

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!

When people come in looking for certain brands of dog or cat food, they're often surprised that we don't carry the common "grocery store" brands. We're very selective about the foods we do carry – a great deal of thought and research goes into each brand we select. Our basic belief is that providing a biologically appropriate diet that most closely matches your pet's wild diet, the healthier and happier they will be.



We do not carry any food we don't recommend, and, in fact, these are the foods that we feed to our own pets.

Who regulates pet food?

The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is the body that regulates the animal feed industry. Their original focus was on feed for farm animals, but took on the task of regulating pet foods. AAFCO sets the definitions of ingredients and sets nutritional minimums for cat and dog food.

What do we look for in foods we carry?

- ✦ North American sourced ingredients, made in trusted facilities. Nothing in our foods comes from dubious sources like China.
- ✦ No corn, soy, or wheat. These are used as fillers, to displace the meat content. While regulation is minimal on this, these ingredients are not, we believe, something that cats and dogs should ever eat. These ingredients are known to increase probability of obesity, diabetes, and allergies.
- ✦ Human grade ingredients. This simply means that there are no re-rendered ingredients in our foods; every meat is something that could have been served to people, that has been deemed "table ready". Every food we have contains real, named meat and high quality meat meal .

What does re-rendered mean? Simply put, re-rendering is the heating of waste animal tissue to convert it into usable material. They can take all the pieces and parts of animals that they cannot feed to us, cook them down, and add them to cat and dog food. This lower quality protein is used to make the cheaper brands of dog food. The one phrase that worries us the most is "meat by-product"; they're not specifying *what* animal the protein came from, so it could be *anything*. That's why we look for "named" meats – we want to see chicken, salmon, duck, lamb, or rabbit as the main source of protein. Re-rendered meats are a lower quality product and can be used to produce a cheaper food.



Real meat should always be the first ingredient in your pet's food.

Diet is the foundation of your health, and you are what you eat. High quality proteins lead to a healthier, happier pet with fewer vet visits.

The difference between meat and meat meal. We like to see whole meats listed on the ingredient panel. Using whole ingredients helps your pet absorb the natural nutrition better. You will notice a lot of our foods have meal listed, such as lamb meal and salmon meal. The word meal simply means that the meat has been gently

dehydrated; this concentrates and increases the protein by weight. Fresh meat can be from 55% to 75% water; removing this lets you put more meat in the kibble, increasing the protein content.

You can see a long list of definitions set by AAFCO [here](#) (the actual list is not shown by AAFCO, as they make you purchase the publication, as a source of revenue for the organization.¹)

Why are there so many types of meat in dog and cat foods?



Nature's Logic comes in several formulas, to make it easy to give your pet variety.

You'll notice a lot of foods made with what we call novel or alternate proteins. Why have a dog food made with buffalo or a cat food made from rabbit? Most dog and cat foods, pretty much since World War I, have been made with chicken as the source of protein. It is thought that constantly eating chicken, not only meal after meal but generation after generation, has made a lot of dogs sensitive to it.

Alternate proteins tend to not carry that risk. Something savory like duck or lamb is rarely eaten, therefore, fewer animals have sensitivities to them. They often really like the new flavors, so it makes a great way to get a finicky dog to eat their food.

We're big fans of rotational feeding. Each bag you get, try a different protein. Wholistic vets believe this helps prevent allergies to any one ingredient. When you're staying in one brand of food, you usually don't need to transition to the new flavor, and can quickly switch to something new.

Additional ingredients

You'll see a lot of ingredients listed in dog and cat foods. Here are some of the more common ones, what they are, and why they're in there.

- ✦ Yucca schidigera – the yucca plant comes from the desert south west. It contains vitamins and minerals including vitamin c and iron, and naturally helps reduce stool smell. It is also thought to reduce inflammation and balance insulin levels.
- ✦ Tomato pomace – This is a mixture of tomato skin, pulp, and crushed seeds, and is added to some foods for high levels of antioxidants like lycopene, and as a source of soluble fiber, which helps form regular stools.
- ✦ Tocopherols – Natural form of vitamin E from olive and sunflower oils, used as a natural preservative. Mixed tocopherols are vitamin E combined with vitamin C.
- ✦ Zinc proteinate, copper proteinate – It can be difficult for the body to absorb all the minerals in the food. They trick the body into taking them up by chelating, or binding, the mineral to amino acids and/or partially hydrolyzed proteins. This ensures that they are getting complete nutrition.
- ✦ Enterococcus faecium, lactobacillus plantarum, trichoderma longibrachiatum (often listed as fermentation product) are beneficial gut bacteria, called probiotics. It's thought that a major portion of the immune



¹ <http://www.aafco.org/Directory/CommitteePages/IngredientDefinitions.aspx>

system is located in the gut, and a healthy population of beneficial bacteria out-competes pathogenic organisms. They also help break down and absorb nutrients from food.

