

HVAH Newsletter

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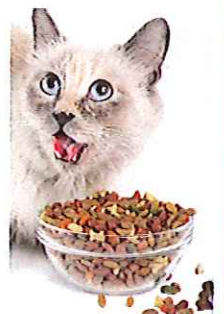
Choosing A Diet For Your Dog Or Cat ... By Dr. Brad Pondish



It can be challenging for pet owners to determine the right diet choice for their furry friends. Here are some things to consider when selecting a product to feed your pet. It is important to understand that while the label can include some helpful information, it is also a marketing tool to attract pet owners. (After all, our pets aren't picking out their own foods!) Many of the unregulated terms such as "holistic", "premium", or "human grade" are of little help in assessing the nutritional value of a particular food.

- 1. Who developed and formulated the diet?** The formula should be developed by someone with a thorough understanding of the nutritional needs of dogs and cats as well as food science. In the case of a commercial canned or kibble diet, the manufacturer should employ a qualified nutritionist (either PhD in animal nutrition or board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition or the European College of Veterinary Comparative Nutrition.)
- 2. Who manufactured the diet?** Companies that own the manufacturing equipment or are a large organization are more likely to have better controls in place to ensure quality and prevent production errors. Smaller companies or those that outsource production may not always have the resources to do post-production quality assurance and safety testing, although this does not always hold true. The label should include the manufacturer's contact information; sometimes the only way to answer some of these questions may be to call or e-mail and ask. If the manufacturer cannot or will not provide any of this information, you should be cautious about feeding that brand.
- 3. Is the food complete and balanced for my pet's life stage?** In the United States, commercial diets will include an AAFCO (The Association of American Feed Control Officials) nutritional adequacy statement. This will either indicate that the food was determined to be complete and balanced via feeding trials (better) or nutrient analysis and for which life stage the food is appropriate (e.g. for all life stages or maintenance.) In general, growing or pregnant animals should be fed a diet for all life stages and adult animals should be fed a diet intended for maintenance. If a diet label reads that it is "for intermittent or supplemental use only", then it is not complete and balanced and would only be acceptable if it was a veterinary prescription diet to treat a specific medical condition.
- 4. Is it safe for you and your pet?** Feeding raw meat diets, whether prepared at home or purchased from a veterinarian or pet supply store, will increase your household's risk of exposure to pathogenic bacteria, such as Salmonella, E. coli, Campylobacter, and Listeria. Yes, there have been recalls for Salmonella contamination in dry pet foods as well, but this is still a much lower percentage than the bacterial counts in raw meat products.
- 5. Other things to consider:**
 - A.** While a lot of pets can tolerate sudden changes of brand or type of food, a more gradual transition will help minimize gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting or diarrhea. Changing brands of food occasionally is not necessarily harmful (unless a pet is on a prescription food) and sometimes can help make up any small deficiencies that staying with one formula lifelong might create.
 - B.** Prescription diets are part of your pet's "medicine". If your pet suffers from a medical condition such as diabetes, kidney disease, obesity, bladder stones, etc. for which it has been treated with a prescription diet, the diet should never be stopped or fed to another pet in the house without first consulting your vet.
 - C.** Cats are not small dogs. This may seem like a silly or obvious statement but it is amazing just how different their nutritional needs are. For example, cats are *obligate carnivores*, which means that they will get sick if not fed a diet containing meat protein, while dogs can survive on a vegetarian diet. Additionally, most cats tend to be healthier when fed a canned-only diet with higher moisture and protein levels, as opposed to dogs which generally can thrive on an entirely kibble diet.
 - D.** "The proof is in the pudding". If your pet is doing very well on their current diet (e.g. at an ideal weight, has lustrous/healthy fur and skin, has no gastrointestinal problems such as diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss/gain or poor appetite and is active and energetic) then often the best plan is to make no changes!

If you have questions or would like specific recommendations about your pet's diet, please feel free to schedule a nutrition consultation with the doctors at Hunt Valley Animal Hospital!



"Meet Our Staff" Spotlight is on ... Megan

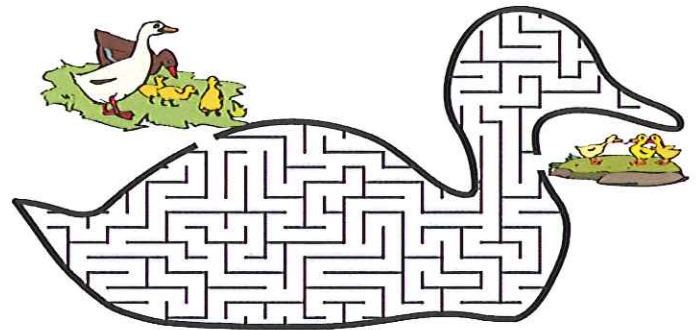
Megan has been part of HVAH since March, 2012. Originally from Edgemere, MD, Megan now shares her home with her longtime high school sweetheart Nick, "Camo" a Belgian Malinois/ Mastiff mix, "Diesel" an American Pit Bull Terrier, and "Jack" the cat in Dundalk, MD.



A graduate of Kenwood High School, Megan also studied Culinary Arts at Sollers Point Technical School. This summer, Megan will be attending CCBC to study Medical Coding and Billing.

Megan's primary duties are in reception, however she sometimes floats as a technician when needed. Although still getting used to the homeowner's life, she and Nick love to boat, fish, camp, archery, & crabbing. They enjoy swimming and walks with "Camo" & "Diesel" who are the best of friends - usually finding "Diesel" sitting on top of "Camo". Megan loves to cook and bake, and is always trying out new recipes.

Something some may not know about Megan, is she embarrasses very easily - and has often put off attending college for fear of having to take a mandatory speaking class.



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AVMA advises ... "Don't skip vaccinations" -

Diseases such as rabies and distemper have been held in check but could roar back if the anti-vaccination movement making headlines in human medicine emerges on the animal side, the American Veterinary Medical Association is warning.

The AVMA noted that the domestic dog variant of rabies has been eliminated in the US because of widespread vaccinations and that diseases such as distemper, parvovirus, and panleukopenia aren't prevalent anymore.

"This trend could easily be reversed, however, by the same circumstances that are allowing measles to spread in the US," the AVMA reported.

The rabies vaccine in animals also reduces the chance of people contracting the deadly disease.

"Unvaccinated pets are not only a risk to themselves, but pose a threat to other animals, including young pets that have not yet received their full series of vaccines and thus are not fully protected, or those individuals that can't be vaccinated due to pre-existing health issues," said AVMA President Ted Cohn, DVM.

"Vaccinating your pets helps to keep them safe from serious preventable diseases, while also protecting the health and well-being of these vulnerable populations."

The AVMA acknowledged that veterinary vaccinations carry some risk. "Such adverse responses can vary from mild to severe, but most of these vaccine responses - such as fever, sluggishness and reduced appetite - are rare, mild, and resolve quickly," the organization stated. "For the majority of pets, the benefits of vaccinations far outweigh the risks."

"While there are certain core vaccines recommended for all dogs and cats, and some that may be required by law, there are other vaccines that may or may not be necessary due to the pet's age, health, and lifestyle," the AVMA stated.

Pet owners concerned about vaccinations should consult one of veterinarians here at Hunt Valley Animal Hospital.

IT'S TOO HOT TO LEAVE YOUR DOG IN THE CAR

Dogs suffer from heatstroke and die every year when owners leave them in parked, hot cars. Leaving the windows down or parking in the shade is not enough to prevent this.

AFTER JUST 10 MINUTES...

OUTSIDE



70°

85°

90°

IN CAR



90°

102°

109°



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