

Pet Food Myths

Choosing the best food for our four legged friend can be a tough task. The marketing of pet food often takes common human food trends and then transfers them into selling pet foods. By educating yourself on some of the common myths, it can help in making a decision on which food to select.

By-Products

Myth: By-Products are the leftover parts of the animals. such as hooves or feathers and are not nutritious.

Fact: By-Products are defined as secondary products produced in addition to the principal product and include the non-rendered, clean parts, other than meat, derived from slaughtered mammals. This includes, but is not limited to, lung, spleen, kidney, brain, liver, blood, bone, partially defatted low-temperature fatty tissue and stomachs and intestines freed of their contents. This does not include hair, horns, teeth and hooves. When catching prey in the wild, animals will often eat organs, which are nutritious to cats and dogs. If a pet were only to eat muscle meat, they would develop nutritional deficiencies.

Many commonly consumed "human foods" contain by-products. Some common human foods that are considered a by-product include chicken stock, corn oil and wheat bran.

Corn

Myth: Corn is used as filler, and can cause food allergies.

Fact: Fillers are defined as ingredients that serve no nutritional purpose, and corn does not fit that description. Corn is a nutritionally superior grain, compared with other grains used in pet foods because it contains a balance of nutrients not found in other grains. Corn provides a highly-available source of complex carbohydrates and substantial quantities of linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid that is important for healthy skin. Corn also provides essential amino acids and fiber. Corn is not a common cause of food allergies in pets. More than 70-80% of the food allergies in pets are caused by beef, dairy and wheat in dogs or fish in cats.

In some cases corn has unfairly received a bad reputation, which has caused some pet foods to use potatoes in its place. The result is a food that is higher in calories. Pets are more likely to become obese on a higher calorie food.

Real Meat

Myth: Listing real meat as the first ingredient on the pet food label is important

Fact: Pet food ingredients are listed in order of weight on the label. Real meat or other terms used, such as whole chicken or fresh meat, contain a large portion of water. There may actually be less meat than expected in the pet food because of this water weight. Whole chicken will contain chicken meat, chicken fat and chicken by-product. Meat meal is a product that is concentrated meat with the water and fat separated and removed.

For questions on your pet's diet or how to read your pet's food label, please contact your veterinarian at The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.