

The Value of Premium Pet Nutrition

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You've no doubt heard the saying, "You are what you eat." It is certainly true that the body can only build tissues (muscle, bone, brain, etc.) and maintain function based on the raw materials with which it is provided. Keep in mind that this same concept is just as true for our animal companions.

Given this premise, what constitutes wholesome nutrition for pets? The standard answer is, "Any commercial, processed pet food that is deemed complete and balanced." I would contend that this "common wisdom" may not be so smart after all.

Looking at the label it quickly becomes evident that foods meant for dogs and cats have some odd ingredients. Usually, a grain of some sort is one of the first on the list. There are two reasons for this, cost and convenience. Grains are a cheap source of calories and you cannot make a dry food without carbohydrates. Note that neither of these reasons has anything to do with the nutritional needs of dogs and cats – they were never meant to eat grains.

The carbohydrates provided by grains are not only unnecessary in a pet's diet; they can actually contribute to adverse health conditions including obesity, diabetes, allergies, poor athletic performance and cancer. Yes, studies show that cancer cells preferentially feed off of carbohydrates.

Meat unfit for human consumption can end up in pet foods. In fact, the FDA has found traces of Pentobarbital (the drug used to euthanize pets) in commercial pet foods, proving it truly is a "dog eat dog" world.

If you are comforted by the label claim that the diet is "100% complete and balanced," you shouldn't be. Even the veterinary nutritionist Dr. Tony Buffington has stated, "The recommendation to feed one food for the life of an animal gives nutritionists more credit than we deserve." The experts know that many commercial pet foods are not nutritionally sound.

Finally, there is the issue of additives and preservatives. Did you know that the average 25 pound dog eating conventional, commercial dry dog food consumes between six and nine pounds of preservatives per year? This cannot be a healthy situation.

It is impossible to make a cheap pet food with quality ingredients. Given the importance of good nutrition to a pet's health, it makes sense (and cents – as in savings in veterinary bills) to feed your pet a natural, high quality pet food.

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.

