

Nutrition and your pet part 1

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Just like your fingerprints your pet's specific nutritional needs are unique and change as they mature. For example a working dog or growing kitten or puppy will need more calories in its diet than your senior stay at home dog. Feeding too many calories can lead to obesity, linked to both diabetes and hip dysplasia. Large breed puppy foods have been formulated with the high risk of hip dysplasia in mind. Small dog breed diets reflect their high rate of urinary tract disease and occurrence of dental disease.

One of the most common errors we see with non-veterinary food is the term "all life stage diet". Clearly it does not make sense that one diet will meet our pets changing nutritional requirements. Age related Disease, often manifesting in pets over the age of seven, can also be addressed through diet recommendations. These diets have been shown to prolong the quality and quantity of a pet's life. In a recent study they have established that the most expensive pet food is now found at a pet store. Prescription diets are now in the middle range for cost. **Paying more for your pet's food does not mean that the ingredients are necessarily better.**

Natural or organic labeling is misleading. The AAFCO definition "Natural" is "any ingredient which has not been chemically altered". This means that any diet that has added vitamins and minerals, which are essential to creating a balanced diet for your pet, are not considered "Natural". Organic labeling can be applied, even if only ONE ingredient is organic. There are currently no requirements to allow a company to put the word "holistic" on a label. As with all diets, these "Natural" and "Organic" ingredients can still be subjected to contamination by moulds and yeast, and are not necessarily superior to other diets in meeting their nutritional requirements.

Pet food labels are regulated, sort of. The regulation states that food must be listed in order of weight (prior to processing), the heaviest items being first. Ingredients with high water content such as fresh meats and vegetables will be listed higher than comparable amounts of dry ingredients even though they may add fewer nutrients to the overall diet. Pet food labels can also be more deceiving if they list several forms of the same ingredient or related ingredients separately. For example – corn, corn bran, corn feed meal, corn flour, corn germ meal, corn gluten meal, corn grits. The Guaranteed Analysis is a quantitative analysis performed in a laboratory; however it does not give any information on the quality of the ingredients used. For example; hair, feathers, chicken feet and beaks are high in crude protein, but have little nutrient value for your pet. Poultry meal is a common item found in some pet food stores. The cost of a high end chicken meal is much higher than the cost of a low end poultry meal and the digestibility and the nutrients your pet obtains from ingesting them is also much higher. Pets

need nutrients not ingredients! **Unfortunately you cannot determine the quality of the ingredients or the nutritional value of each ingredient by a pet food label or by cost.** The amount of stool a pet produces is a subtle way of assessing the digestibility of a diet.

Being made in Canada, means that the ingredients are purchased within Canada, not necessarily that those ingredients haven't been imported from another country.

Did you know that cats are carnivores? This means that cats **MUST** have meat in their diet to survive.

Dogs are omnivores. Dogs need a balanced diet of proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins from a variety of sources, such as meats, vegetables and grains to meet their nutritional requirements. Domestic dogs vary in their genetic makeup and are able to digest grains to obtain the carbohydrates they require to survive, differing from wolves.

Nutritional recommendations should be made individualized to your pet. Their breed, age, and previous health history will influence diet recommendations. Choosing a suitable diet ensures that their nutritional requirements are met and that breed related health issues are minimized. The prescription diets enable our pets to live longer more comfortable lives, and we get to share additional time with them!! Although dry foods are recommended for dental health, increasing the amount of water fed through canned foods has been shown to aid in the prevention of urinary disease.

The diets sold through Ajax North Pet Hospital are from companies doing continuing nutritional research. They guarantee their products, even for palatability. Lastly, and most importantly, they have been shown to increase the quality of a pet's life and aid in the management and treatment of disease. These companies have supported their diets, and their clients as demonstrated by their historical actions. Especially with previous recalls.

The Ajax North Pet Hospital Veterinarian and staff are constantly striving to stay up to date on the dietary changes and diets available through ongoing courses.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your pet food, and what the right food for your pet may be.