- ✚ Inulin or chicory root, or fructo-oligosaccharide – Chicory root is a source of inulin, a type of dietary fiber often used as a prebiotic. Prebiotics are food for probiotics, helping them establish a healthy colony in the gut.

The differences between different “stages” of food²:

All life stages – these foods meet or exceed the minimum requirements from AAFCO for being both a “growth” and a “maintenance” food nutrient profile, so they have the proper nutrition for both growing and adult dogs.

Puppy – The puppy stage is when your dog put on all their growth, so they need nutritional support. Puppy food generally contains a little more protein and a little more fat than adult versions, plus a slight increase in vitamin and mineral content.

Large breed puppy – This food actually contains less protein and fat than regular puppy food. Large breed dogs have a slower growth rate, and a controlled calorie intake helps them grow at the right speed. It usually contains high levels of glucosamine, chondroitin, and vitamin C; it is thought that the earlier these joint supplements are used, the better they help later in life.



Adult – Standard formula, meant for non-lactating females and dogs that have finished their growth. Most breeds are considered grown at one year, larger breeds can take a full two years to finish growing.

Small breed adult – a lot of small dogs have higher metabolism than medium dogs, so their food has a little more protein to give them energy. The kibble is also smaller, to fit their smaller mouths.

Large breed adult – Larger dogs have lower energy requirements than small breeds, and the food stays in their digestive tract longer. This lower protein and fat food helps prevent them from gaining weight. Added prebiotics (like inulin) help keep their digestion on track. Large kibble size helps ensure they chew their food instead of gulping it, preventing gas and digestive upset. Large breed adult also contains more vitamin C, glucosamine and chondroitin to keep their joints health and supporting their weight.

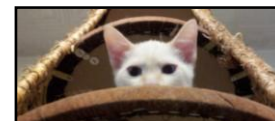


A big boy like this needs a food to meet his special needs.

Senior foods generally are lighter on protein and fat and have added glucosamine and chondroitin to help support aging joints.

Cat and kitten foods:

While kittens are growing quickly, their nutritional needs are not significantly different than adult cats, except you may want to feed them more often. Kitten foods do contain a little more protein and fat than adult cat food, but it's slight (for Wellness Kitten it's 11% protein and 7% fat, adult is 10% and 5%, respectively).



“Are you talking about me?”

Her needs are similar to an adult's needs.

² <https://suite.io/ian-shoust/57tx23e>

Kitten food can contain higher amounts of vitamins and minerals, especially calcium and phosphorus to support healthy bone and teeth growth. We feel that most foods labeled for “kitten” is more of a marketing move, and a lot of people simply provide several meals throughout the day to help support their kitten’s growth.

Indoor cat – Several of our recipes come in “Indoor cat” formulas. Indoor cats can be a little less active, so they contain a little less fat and protein. They’re also higher in fiber, to help manage hairballs.

Cat food differs in one major way from dog food: the inclusion of taurine. Taurine is an essential amino acid, meaning that it is not made in a cat’s body, so it must be supplied through their diet. Long term deficiency can lead to problems with their eyes and will eventually lead to heart disease.

Water is an overlooked problem with cats and is vital for urinary health. Check out our [caresheet](#) on how feeding raw and canned food can help prevent kidney problems in cats.

You can see all the foods we carry, including links to each manufacturer’s site, on our [dog food](#) and [cat food](#) pages. Always consult with your vet regarding your dog or cat’s nutritional needs. Stop by, check out samples of our favorite foods and discuss our recommendations for your furry family member.

More about raw foods:

We are huge believers in raw foods for our cats and dogs. Why? There is no diet that is more natural, more species appropriate than raw.

What does that mean? Simply put, dogs and cats are carnivores, eaters of raw meat (dogs are, technically, scavengers/carnivores, cats are obligate carnivores). They do not eat corn; wheat is not a part of a wild dog’s diet. A wild canine’s ingestion of veggies, fruits, and grains in the wild is going to be minimal. There is no company processing all the game and prey into convenient little dry kibbles for the wild dogs, wolves, coyotes, and dingoes. To give our pets the best chance at great health, we need to provide a diet as close as possible to what they are genetically evolved to eat.

Why raw?

