

further preserved with BHT, BHA, and ethoxyquin. The body will use these fats, despite the rancidity, by incorporating them into the cellular membrane.

Again the pet food company is not required to disclose the ingredients in the "animal/poultry fat" product on their label.

SWEETENERS:

Some of the sweeteners used in pet food include but are not limited to sugar, corn syrup, sucrose, beet pulp sugar, etc. These are added merely to improve palatability. With all the information about the health issues resulting from the use of refined sugar and sweeteners in humans, can one truly expect pets to benefit? It truly says something about the ingredients used in pet food when companies have to add multiple ingredients just to enhance the flavor and increase palatability.

A general rule of thumb is:

"If you can't pronounce it, don't feed it."

A common question from care-givers is "Is there a nutritious processed food that I can feed my pet that will give him/her all the nutrients needed for optimal health and well-being?" The simple answer is: no, there is not.

Processed pet foods were created for convenience. If your lifestyle requires that you feed a commercial, processed food, then your job is to find the least offensive. You have to make educated choices with the information you now have to find a diet that provides a decent level of nutrition to your pet. And you must enlist other foods and supplementation to make it more nutritious. This is where a holistic practitioner can help.

The pet food industry is a multi-billion dollar industry. The various companies don't make a profit from using whole cuts of meat and wholesome ingredients in their products. Perhaps the recent spotlight on the industry will ultimately have a positive outcome...perhaps the companies will make better selections of the various ingredients in their foods. Until that time, your greatest tool is knowledge.

**For further information, go to
www.vitalitypetcare.com**



N U T R I T I O N **What's In Your Pet's Processed Food?**

There is no single diet that meets the individual needs of every single pet. Each pet is unique and a diet that is useful for one may not be useful for another. The biggest question many guardians have is: "How do I determine what is right for my pet?" This requires you to depend on more than just clever marketing. You need to have a basic understanding of nutrition and with the assistance of your holistic practitioner; you can then determine what is best for your individual pet.

The most popular form of feeding is the use of processed commercial foods. These foods include all dry (kibble) and canned foods. You see numerous commercials where leading pet food companies advertise their "100% complete" and "nutritious" pet food. You see succulent cuts of meat, luscious vegetables and hearty grains on the commercials and bags of food with healthy, happy-looking dogs. As with many purchases, we select processed pet foods based on the attractiveness and the claims on the packaging. Unfortunately, those lovely pictures are not representative of what is inside.

To know what is in pet food, you must know how to decipher the label. Beyond the wording on the labels, you must look to the list of ingredients and then understand what the ingredients actually encompass.

The following is a brief summary of some of the top ingredients to avoid in pet food. This is an abbreviated list that will help get each person started, but further reading/research is strongly recommended. Remember, knowledge helps you make better decisions that impact the health and well-being of those you love. Though this is a partial list, if you select a commercial food that avoids these ingredients, other unwholesome ingredients are less likely to be added.

THE TOP 6 INGREDIENTS TO AVOID IN ALL PET FOOD ARE

1. meat meals (i.e. chicken meal, beef meal, etc.)
2. by-products
3. preservatives
4. processed grains
5. animal/poultry fat
6. sweeteners

For a better understanding, we will have a brief look at these ingredients separately.

MEAT MEALS:

Definition: a rendered product from mammalian tissues exclusive of any added, blood, hair, horn, hide trimming, manure, stomach & rumen contents, such as chicken meal, beef meal, lamb meal etc.

Meals are the cache of hidden ingredients. As they are provided to pet food companies by rendering plants, the true ingredients of a meal are not disclosed on the pet food label. The pet food company is required only to list what their company added to their food, such as "chicken meal", and not what the rendering plants included in that particular meal. The unlisted ingredients can include:

- **Food not fit for human consumption**
- **Preservatives (See Preservatives section below for details.)**
- **Drug residues, hormones, euthanasia solution from animal parts used**

The rendering plants heat this tissue to 270 F/130 C which will kill any residual bacteria in the diseased tissue. Unfortunately, the endotoxins certain bacteria produce are unaffected. So when a meal is fed, it is possibly providing food not fit for human consumption, endotoxins, hormones, drug residues, and euthanasia solution. Note: There are a few companies who acquire the meals from sources with better quality control. Contact the specific companies directly to inquire about the sources of their meals, in addition to the specific ingredients and preservatives added.

BY-PRODUCTS:

Definition: Secondary products produced in addition to the principal products.

What does that mean? It means those parts of the animal not used for human consumption and that are excluded from meals. For example, those parts in a chicken by-product may include: feathers, beaks, heads, feet, entrails, lungs, spleen, kidneys, brain, liver, stomach, and so on. Many pet foods use by-products as their sole source of "meat", which is not even a meat at all.

PRESERVATIVES:

In order for a processed food, specifically dry foods, to have a shelf-life, chemical preservatives have been added. These preservatives include:

- **Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA)**
- **Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)**
- **Ethoxyquin (not been tested for safety in cats)**

- **Propylene glycol (banned in cat foods)**

- **Propyl gallate**

The canned foods require lesser amounts of preservatives because the canning process is a form of food preservation. There is a great deal of controversy regarding these preservatives in the human and pet markets. Ethoxyquin is a potent rubber stabilizer used in tire manufacture. BHA, BHT and ethoxyquin have been linked to cancer in various studies and are used in human foods as well. There simply is not enough data on the use of these preservatives.

Many pet food companies have responded to the concerns of pet owners and began using "natural" preservatives such as synthetic Vitamin C or tocopherol. Unfortunately, many "meat meals" used in pet foods still utilize these chemical preservatives to stabilize the rendered product and the pet food company is not required to disclose the ingredients of the meals on their label. In addition, these preservatives are often used to preserve various synthetic vitamins and amino acids in pet foods.

PROCESSED GRAINS:

Definition: grains that have been stripped of the nutritious bran and germ layers during processing, thus removing all of the valuable nutrients within in the grain itself.

This process removes an important source of trace minerals and vitamins such as B vitamins, Vitamin E, folate, selenium, zinc and iron. The processed grains are often "enriched" which means nutrients are added back in synthetic form. This enriched product is still far less nutritious than the whole grains.

Cats are obligate carnivores, which mean they are meat-eaters. They do not require and cannot utilize grains in their diet. Yet most of the "premium" kibbles on the market have some form of corn or other grains in the ingredient list. Dogs are also carnivores, but in a natural state, they do take in ingesta/intestinal contents of the prey, which is loaded with macerated veggies, berries, etc. No species, including humans, benefits from the use of processed grains.

The only grains that are beneficial to any species are whole grains. Whole grains contain all layers of the grain:

1. **Bran** – contains niacin, riboflavin, magnesium, phosphorus, iron & zinc
2. **Germ** – contains niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin E, magnesium, phosphorus, iron and zinc
3. **Endosperm** – (aka kernel) contains most of grains' protein and carbohydrates with small amounts vitamins & minerals. This is the only layer that remains in processed grains.

Bottom line: avoid all processed grains. If a pet's diet has to have some grains, use only small amounts of whole grains like oats, barley, brown rice, millet, quinoa, etc.

ANIMAL/POULTRY FAT:

Definition: rendered animal fat or vegetable fat and oils deemed inedible for humans make up "animal/poultry fat".

Animal fats are added for flavor in processed foods. Not only do they provide flavor, but they act as binding agents for flavor enhancers. Good oils are a source of essential fatty acids (EFA) which are critical in cellular function. Unfortunately, the "animal/poultry fat" is often composed of rancid fats that are