

Tips for Reading Labels

Follow these guidelines from Petco to determine whether a product will be good for your pet.

Start with the guaranteed analysis.

Much like human food, the guaranteed analysis on any package or can of pet food will tell you the overall fat, protein, fiber, and moisture content of the food. Look for a healthy balance of nutrients and moisture.

Look for a balance of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and other nutrient sources that is right for your pet and its life stage.

For example, puppies require more protein than adult dogs for healthy growth, while senior dogs need more fiber and moisture to help with digestion and joint health.

Don't guess the quality by the package.

Just because a package is covered with wholesome-looking ingredients doesn't mean the food is nutritious. Read the small print on the ingredient list and nutrition label instead of depending on illustrations or advertising.

PREMIUM PET FOOD LABEL

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:
CRUDE PROTEIN 23.0% MIN.
CRUDE FAT 13.0% MIN.
CRUDE FIBER 3.0% MAX.
MOISTURE 10.0% MAX.
OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS 0.5% MIN.
OMEGA-6 FATTY ACIDS 10.0% MIN.

INGREDIENTS: Chicken, Brown Rice, Lamb Meal, Oatmeal Barley, Duck Meal, Potatoes, Carrots, Chicken Fat (preserved with natural mixed tocopherols), Tomato Pomace, Natural Flavor, Canola Oil, Brewers Yeast, Salmon Meal, Salmon Oil, Whole Ground Flaxseed, Potassium Chloride, Choline Chloride, Taurine, Spinach, Parsley Flakes, Cranberries, L-Lysine, L-Carnitine, Yucca Schidigera Extract, Dried Kelp, Vitamin E Supplement, Iron Proteinatate, Zinc Proteinatate, Copper Proteinatate, Ferrous Sulfate, Zinc Sulfate, Copper Sulfate, Potassium Iodide, Thiamine Mononitrate (Vitamin B-1), Manganese Proteinatate, Manganous Oxide, Ascorbic Acid, Vitamin A Supplement, Viotin, Calcium Pantothenate, Manganese Sulfate, Sodium Selenite, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride (Vitamin B-6), Vitamin B-12 Supplement, Riboflavin (Vitamin B-2), Vitamin D-3 Supplement, Folic Acid.

BASIC PET FOOD LABEL

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:
CRUDE PROTEIN (MIN) 18.0%
CRUDE FAT (MIN) 5.0%
CRUDE FIBER (MAX) 8.0%
MOISTURE (MAX) 33.0%

INGREDIENTS: Wheat flour, soybean grits, soybean flour, high fructose corn syrup, brewers condensed solubles, beef, water, liver, calcium carbonate, phosphoric acid, salt, sorbic acid (added to prevent spoilage), calcium propionate (added to prevent spoilage), DL-Methionine, choline chloride, zinc oxide, vitamin supplements (E, B-12, A, D-3), ferrous sulfate, ethoxyquin (a preservative), added color (Red 40), niacin, riboflavin supplement, calcium pantothenate, manganese sulfate, biotin, thiamine mononitrate, folic acid, copper sulfate, ... calcium iodate.

Don't assume that what's good for you is good for your pet.

While we're trained to eat a low-fat diet, dogs and cats get most of their energy from fat and need fat, which should account for at least 20 percent of their overall diet.

Determine primary ingredients and protein sources.

Ingredients on pet food labels are listed by weight, but whole meats contain a lot of water, so they weigh more than other ingredients. For that reason, it's important to look beyond the first two or three ingredients listed. Look at the first five to eight ingredients and ensure there is a healthy combination of high-quality protein sources.

The combination of ingredients is more important than any single ingredient.

Food can contain more than one form of the same ingredient, so read the entire label for a healthy balance of protein, fat, and carbohydrate sources with natural names you recognize.