

How to read a pet food label

It is important that you understand exactly what it is you are buying when you go to purchase a food to feed your pet.

The pet food label: key information

- **Ingredient listing:** Ingredients are the delivery vehicles for nutrients and are listed on a pet food label in descending order by weight
 - Ingredients such as chicken, beef or lamb contain more than 50% water. The high water content makes them weigh more than dry ingredients such as grains, meat/poultry meals, minerals and vitamins, so they are listed first
- **The guaranteed analysis:** The guaranteed analysis is designed to provide consumers with nutrient information about the pet foods they purchase. It indicates minimum or maximum levels of nutrients such as protein, fat and fibre in the product to guide consumers. It is important to remember, however, that the guaranteed analysis is not an indication of the actual nutrient content of the food
 - The minimum guarantee gives the lowest amount of the nutrient in the food, not the actual amount. For example, the minimum fat guarantee may be 8% but the product can legally contain 15% fat or more. Likewise, a product with a maximum guarantee of 5% fibre may only contain 1%
- Obtaining the actual nutrient content from the manufacturer is a better way to evaluate products
- **The nutritional adequacy statement:** This portion of the label verifies that the food provides complete and balanced nutrition for growing animals, pregnant and nursing mothers, or adults – or it might say the product is nutritionally adequate for all of these groups (“all lifestages”)
 - Caution should be exercised when considering foods intended for “all lifestages.” They may contain excessive levels of some nutrients – making them inappropriate for adult and senior pets
- **The manufacturer’s name and toll-free phone number:** Consumers are encouraged to call the 800 number for product information not on the label such as the actual nutrient content of the food and its caloric content

Determining quality

There is no way to determine the true quality of a pet food by reading the ingredient listing or the guaranteed analysis. In fact, two products that may appear to have the same guaranteed analysis might have actual nutrient levels that vary significantly.

Individual ingredients do NOT determine the quality of a pet food. It’s the nutritional value of each ingredient blended together that delivers a product specific for a pet’s age or condition. The guaranteed analysis is not a guarantee of nutritional quality – nor is the ingredient list or the presence or absence of certain ingredients.

Better information. Better nutrition. Better health.



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