



## Fact Sheet - Pet Food

What is the best food for my pet? This is one of the most hotly debated issues facing pet owners today and there is a seemingly endless list of choices.

There's dry food, canned food, semi-moist food, raw food, holistic, upper premium and even organic diets available and for each type of diet.

The truth is there is no one best food that will suit every pet. When choosing what to feed your pet you need to consider: your pet's stage of life - is he/she a puppy/kitten, adult or senior animal.

It's common sense that the nutritional requirements of a six month old Great Dane puppy will be very different to those of a fifteen year old Chihuahua.

- Lifestyle – does your pet need lots of energy to compete at agility, or is he/she a couch potato that likes to follow the sun from room to room?
- Environment – indoor or out door, warm or cold climate?
- Medical conditions – does your pet suffer from skin problems, digestive upset or other health conditions? Your vet may recommend special prescription diets to help manage these conditions.
- Flavour and texture preferences – just like us, our



pets can have favourites. Cats in particular can be selective about the texture and shape of their food – many of these cats are often labelled as fussy by their

owners but really, they just know what they like.

The most important point to remember is that any diet food needs to be complete and balanced – that is, it must contain the correct levels of nutrients to meet your pets' life-stage requirements.

At VetEnt we believe strongly in evidence-based medicine. That means we can be confident that the food we recommend have undergone stringent analysis and/or food trials to ensure they are a complete and balanced diet for your pet.

The standards are set by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) and as well as ensuring nutritional adequacy, will also indicate the life-stage for which the food is adequate. (gestation/lactation, growth and maintenance). Nutritional needs for senior pets can vary depending on health conditions, there is no AAFCO standard for senior food.

Premium foods contain consistent, high quality ingredients that are more digestible. This means more nutritional value per serving, less waste out the other end, and better value for money. Good quality foods are free of food colourings which can cause food allergies and contain higher



levels of animal protein as well as natural anti-oxidants and Vitamin E which acts as a preservative (rather than chemical preservatives).

Sometimes, your vet will recommend a special or prescription diet for your pet. These are diets that are specially formulated to help in the treatment of certain diseases or health problems and can significantly improve your pet's quality of life. These diets are the result of many years of research and are constantly being tested and improved as our understanding of health problems also grows.



There are diets to help manage kidney disease, liver disease, bladder stones, diabetes, arthritis, skin allergies, gastrointestinal problems, thyroid disease, weight loss and even one for the signs of brain aging.

Raw food diets are becoming more popular, however their benefits remain controversial. The concept behind a raw food diet is that adult dogs would thrive on an evolutionary diet based on what canines ate before they were domesticated – raw meat, bones, fruits and vegetables.

The reality is that our pets, both dogs and cats, live in a vastly different world to that of their ancestors. They are potentially exposed to more toxins, allergens, challenging environments and even stresses associated with modern living, so it makes sense that they may actually



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maintain better health and immunity on a more evolved diet.

Many raw food diets whether commercially made or home made are not balanced, too much or too little of essential nutrients (for example protein, calcium and phosphorus) can damage your pets health. Whilst great for helping keep teeth clean whole bones can break teeth, puncture intestines or cause constipation so must be fed with care. There is also a risk to both humans and pets from bacterial contamination of raw meat (salmonella, campylobacter).

Even veterinarians who support raw food diets agree they are not suitable for all life stages and in particular not for:

- puppies/kittens
- older animals with kidney/liver disease
- cancer/chemotherapy patients
- animals with immunosuppressive diseases

### In Summary

When choosing a diet for your pet:

- Consider his/her life-stage and lifestyle
- Read the labels on pet foods, look for the AAFCO standard and if possible diets that have been through feeding trials
- Make sure that diet you feed is complete and balanced

Need more advice? Come in to any VetEnt clinic nationwide and our trained staff will be able to give you up to date information on what diet best suits your needs and the nutritional requirements of your furry friend.