

# Choosing A Quality Food for Your Pet

 Is there an AAFCO statement or label on the bag?

Association of American Feed Control Officials regulate the production, labeling, distribution, and sales of animals foods. They establish dog and cat nutrition profiles and promote uniform pet food regulations. [www.AAFCO.org](http://www.AAFCO.org)

 Does it have a complete & balanced nutrition?

The product should meet the nutritional levels established by AAFCO food nutrient profiles. The product will be labeled: ***"(Name of product) is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO (Dog/Cat) Food Nutrient Profiles."***

A product can go one step further and perform animal feeding tests using AAFCO feeding trial protocols. Not only has the product met AAFCO guidelines but its performance has also been tested. ***"Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that (name of product) provides complete and balanced nutrition."***

 What is the protein listed?

Look for the species of protein (ex: chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, etc.) No one protein is better than the next but it is important to know what your pet is consuming.

Avoid foods that list "meat" as the protein (ex: meat product, meat meal, etc.) A quality food will list the specific species of meat. Foods that list "meat" can substitute different protein sources with each batch made.

 What to avoid

Dyes – These are used as a marketing tool to appeal to the human eye and are not found in quality pet foods.

Sweeteners and Flavorings – Quality pet foods do not use or need either of these. Small amounts of sweeteners in treats are ok.



## Helpful Definitions



❑ **Organic** – no dry food can be certified organic and may only be applied to pet food labels (with seal) that meet USDA regulations

❑ **Natural** – there is no legal definition for this term

❑ **Holistic** – there is no legal definition for this term

❑ **Human Grade** – there is no legal definition for this term

It is important to see that these terms are often used as a marketing strategy by pet food companies. Because there are no legal regulations for use of these words, any manufacturer can make these claims.



## Common Misconceptions



❑ **Corn** – this carbohydrate often gets a bad reputation. In reality, corn is highly digestible and supplies many essential nutrients. Also, corn is NOT the main cause of food allergies – animal proteins are typically the culprit unless otherwise identified.

❑ **Meal** – meat sources in meal form are acceptable as long as the animal type is specified (ex: chicken meal, lamb meal, etc.) Meals consist of meat and skin, with or without the bones, but exclude feathers/hair, heads, feet, horns, and entrails.

❑ **By-products** – are acceptable as long as they are not the main protein source. By-products are common in human and pet foods and are NOT inferior. They are just something that is produced while making another product. (ex: chicken fat is a by-product of the chicken industry)

When it comes to choosing a pet food take your time and learn how to understand the label to ensure that you make an informed decision. All quality foods have their pros and cons. High cost does **not** equal high quality. Every animal has different nutritional needs and nutritional tolerances. For specific recommendations or if you believe your pet has a food intolerance or allergy, please consult your pet's veterinarian.