Processed kibble has been ground, cooked, and extruded. A lot of the natural vitamins, minerals, and enzymes are destroyed to make a product that is convenient and easy to feed. Raw food is minimally processed, so it retains the micronutrients that fresh meat has. Feeding your dog or cat a raw diet can lead to:

- Firmer stools
- Improved digestion
- Healthier skin and coat
- Reduced allergy symptoms
- Reduced risk of cancer and diabetes
- Improved oral health
- Better weight management

We've seen older dogs that have slowed down start to act like puppies again. Raw foods also act like our sugar-free gum; their tongue moves a lot more to eat the food, spreading saliva, like we do when we chew gum, loaded with enzymes and helps keep their teeth and gums healthy.

Transitioning to a raw diet

The most important thing to keep in mind when transitioning from dry kibble to a raw diet is to go slow. Raw diets are much richer than the kibble they are used to eating, and quickly changing foods can cause stomach problems, making the transition more difficult and less likely to succeed.

Offer a small bite as a treat between meals, keeping an eye on their stools. Over the next few days, increase the number of new food treats. If their stools stay normal, you can then replace one of their meals with a little of the raw. If at any time their stool is too loose, decrease the raw and go longer before increasing the amounts again.

How to feed raw foods

Raw meats need to be defrosted in the fridge, not on the counter (this goes for our foods, too.) Place enough food for three days in a container in the fridge; begin feeding the next day. When you have one day's worth of food left, set another three days worth of food in another container and place it in the fridge to defrost for the next time.

Raw diets can be offered as the sole diet, or can be alternated with dry kibble; many people offer the raw in the evening and keep kibble down during the day. It is not suggested to mix both raw and dried, as the different forms may cause some stomach upset with gas and bloating.

Safety

There are a lot of concerns and myths that raw meat diets are dangerous from bacteria like e. coli and salmonella. This is raw meat, so some common sense rules need to be followed, again, no differently than when handling meat for our dinner, mainly washing all containers, surfaces, and utensils thoroughly. Prevent cross contamination by washing your hands well.

It does need to be noted, however, there have been far fewer recalls of raw diets compared to kibble for bacterial contamination in the last several years.

A dog and cat's digestive system is vastly different than ours, and that makes it very difficult for them to suffer from food-borne pathogens (even if they were present in the food). Their mouths are loaded with enzymes whose sole purpose is to help destroy pathogens as they pass while eating. Their stomachs are made to handle high bacteria loads; their food stay in their stomach, in an acid bath, for 8 hours, with a quick trip, of only a couple of hours, through their intestines. This naturally evolved defense against pathogens keeps them healthy.

Controversy about raw.

There is a huge dispute concerning raw diets for cats and dogs. The American Veterinarian Medical Association, after the annual meeting every year, comes out with a statement against raw diets. Many vets do not like raw diets. We think this comes from a lack of knowledge of raw diets, and a tendency to get stuck doing things the way we always have. Some people have rushed to the vet for diarrhea after switching to a raw diet. The vets, naturally, blame the raw meat without getting more info, like how long the transition to raw food was.

Wholistic vets do believe in raw diets and are, fortunately, a growing voice supporting these more natural diets. They have seen the amazing changes a biologically appropriate diet can bring about in an older dog, how it can preserve a dog's health, and understand how to properly feed a raw diet.

We have witnessed many dogs and cats that benefit from a whole, uncooked diet. Owners who have tried every cooked kibble on the market with little success have, as a “last resort”, have switched their pet with health problems to a raw diet (we think this should have been the first option). The improvements in skin ailments, obesity, digestive problems, and diabetes have been remarkable.

See what well known wholistic vets Dr Karen Becker and Dr Barbara Royal have to say about raw diets:

<http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2011/02/15/raw-meat-the-best-and-healthiest-diet-for-pet-cats-and-dogs.aspx>

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-08-29/health/ct-x-veterinarian-book-20120829_1_pet-owners-royal-treatment-moonshine Dr Royal’s book, "The Royal Treatment: A Natural Approach to Wildly Healthy Pets", has a lot more info on raw diets.

We always suggest talking to your vet about your pet and their health; taking along some information you’ve gained from your research can help you make the right decision.

Getting more out of your food.

Like all of us, you spend a lot of time trying to pick the most nutritious and best food for your cat or dog. And you know that we proudly carry some of the healthiest diets available. And yet by their very nature, processed kibble diets are still lacking something that is missing from what they naturally eat in the wild. Heat from cooking and the friction from grinding and forming into kibble destroys and renders inert a lot of important nutrients and delicate key ingredients in their food.

So what can we do to get even more out of our pet’s food? First, it helps to understand what is missing from their food, and what these key ingredients do for our pets.

Enzymes:

Plant based digestive enzymes target components of food, proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates, beginning to break them down before your dog or cat eats them. This makes the more available for digestion; in fact, it’ll greatly increase boost absorption of their food and can contribute significantly in improving food nutrient utilization. People find they can actually feed a little less food since they’re getting more nutrition from it. This also helps create tight and tiny poops, a sign the digestive system is functioning properly.

