

## HOW TO EVALUATE FOOD FOR YOUR PET

With so many pet foods out there, how do you choose the best food for your dog or cat? Start by talking to your veterinarian about diets specific to your pet's health status and lifestage and following these guidelines.

### THE AAFCO STATEMENT

**Where is it?** The side or back of the food bag or can.

**What does "Complete and Balanced" mean?** The AAFCO statement speaks to the nutritional adequacy of the pet food, ensuring that your pet's food contains all nutrients required by your pet in the correct amounts and ratios for his or her life stage.

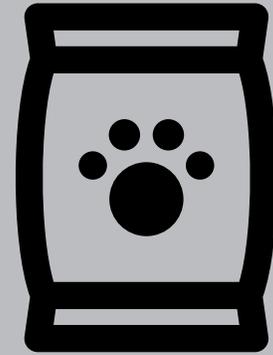
**What does "Formulated to meet the nutritional levels" mean?** This phrase means that the diet meets the requirements set by AAFCO (complete and balanced for the specific lifestage listed). This phrase is good, but not quite the gold standard, which involves completing a feeding test.

**What is a feeding test?** The phrase "Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures" means that dogs or cats were fed this diet following specific protocols set by AAFCO and their health was evaluated and monitored to ensure this diet was appropriate. This is the gold standard for pet food products.

**What does it apply to?** Every AAFCO statement designates a specific lifestage the diet was formulated for. We recommend that you feed your pet a food specific to his or her life stage, especially since different life stages require different nutrients. Life stages recognized by AAFCO include Gestation/Lactation, Growth (puppy/kitten), Adult Maintenance, All Life Stages.

**What does "All Life Stages" mean?** This phrase means that the food meets the minimum requirements set for all of the lifestages, including Gestation/Lactation, Growth, and Adult Maintenance. However, growing kittens and puppies require higher levels of certain ingredients like protein, fat, calcium and phosphorus that may be too high to give to adult pets.

We consider All Life Stages diets to be formulated like Growth diets and recommended feeding your pet a diet specific for his or her life stage instead. Ask your veterinarian about diets specific for large breed puppies, mature adults and aging pets.



### WHO MAKES YOUR PET FOOD?

Use this checklist to help you select a pet food that ensures your pet is eating a balanced and nutritional product.

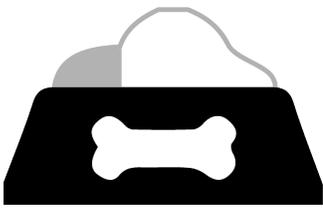
- The company has veterinarians and veterinary nutritionists on staff.
- The company researches their products and have conducted feeding trials.
- The company has strict quality control measures, with multiple checkpoints during production to ensure quality is maintained.
- The company owns and runs their manufacturing facilities.

If this information is not readily available on the company's website or food packaging, call and talk to a representative.

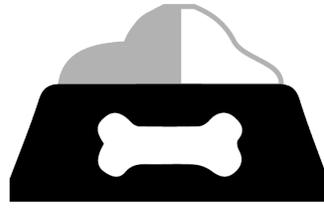
**Companies that meet the above-mentioned criteria: Hill's Pet Nutrition, Royal Canin, and Purina Pet Care Company.**

# TRANSITIONING YOUR PET TO A NEW DIET

When you are switching your pet to a new food, you should always do so gradually to avoid causing gastrointestinal upset.



**Day 1-2**  
25% new food



**Day 3-4**  
50% new food



**Day 5-6**  
75% new food



**Day 7**  
100% new food

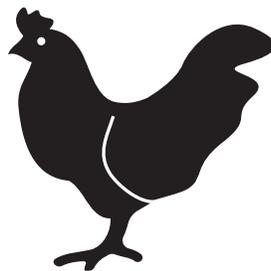
Changing your pet's diet can upset their stomach. Take the time to gradually switch your pet to a new mature diet over the course of a week. Every couple of days, mix 25 percent more of the new pet food into your pet's old pet food.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Did you know that food product names are regulated by AAFCO? The specific words used in a product name directly link to a percentage of ingredient. Check out these examples:

### “BINGO'S CHICKEN DOG FOOD”

This name means that chicken must account for at least 70 percent of ingredients by weight, with water included, and at least 95 percent of ingredients by weight when water is excluded.

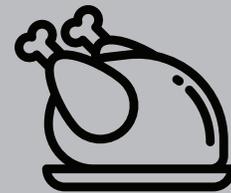


### “BINGO'S CHICKEN ENTREE”

This name means that chicken must account for at least 10 percent of ingredients by weight of the total product, with water included, and at least 25 percent of ingredients by weight when water is excluded. Other words in this category include dinner, meal and platter.

### “BINGO'S DOG FOOD WITH CHICKEN”

This name means that chicken must account for at least 3 percent of the total product.



## THE INGREDIENT LIST

Unless you want to avoid a specific ingredient, **the ingredient list is not helpful**. It does not provide any nutritional value related to food, just a list of ingredients in descending order by weight.

The first ingredient listed accounts for the highest percentage of the product's weight. **It is very important to remember that water is included in this weight.**

For example, Whole Chicken is about 70 percent moisture and Chicken Meal is about 10 percent moisture. This means that Whole Chicken will be listed higher on the ingredient list because of the increased weight from water, even if both ingredients provide the same amount of actual protein.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Association of American Feed Control Officials: [www.aafco.org](http://www.aafco.org)

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association: [www.wsava.org](http://www.wsava.org)

The American College of Veterinary Nutrition: [www.acvn.org/nutrition-resources](http://www.acvn.org/nutrition-resources)

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