

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

Diet is so important. It is our foundation; it is the basis of our health and governs how we feel. You get out what you put in: fill yourself with low quality, nutrient-poor food, and you don't operate at your best. High quality, low fat, nutrient dense foods give us what we need to succeed.



And it's no different for our cats and dogs. Biologically appropriate diets keep our furry friends in top shape, prime weight, and give them healthier, longer lives. Feeding them things they are not meant to eat, like corn, wheat, and less than optimal meat byproducts, can lead to health issues and problems with their stomachs, skin, and organs. Our pets are members of our family and we all want to give them only the best, so we're going to take some time to look at what we are feeding our furry friends.

Let's start by looking at the different forms cat and dog food comes in:

Dry kibble vs. canned vs. freeze dried vs. raw

Dry kibble:

Dry kibble is what most people first think of when they think of cat or dog food. It's what we all know, the standard for the industry. It's what our parents fed our dogs when we were growing up. It was created because it's a quick and easy way to feed and could be stored for longer periods. Cheaper foods can be made by using cheap pieces of meat by-products and The ingredients are ground, cooked, and run through extruders to form the shaped kibble. Since the heat and friction destroys a lot of the vital nutrients, they must be added back in after the extrusion process to create a nutritionally complete diet. Kibble can come in different styles, from recipes for dogs and cats of any age (all life stages), to puppy and kitten formulas, to senior blends.



Canned:

Canned food is a great way to add some variety to your cat or dog's diet. In the wild, they do not always eat the same type of protein all their lives. Wholistic vets believe (and we agree) that rotating the different types of protein – from lamb to beef to salmon to duck – helps prevent their bodies from developing a sensitivity to one type of meat and stops them from getting tired or bored with their food.



Weruva, a stew-style canned cat food.

Feeding canned food is very important for cats. Most people feed cats dry kibble due to an old wife's tale – that wet food weakens teeth and dry food keeps them

clean. But cats evolved in the desert, and do not have a large “thirst response”. Their bodies expect to get most of their moisture from their prey: birds, rodents, and reptiles – moisture they can’t get from eating dry kibble. This lack of moisture leads to kidney problems, commonly seen in older cats. By feeding canned food, they get the moisture their bodies need in the manner they expect. Plus, their teeth are better evolved to cut meat, not grind dry kibble.

Canned food comes in two forms: pâté, where the ingredients are blended into a paste, and stew style, with chunks of meat and vegetables in gravy. Try different types; some pets refer one to the other, while some love anything you put in front of them.

Freeze dried:

Freeze dried foods have a lot of the benefits of kibble combined with the benefits of raw: it’s convenient to feed, requiring only that you add water and rehydrate, and less processing means that a lot of the natural nutrition is left intact. The ingredients are frozen and then placed in a vacuum chamber. This extracts the water without the application of destructive heat.



Freeze dried diets can be fed in several way: rehydrated and given as the main diet, rehydrated and mixed with canned/kibble, or crumbled dry on top of other foods. Its rich, meaty smell and high protein content can be helpful in getting finicky animals to eat their food.

Raw/frozen:

Raw frozen is, we believe, one of the best diets to have your cat and dog on. Raw meat is the most natural food they can eat; it is, after all, their natural diet in the wild. Raw is also a lot more nutritionally complete; the processing of kibble ingredients reduces and destroys the natural nutrients, amino acids, and enzymes through heat and friction. Raw food is minimally processed, which keeps all these essential nutrients, amino acids, and enzymes intact. It’s high in flavor, making it a great option for picky eaters and elderly pets.



How to feed: Place three days worth of food in a container in the fridge and let them defrost over night. The day before you finish that container, place another three days worth in another container and let it defrost in the fridge over night. It does contain raw meat, so treat it like you do your food and be sure to wash your containers and any surfaces the food touches. Raw can be fed exclusively as their main diet, fed for one meal, or mixed with dry or canned foods.

Many people are concerned about bacterial contaminations with raw meats. That’s why we say treat it no differently than you do the meat you prepare for yourself: don’t cross contaminate surfaces and wash your hands and any utensils you use. But because of the minimal processing involved, and fewer chances for contamination, there have been *far fewer recalls* of raw frozen diets than there have of kibble diets.

Regardless of the type of food you feed, be sure that you feed them the best! Choose foods with made with the highest quality ingredients, human grade, table ready meats, that are corn, wheat, and soy free.

Do you have questions about what type of food is best to feed your cat or dog? Stop by and talk with any of our trained staff about your pet’s nutritional needs!