate	Iron / Ferrous oxide (= rust)
Fewer in premix = better		Many in premix = food based ingredients are nutritionally deficient

Other

Good	Bad	Ugly
Herbs and botanicals	Ingredient splitting (one ingredient listed more than once)	Colors (esp. caramel color, titanium dioxide)
Enzymes	Salt, Sea salt	Corn syrup
Apple cider vinegar	Sugar	Glycerin

Processing

Good	Bad	Ugly
Raw, Fresh, Frozen, Freeze dried, Dehydrated	Baked	Canned and extruded
Organic, Hormone free, GMO free		

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I've always been fascinated by the concept of food as medicine. From my childhood in England, helping to grow vegetables in our family garden, to my later interest in herbs, homeopathy and traditional Chinese medicine, I've had a broad understanding that the earth itself provides most of what we need for ourselves and our animals to stay healthy. Many of the top medical reasons pets visit the vet are linked in some way to the diet. Understanding those links can help a guardian find the right food for their animal companion, and in many cases, lead them back on the path to great health.

Lucy.

*Lucy Postins is a companion animal nutritionist
and founder of The Honest Kitchen*

The Honest Kitchen's nutritional products are not intended to diagnose, cure or prevent disease. Our online and printed material are for informational purposes only and do not replace the expert care and advice provided by your veterinarian. Dietary and other healthcare changes should be made under the guidance of your vet, particularly when underlying health conditions exist.