

# Cultural Daily

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## How to Identify Good Quality Pet Food

Our Friends · Tuesday, May 18th, 2021

Do you know what your pet is eating? How about how good it is for them?

If pet food makers were to be believed, *every* brand is a wonder of nutrition and nourishment for our fuzzy pals. We know that's not strictly true, but how do you parse the advertising to find the real information?

It's easier than you think. Read on and we'll teach you how to identify the best pet food for your animals.

### Ingredients: Less is More

While companies aren't required to put forth strict caloric content for pet food, they *do* have to put the ingredients contained on the bag or box. That list forms the basis of a pet food's nutrition.

Less is more when you're looking at ingredients. Most of the time an expanded ingredient list is filled with things like [preservatives and coloring](#). If you don't know what an ingredient is then you should take the time to look it up. Most manufacturers dress up ingredients under uncommon names.

The key things to look for are the protein source and whether or not the food contains any grains. The latter is especially important for cats since they can't process grains at all. That said, many dogs have grain allergies to one extent or another, with the most common culprit being wheat.

Keep in mind that ingredient lists always go from the largest amount of an ingredient to the smallest. The first should *always* be a protein source, but a smaller list of ingredients is the first indication you're looking at [quality pet food](#).

### Know About Tricky Ingredients

Ingredient lists for food, both human and animal, are filled with [plenty of trickery](#). The names of ingredients are often similar, or even altered entirely to an uncommon form to make things a bit unclear for the uninformed consumer.

One of the biggest ones involves the main protein in pet food. What are you looking for here? The word "meal" tacked onto the end.

Chicken meal, for instance, is a low-quality protein. It's mostly just the discarded bits of a chicken

mashed together, leaving little nutritional value behind while fluffing out the ingredients. If it's the first (or second) ingredient on the list, you should move on.

Likewise, any fish that isn't specifically labeled should be given a pass. Fish meal is remarkably common, and remarkably not great as a primary protein source. Generic labels are a warning that you're looking at mixed species included.

Anything with numbers or acronyms is going to be an artificial color or preservative. It's common to use "alternative" names for natural compounds, but most artificial compounds end up as just a few letters or numbers in a long ingredient list.

### **Consider the Brand's Reputation**

The above guidelines will get you in the ballpark, but the ingredients don't tell us the whole story.

For that, we'll have to rely on something less objective... the company's reputation.

Why is reputation so important?

Because of pet food regulations, as well as avoiding harm during the seemingly unending pet food recalls. For instance, the FDA allows food contaminated with insect and rodent fecal matter beyond human standards to be used in pet food.

That is to say: we've found it too unhealthy to sell to the masses, but you can certainly feed it to your pet!

Check out the brand *before* you decide to invest in new pet food. The best holds their meat and fish to the same standards as humans, the worst may cut corners despite looking great from the ingredient list.

Most common brands, [such as Blue Buffalo](#), are owned by a conglomerate. This allows the same company to compete with itself, but most conglomerates produce their products in the same factories.

It can take a lot of research to find out who a brand is connected to and what the reputation is worth, but it's a small investment of time for your pet's prolonged health.

### **Find Out if You Can Do Better at Home**

So, a dog food company has great ingredients and a sterling reputation? You should also compare it to what you can pull off at home.

There are thousands of dog food recipes spread across the internet and pet magazines, for instance. Some are much more complex than others, but there are quite a few that were designed as a low-cost alternative to high-end pet food.

With the exception of bottom-tier kibble like Purina's "normal" offerings, it's almost always cheaper to make your dog's food at home. Sure, you're paying for premium ingredients with high-end brands, but you're also paying for prep time.

The amount of time that it takes to make pet food at home is considerable, but it *is* something you

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should weigh against the price of premium pet foods before you make a final decision.

## Conclusion

There are few things a pet enjoys more than quality pet food, and the above guidelines will get you started down the track to finding the right food for your needs. In the end, it's a function of simple, natural ingredients and brand reputation that give us the best clues. Once you've invested in good quality pet food, make sure you follow [a healthy feeding schedule](#) too.

So, get on it. A bit of research can make a huge difference in the health of your pet.

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