

# How to Choose a Good Quality Diet for your Pet



1. **Nutritional Adequacy:** First, ensure that the diet you are choosing is a commercially approved diet.

- The FDA and most states use regulations established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (**AAFCO**). To determine whether a diet is AAFCO approved and nutritionally adequate, look for this statement on the food label:

**"(Name of product) is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO (Dog/Cat) Food Nutrient Profiles."**

<http://critterconsulting.com/info/wp-content/uploads/cat-dog->

2. **Primary Ingredients:** Remember that cats are considered **carnivores** and dogs are considered **omnivores**—this means that cats are designed to eat strictly meat, while dogs are designed to eat both meat and plants. This also means that cats have a higher protein requirement than dogs, and dogs should have diets with both animal and plant sources of proteins.

Helpful Hint:

- "BEEF" = 70% or more of product is beef
- "BEEF DINNER" = 25% or more of product is beef
- "WITH BEEF" = 3% or more of product is

- When looking at a food label, the first ingredient listed is the predominant ingredient. When choosing a diet, especially for your cat, ensure that meat (beef, lamb, fish, or poultry) is one of the first three ingredients on the food label. Avoid diets that contain meat "by-products" or meat "digest," which may come from animal parts not fit for human consumption.

3. **Essential Ingredients:** Ideal pet food diets will contain the following essential ingredients:

- **Water** to improve digestion of nutrients, regulate body temperature, and to prevent dehydration.
- Good quality sources of **metabolizable energy (ME)**
  - **CARBOHYDRATES** to provide glucose for metabolism and to serve as an energy source
    - Starches: rice, barley, oats, potatoes, corn, wheat
    - Fiber: cellulose, peanut hulls, soybean hulls, beet pulp bran, soy fiber, guar gum, pectin.
  - **PROTEIN** sources containing essential amino acids
    - Amino acids found in proteins serve as an energy source as well as a building block for growing healthy tissue in your pet's body. **Taurine** is an example of an amino acid that must be added to cat diets.
    - Highly digestible proteins are the preferred source of protein in pet's diet, particularly to help prevent obesity or promote weight loss.
      - Examples of highly digestible proteins in diets include:
        - Best* ▪ **High quality**: Egg, casein, whey, beef, lamb, pork, chicken, fish, liver
        - Moderate quality: Soybean meal, corn gluten meal
        - Adequate quality: Corn, rice, wheat, barley.
  - **LIPIDS** (fat sources) to supply energy, provide essential fatty acids, and help with absorption of vitamins.
    - **Omega-3** and **Omega-6** are classes of fatty acids. Examples of essential fatty acids are linolenic and arachidonic acid, which are commonly found in vegetable and fish oils.
- **Vitamins & Minerals:** All AAFCO regulated products contain specific essential vitamins (e.g. Vitamins A, D, E, etc) and minerals (e.g. calcium, phosphorus, potassium, etc.) that your pet needs.

4. **Caloric intake**

- Even if your pet's diet contains the highest quality ingredients, you must make sure you are feeding the right amount of food for optimal health. The best way to do this is to calculate your dog's Daily Energy Requirement (DER). Ask your veterinarian or veterinary technician for help deciding the right amount to feed per day.
  - How to calculate how much food your dog needs:
    - DER: Ideal body weight (in kilograms) x 30 + 70 = \_\_\_\_ kcal/day
    - DER ÷ (Kilocalories per cup OR oz of food) = # of cups OR oz of food to feed per day

**SUMMARY:**

- ☆Make sure the diet is AAFCO approved
- ☆Choose a diet with real meat (beef, lamb, fish, poultry) as one of the primary ingredients
- ☆Look for diets with high quality essential ingredients including carbohydrate, protein, and lipid sources
- ☆Feed the right amount of food per day (Use an 8 oz measuring cup and divide into two meals/day)
- ☆High price does not always equal high quality! Ingredients, labeling, and your pet's response are the best indicators of quality.