

“Lying Labels”

“The labeling situation for dog foods can be deceiving. Here are just a few examples of how hard it can be to trust pet food labels:

Preprinted Packages: If a dog food company changes the ingredients in the food, those changes are made on the package. However, if the company has preprinted packages with the old ingredient list, they are allowed to use up those labels for the new food formulation—even though the label does not match what is actually in the food. In other words, there’s no telling what is really in commercial dog foods.

Protein Analysis: Pet food labels are required to list and are analyzed for “crude protein.” However, the way this ingredient is actually measured is by looking at the nitrogen level of the substance, since protein is high in nitrogen. So an unscrupulous supplier of wheat gluten (a common source of pet food protein) could adulterate their raw ingredient with some other compound that is high in nitrogen – such as melamine – and make their gluten look especially nutritious while in reality it is more toxic.

“Whole” Meat: You would think that seeing a whole meat such as “whole chicken” on the ingredient list of a dry dog food would be a good thing. It certainly sounds more wholesome than “chicken meal.” You just fell into another pet food label trap. Whole chicken is 70 percent water. This water is removed during food processing reducing whole chicken to chicken meal. It takes about three pounds of whole chicken to make one pound of chicken meal. The ingredients as listed on the label are in order of pre-processed weight. So having “chicken meal” as the first ingredient is three times more impressive than having “whole chicken” listed first. A whole meat ingredient is just another ploy to make it appear that there is more meat in the product.

...Many food companies try to hide the amount of grain [in their food] in clever ways. Sometimes they fraction the grain. For example, wheat flower and ground wheat can be listed as two different ingredients even though the only difference between the two is the size of the ground particle. ...Another ploy is to include several grains so there is proportionately more meat than any one grain. Both of these techniques allow the meat component to be brought to the top of the ingredient list and this makes the food *look* more healthful. The lesson here is to look at the first four or five ingredients on a pet food label to get a better idea of the amount of grain in the diet.”

Taken from the book *The Holistic Health Guide: Natural Care for the Whole Dog*, by Doug Knueven, DVM
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For more information on natural nutrition and general holistic health for dogs read Dr. Doug’s new book, *The Holistic Health Guide: Natural Care for the Whole Dog*, available in book stores, pet shops and on line.

