# Food and Nutrition

With so many pet foods on the market these days, choosing a good one is harder than ever. When thinking about pet food, it is important to remember that dogs and cats are carnivores. Their bodies are designed to eat meat. For the best health and nutrition, the food we feed our pets needs to be as much like their natural diet as possible. Good quality food can be found by examining the list of ingredients first.

An identified meat source (for example lamb or chicken, or a meat meal) should appear as the first ingredient, ideally the first several ingredients. More than one type of meat may be listed. Vegetables should follow closely after meats. Currently, the recommendation is to avoid grain free diets for dogs, as well as legumes and potatoes until proven otherwise. Egg, apples and cottage cheese are signs of a quality food if they appear within the first dozen ingredients. Corn, corn by-products and wheat flour are too starchy to provide good quality nutritional value. Rice and barley provide better nutrition. Animal by-products or by-product meal contain parts such as feet, hair, and feathers and provide little if any digestible nutrients.

Another important hallmark of a good food would be the letters AAFCO on the label. This certification indicates that the food meets the basic nutritional needs of the pet. Use the guaranteed analysis information with great caution.

A pet food company represents all sources of each nutrient in the total. For example, protein can be found in chicken feet and beaks. This protein will be a part of the crude protein total but little of this type of protein is digestible by a dog or cat.

Blue Buffalo, Canidae, 4 Health, Iam’s, Natural Balance, Nutro, Purina, and Royal Canin are superior to many foods on the grocery shelves. We can order many of these foods for you.

Great quality pet foods have great ingredients and consumers will find that these foods are usually higher in price. However, pets need to eat less of the higher quality foods to meet their nutritional needs and thus the cost per meal can be comparable to that of a lesser quality food. If top quality foods are outside of your budget, then make a purchase based on the best ingredients you can afford.