

## Transitioning to a New Food

As more and more pet lovers are learning about healthier foods, many are switching to more nutritious brands made with less processed ingredients. However, a pet's digestive system may have grown accustomed to a certain food formula and the "good bacteria" in their intestines may not be ready to support higher levels of meat and vegetables overnight. Your pet should be transitioned to a new food over a ten day or longer period. Switching slowly will allow the "good bacteria" to grow stronger and more numerous to break down the new nutrients. If change occurs too quickly, the digestive system may react negatively causing vomiting or diarrhea. We suggest the following food mix to help your pet easily transition to the new food.

**3 days of 3/4 old food & 1/4 new food**

**4 days of 1/2 old food & 1/2 new food**

**3 days of 3/4 new food & 1/4 old food**

A canned pumpkin food for dogs can help ease in the transition from one food to another.



## Nutrition Basics

**Proteins** contain amino acids which are used for tissue and muscle development and repair as well as maintaining a healthy immune system.

**Fats** are necessary for proper organ development and function as well as healthy skin and coat.

**Carbohydrates** are used as a primary energy source

**Fiber** helps maintain digestive regularity

**Water** is often thought of as the most important nutrient of all and is used in just about every function in the body.

## Dog & Cat Evaluating Pet Foods



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## Evaluating Pet Foods Ingredient Panels

To best evaluate the ingredients listed in the food panel on the label you need to ask three questions: **What? Where? How Many?**

### ◆ **What?**

**How pure (less processed) is the ingredient.**

- **Look for names species** meats, fats or meals (ex., chicken, turkey, salmon, chicken meal, etc.).
- **Try to avoid un-named species** meats, fats or meals (ex., meat and bone meal, poultry fat, fish meal, etc.).
- **Look for whole complex carbohydrates** verses grain fractions (Brown rice, barley, etc., instead of brewer's rice ,ground corn, etc.).
- **Avoid grains often associated with allergies** such as corn, wheat ,and soy.

### ◆ **Where?**

**How close to the top of the ingredient list does this ingredient appear.**

- To be a meat based product, the **meats MUST be in the first ingredients** in the diet. An example ingredient panel list would be: Turkey, Chicken, Chicken Meal, Pearled Barley, Oatmeal, etc.
- Ingredients are **listed in order of their weight**. The farther down the list the smaller the percent of ingredients.

### ◆ **How Many?**

**Count the number of similar ingredients on the list.**

- **Look for several grains or other carbohydrates** listed after one or two protein sources. Even though the first ingredients listed are proteins several carbohydrates can reduce the overall percentage of meat in the food
- To truly be a **meat based diet the first three out of five ingredients should be meats**. The exceptions to this would be a single source protein diets or limited ingredients diets

*This information is not meant to substitute for proper veterinary care. Pet owners should always speak with and follow the instructions provided by their veterinarian. This information has been provided as a general guide for supporting better health.*

## Which Food Might Be Best For My Pet?

### ◆ **Grain Free Diets**

Grain free diets were created to be closer to the diets that dogs and cats ate in the wild. Dogs and cats did not eat large amounts of carbohydrates. Their diets consisted mostly of meat and plant matter that was partially digested by their prey. The digestive tracts of dogs and cats are short and highly acidic to easily break down meats. Grain free diets can provide many benefits to pets: reduced allergies reduction of weight related diseases, better muscle mass, higher immunities, and better palatability.

### ◆ **Limited Ingredient Diets**

Successfully managing a pet's food allergies requires the identification of the ingredient (s) that cause an allergic reaction and the removal of the ingredient (s) from the diet. Many veterinarians suggest using the process of elimination to determine the allergen. Limited ingredient diets help achieve this by offering one meat protein source and limited carbohydrates. By reducing the number of ingredients, you reduce the likelihood of an allergic response. Limited ingredient diets also help pets with sensitive stomachs, and can help pets from rescues in making the switch to better quality diets because they are less taxing on the digestive tract.

### ◆ **Senior Care**

As your pet ages there can be some health changes that may require a little extra care to make sure your pet remains healthy. One of the most common concerns includes joint problems and arthritis. Lower activity levels reduce both the caloric and fat needs. Senior care diets are formulated specifically for older pets to help them live a long and more comfortable life.

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### ◆ **Skin & Coat Concerns**

Skin and coat problems come in a variety of forms and may cause your pet to experience itchy, red, irritated skin that can result in hair loss, "hot spots", dull, flaky or greasy coats. These problems are often cause by environmental irritations, nutritional deficiencies, parasites, allergies, or poor grooming. You can help your pet's coat by feeding a meat-based high quality ingredient diet.

Wheat, corn, soy and grains are some ingredients that can trigger allergic responses and should be removed if your pet has a poor coat.

### ◆ **Underweight Pets**

If a pet is underweight for too long, they may have less energy and other health issues can develop. Since an underweight condition can have a myriad of causes you need to monitor your pet and work closely with your veterinarian. Often feeding a more palatable food, higher in protein and fat can help increase your pet's weight.

### ◆ **Overweight Pets**

Excess weight can lead to many health problems including diabetes, increased risk of cancer, damage to the joints, bones or ligaments, decreases stamina, heat intolerance, and a reduced quality and length of life. A healthy solution is more exercise and a food higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates and fats. Feeding twice a day verses once allows your pet's metabolism to be at its peak burning rate all day. We strongly discourage "free feeding" any pet that is overweight.

### ◆ **Puppies**

Puppies grow quickly which mean they have higher demand for quality proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and calories than adult dogs. Puppy foods are formulated to meet these higher demands. Large breed puppy foods are formulated with less calcium and phosphorus to help promote slower, healthier and stronger bone and joint growth. Small & medium breed dogs are considered puppies for 1 year, larger breeds are generally considered to be puppies for up to 2 years.