Enzymes do even more in your pet’s body. As animals groom themselves, they naturally swallow hair. Over time, this loose hair begins to build up on the walls of the intestines. This impacted hair makes their body think that there is too much hair on the body, so they actually begin to shed more hair. They swallow this extra hair, the colon becomes more impacted, triggering more shedding. Enzymes begin to break this vicious, negative feedback loop by breaking down the impacted hair into smaller pieces, making it easier for the body to eliminate. We often compare enzymes to Liquid Draino, as it helps dissolve and clear clogs in the digestive system.



Shedding can be kept to a minimum with a little help from

Enzymes are helpful in reducing allergies, increasing energy, and decreased odors. Using digestive enzymes will help improve their digestion by decreasing vomiting, reducing diarrhea and help eliminate stool eating. There are also some studies that show that enzymes help reduce inflammation and speed healing in the body. (1)

Omega fatty acids:

Omega fatty acids are a long-chain form of polyunsaturated fats. Omega-3s come primarily from cold water fish, and omega-6s come from poultry, eggs, grains, and most plant based oils. These essential building blocks are needed by your dog and cat for a healthy heart, strong immune system, and flexible joints. Omega acids are also important for a soft, shiny coat and hydrated healthy skin. This is going to reduce dry, flaky skin, and will decrease shedding. After about four weeks of feeding OFAs, you'll begin to notice a softer, sleeker coat.



Salmon is a great source of omega 3 fatty acids

Probiotics:

Probiotics refers to a whole host of beneficial bacteria that live inside the intestines. Besides helping break down foods, it has been found that these bacteria are actually a big part of our defense against illness and pathogens.

Beneficial bacteria populations can suffer when the body is under stress, suffering from diarrhea, and taking medications such as steroids and antibiotics. This makes it more difficult to digest food and decreases the immune response.

So what can we do to bridge this gap between processed kibble and natural raw diets? We carry the best lines of complete supplements that will easily do just that!

Our favorite omega oils:

Grizzly Oil – Made with wild caught Alaskan salmon, one of the highest quality sources of balanced omega 3 fatty acids. Find out more [here](#).

Acenta Omega 3 oils – High quality fish oils, formulated for cats and dogs in flavors they'll love. Find out more [here](#).



Wholistic Digest All Plus:

Plant based enzyme supplement that goes a lot farther. It contains probiotics, those beneficial bacteria that occupy the gut and play several important roles in our lives. It also contains prebiotics, food to help encourage the probiotics to thrive. For more information, check it out [here](#).

Wholistic Canine/Feline Complete:



A super-premium supplement that provides your pet with a complete array of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, essential fatty acids, powerful antioxidants, and digestive microflora! High bioavailability is ensured by the use of pure, organic, whole-food sources. See it on their website [here](#).

Missing Link:

This supplement contains phytonutrients from fruits and veggies to support general health, a balance of omega acids from both fish and ground flax seed, and a great taste they'll love. In addition to the omega-6 fatty acids, flax also contributes dietary fiber to promote a healthy digestive system. This high fiber is also a great help in reducing

impacted hair in the intestine; fiber acts as a “plumbers snake”, helping scrub and push out the hair (aided when the hair is broken down with enzymes) and will reduce shedding.

Missing Link is available in Skin/Coat and Senior formulas. We are also carrying Missing Link for Birds and for Small Animals. This formula helps keep skin, eyes, hair/feathers, and the digestive system healthy. See more [here](#).

Nature’s Logic All Food Fortifier:

Nutritious and healthy way to augment your pet’s diet a complete spectrum of all natural vitamins, minerals, essential fats, enzymes, and other trace elements from 100% all natural food sources. See the whole list of ingredients [here](#).

Flora4™ Raw Food Topper

This supplement effectively adds the live probiotics, plant enzymes, phytonutrients and whole food vitamins & minerals that are lacking in an all-meat diet. *Flora4* contains only 100% raw organic sprouted seeds (a blend of barley seed, flaxseed, and lentils), ground into a fine powder and packaged in daily servings. Their [website](#) has more information.

Steve’s Raw Goat Milk Yogurt:



This tasty food topper is packed with probiotics and the full gamut of vitamins, minerals and micronutrients. It’s packed with coconut and chia seeds; the coconut acts as an anti-microbial, anti-fungal and anti-viral while the chia is a protein packed, gluten free seed high in omega-3s.

You’re feeding one of the best diets on the market, and there are still ways to get even more out of it. Stop by and talk to our trained staff about which supplements are perfect for your cat or dog’s needs.

(1) http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/8_10/features/15752-1.html