

# What's Wrong with Dog Food and Cat Food?

When I tell people what I do for a living, this is almost always the first question I am asked. The perception most people have is that only rich or wacky pet owners would splurge on feeding "gourmet" food, or mess around with making their own pet food. The diet I recommend is not gourmet; it is merely made up of real food, the same as you or I would eat. The fact is, you wouldn't be reading this article if you didn't care about your pets and want the best for them. Perhaps the information below can give you a new perspective on what NOT to feed your pet for optimal health.

Dry foods are full of indigestible stuff, no matter how high the price tag is, how reputable the seller may be, or how "premium" the ingredients sound. There is no such thing as a dry food that has "no fillers." By their very nature, kibbles (dry, processed dog and cat foods) are 60% or more grain. Ever try to bake a cookie or muffin that contains no flour, or oats? Grains lend cohesiveness to the formula, and help the processed, cooked food hold together in its cute little shapes. Grains are also very inexpensive, making pet food cheap to produce, with a large profit margin.

Grains are carbohydrates, for which a dog and a cat (carnivores) have no need. They do not digest well, and they do not provide energy the way they do for us humans. Instead, dogs and cats obtain their energy from fats.

The term "energy" is not referring to how feisty your kitten is, or how much get-up-and-go old Rover has. Energy, to a nutritionist, means the substance known as ATP (adenosine tri-phosphate), also known as the "currency" of cells. Every cell of the body, be it a human body or an animal one, operates on ATP, or "energy." Humans and pets go about converting the foods they eat into this energy in different manners. It just so happens that dogs and cats are much more efficient at converting fats into energy, than carbohydrates. For us humans, it works the other way around, which is unfortunate for those of us who enjoy those fatty foods!

Grains also metabolize directly into glucose, which feeds cancer cells, contributing to a condition known as cachexia. Therefore, grains in the diet of a pet with cancer are deadly. This is why some people refer to a raw, grainless diet as a "cancer starving" diet. There is no such thing as an anti-cancer diet that is a kibble or a canned food. It has been shown that pets with cancer do best on a high-fat, high-protein diet, with the fats and proteins provided in the form of raw meat.

Dry foods are also full of preservatives. The three biggest names to avoid are BHA, BHT, and Ethoxyquin. Don't be fooled by foods that claim to have no preservatives. They would have zero shelf life without preservation of some type. Check those "good through" dates on the bag, and think about it. How appealing

is it that some of these foods will last 2 years on the shelf? There are at least some higher quality foods, which use "natural" preservatives, like vitamins. However, there is some controversy that high levels of these antioxidants used as preservatives can actually interfere with absorption of other nutrients.

Furthermore, no matter how wonderful the ingredient list, by the time those ingredients are processed into kibble form, there is virtually nothing left in the way of useful nutrition. Again, the processing necessary to convert the ingredients into kibble requires high heat and days of cooking, followed by the extrusion process. All of this literally kills the enzymes, vitamins, and minerals that lend their "living" qualities to raw foods. This is why you see a lengthy list of chemical-sounding names on the ingredient panel of all dry and canned foods. The manufacturers must add back -- in synthetic form -- all the necessary vitamins and minerals which have been removed during the manufacturing processes. Synthetic versions of vitamins and minerals have been shown to be less effectively absorbed and utilized by the body than natural forms, found in real foods, in their raw state.

And finally, dry foods take 12-14 hours to pass through a pet's system. All of that time spent lingering in the digestive tract will many times lead to room-clearing clouds of gas (attributed to fermentation of indigestible grains in the gut), and is also thought to contribute to the formation of "allergies." The body sees these indigestible ingredients (grains, preservatives, denatured proteins, etc.) as foreign substances, to which it develops irritations, manifested as allergy symptoms. Translation: Spot and Fluffy are itchy, have gunky ears, and lick their paws a lot.

This is, in a nutshell, what is "wrong" with even the "best" pet foods. If your curiosity is sparked, and you would like to find out what you could feed instead of "pet food," please start with my online article entitled [The Importance of Feeding a Natural Diet](#).

Good health, and bon appetite to your pets!

*Article written by J. Boniface, (c) Copyright 2000, all rights reserved.*

*Other articles available online at [www.auntjeni.com](http://www.auntjeni.com)*