

Tigger wants to know: Are You Feeding Your Pet Commercial Pet Food?



Whilst processed, ‘convenience’ foods contribute to poor human nutrition, many commercial pet foods are similarly detrimental to our furry friends.

The pet nutrition industry is very similar to the human food industry – full of hype and false claims, peddling inferior nutritional choices. Much of the so-called “healthy pet foods” on the market contain inferior meat meals, cheap grains like corn and soy, fillers, by-products, food coloring, pesticides, preservatives, and other contamination's.

Case in point: the widespread contamination of melamine (a chemical used in the production of plastics, which imitates protein) rocked the pet food industry not so long ago, and led to thousands of deaths and illnesses. More than 5,600 products by dozens of pet food makers – everything from cheap supermarket brands to prescription-only food – were recalled in the process.

Many Commercial Pet Foods Can Destroy Your Pet’s Health

Unfortunately, most widely available pet foods and even many of the brands conventional vets recommend do not contain clean, inspected ingredients, nor are they biologically balanced for your domesticated carnivore (cat) and scavenging carnivore (dog). Common symptoms associated with regular consumption of commercial pet foods include diarrhea, increased flatulence, dull coat, intermittent vomiting and prolonged scratching.

Dogs and cats have evolved in the wild consuming a variety of small prey animals, and once you remove the raw food, you disrupt nearly every important biochemical pathway in their body. This is a prescription for disaster, and maintaining your pet on completely cooked and refined foods can clearly impact their organ health. **In fact, a growing number of veterinarians state that processed pet food (kibbled and canned food) is the number one cause of illness and premature death in modern dogs and cats.**

In December 1995, the British Journal of Small Animal Practice published a paper contending that processed pet food suppresses animals' immune systems, and causes liver disease, kidney disease and heart disease.

Why Your Pet Needs RAW Food

The introduction of commercially available raw food diets in the late '90's offered tremendous additional health benefits to pets everywhere, because many varieties combined USDA inspected meats with human edible-quality vegetables and fewer grains, which is more biologically appropriate.

Several AAFCO approved homemade recipes also became available and contained options for living food additions. To argue whether raw food diets are appropriate for dogs and cats is moot; they have thrived consuming a variety of small prey for thousands of years!

The Two Main Problems with a Dry Food Diet

The biggest concern I hear about not feeding dry food is, "But what about their teeth?" Remember: eating crunchy granola doesn't brush or clean your teeth. You have to brush your teeth. Likewise, eating crunchy kibble doesn't brush or clean your pet's teeth. You still have to brush your pet's teeth. So please don't use this rationale to feed your pet a diet of mainly dry foods.

There are the two major problems with an entirely dry food diet, Protein quality and Moisture content.

Protein Quality -- Contrary to popular belief, protein requirements actually increase as pets age to combat catabolic processes, which can lead to muscle wasting. We have also learned that the biological availability of certain protein sources actually determines how easy or difficult they are to metabolize. For example, snouts and feathers, although 100 percent protein, are not nearly as digestible as lean muscle meat.

The quality of protein your pet eats is critical to reduce organ stress over time. The scary truth is that the majority of commercial pet foods on the market today are using rendered meats that are not approved for human consumption. Because kibbled foods made with these poor quality meats are so difficult to digest and assimilate, they can actually cause organ disease.

Moisture Content -- Our carnivorous companions were designed to consume non-dehydrated foods. Species appropriate diets -- foods free of corn, wheat, rice and soy -- formulated in their biologically correct form, meaning raw or minimally processed, with non-denatured proteins, contain all of the moisture needed to process the food with minimum metabolic stress.

Did you know that the natural diet of dogs and cats is up to 70 percent water? That's right: rabbits and mice, like our bodies, are primarily composed of water. Our pet's bodies have evolved to consume a diet that is rich with water, not dehydrated, and not cooked. When food is cooked and dehydrated (which is how kibble is produced), several things happen, the most detrimental of which is that the food becomes dry. Far too dry to be healthy. This requires your pet's body to provide sufficient moisture to reconstitute the food in their digestive tract. Although some animals may make a noble effort to consume enough water, many animals, and most cats, don't. A lifetime of minor dehydration is stressful to multiple organ systems, but most notably the kidneys. It's important to realize that this can easily be remedied by feeding canned or living food diets

Diet Recommendations

Some years ago, Dr. Francis Pottenger tried an experiment on several hundred cats. He divided them into two groups and fed one group their natural diet of raw meat and the other group a man-made diet of cooked pet food. He carried on this experiment through three generations. The cats that were fed their normal uncooked diet thrived. The cats that were fed a cooked diet developed the same diseases, and required the same medical treatment, as we humans.

Dr. Donald Ogden D.V.M. writes that commercial pet food (even the best known and most expensive brands) have had their nutrients altered, adulterated, devitalized and destroyed by heat, processing, coloring, preservatives and other chemicals. Feeding your animal such food on a regular basis causes waste-toxins to accumulate in the blood, lymphs and tissue which contributes to a weak immune system and renders our pet susceptible to chronic diseases.

Animals require the enzymes, amino acids and other nutrients in the raw meat in order to stay healthy. Animals need at least 30% raw animal fat, and their systems are not designed to handle cooked meat or cooked fat. In the wild, a panther or jackal does not barbecue, grill or smoke its prey.

For a return to health, your pet requires a diet which strengthens the immune system and most closely resembles that which they would get in the wild. It's really easy to do, feed your pet a combination of raw meats and select from a host of raw vegetables with little to no grains, and LOTS OF WATER.

By: Dr. Karen Becker, a proactive and integrative wellness veterinarian

Sources: www.mercola.com and www.living-foods.com
