



Levittown Animal Hospital

Healing Long Island's Pets Since 1965
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Q: What's the best food for my pet?

A: Especially since the big food recall, this is one of the most asked questions among dog and cat owners. While there isn't necessarily a quick and easy answer, there are definitely some guidelines you can follow to ensure you're providing good nutrition for your little friends:

- 1) Your pet has to eat the food. If they refuse to eat it, even after letting them get really hungry, then the food is no good.
- 2) You should be able to afford the food. This may not be an issue with your 4 pound Yorkie, but if you have 6 cats and a couple of Great Danes in the house, you'll need to establish a budget for pet food.
- 3) The food should be widely available. If you need to travel three towns over to the one little store that carries your special food, it's not the right choice for you.
- 4) The food should be from a respectable, established, nationally recognized manufacturer. Only these companies have enough funds to conduct proper quality control and nutritional research.
- 5) The food label should include an AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) statement, ensuring that the food meets the nutritional requirements for your pet.
- 6) The food should be matched to your pet's age and [often] breed. Don't feed a large breed puppy food to a 13 year old Chihuahua. Similarly, cats are not small dogs, so stick with cat food for cats and dog food for dogs.
- 7) I never ever recommend raw diets, and it is rare that I will support the feeding of a home-cooked diet.
- 8) There is a wide range of quality when it comes to pet foods. In general, you get what you pay for. However, don't be fooled by clever marketing, fancy packaging or buzzwords such as "natural" or "organic!" When in doubt, ask your veterinarian, not a breeder or the salesperson at the pet store.

Here is a short list of the most popular "mainstream" premium food manufacturers. I have had personal experience feeding all of these foods to my own pets: Eukanuba, IAMS, Royal Canin, and Science Diet. With the exception of IAMS, you will not find these brands at your supermarket. If you prefer to feed a food made with ingredients fit for human consumption or organic meats, you may want to try: Innova EVO, Canine Caviar, Wellness, Solid Gold, or Eagle Pack. I may have very specific brand/variety recommendations if we need to utilize food to address a medical concern.

What do my pets get right now? Krieger eats Hill's Science Diet for Sensitive Skin, and Jodie eats Innova EVO.

Dennis Leon, DVM
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