

Do you know what you are REALLY feeding your pet?

Proper nutrition is vital to optimize your pet's health. A poor diet can compromise your dog or cat's immune system and threaten your pet's overall health. How do you know what diet is best for your pet? There is a tremendous variety of foods available to satisfy different dietary needs and the most discriminating palates. As with people who love fried foods and sweets; cats and dogs may love a food that is not necessarily healthy for them. Many pet food companies use ingredients to encourage pets to like their pet food like salt, corn syrup and sugar. Of course, our pets will probably choose the tasty pet food over the nutritious one! There is only one place to look to determine if a pet food has the quality you are looking for, the list of ingredients. For our families we look at ingredients as we plan our meals, we should do the same for our pets. Just because one brand is more expensive, does not mean it has the best nutrition. Here are some things for watch for and why:

1. Corn, Wheat and Soy. Many animals have allergies to these ingredients. They are not necessary to your pet's health. Corn and soy are not easily digested.
2. Animal by-products. These are unspecific and unidentified parts of the animal and can be the scraps off the floor of a factory. These fats can contain heavy preservatives and are difficult to digest.
3. Food coloring. These are not necessary to your pet's health.
4. Sugar and Corn Syrup or other sweeteners. These can cause highs and lows in animals just like people and interfere with an animal's ability to absorb other needed nutrients. Sweeteners have been linked to changes in an animal's behavior and on set of diabetes.
5. Salt. This is used to make foods more palatable to animals. Consuming too much salt can cause numerous health issues. Some foods use small amounts of sea salt, a healthier alternative.
6. Meat or Meat meal. When the meat is unidentified it calls into question the quality. Be sure the meat is defined like whether it is lamb, beef, or chicken.
7. There are many more things to be aware of, and it is easy to do research online if you are concerned over certain ingredients.

Some ingredients are confusing like chicken meal. The "meal" simply means that the meat has been dehydrated. Dehydrating the meat makes it higher in protein and lower in moisture. It is exactly the same quality as the "chicken" or "fish." There are so many diets ranging from dry kibble, grain free food, wet canned food, cooking your pet's food, and raw food. Always check your ingredients to determine you are feeding your animal a healthy diet. Do not be fooled by the price per pound of the food. Each food has its own feeding guidelines and you will find that with some higher quality foods food less is required for a meal. Also, with higher quality foods you will see less feces because they are absorbing the nutrients they need, not just passing them through. This odor reducing feature is especially helpful when house training young puppies and for litter boxes.

Just like us, diet is an important factor for our pet's overall health. Check your ingredients!