



Choosing a Pet Food

CAN DOGS AND CATS EAT THE SAME FOOD?

Cats, which are obligate carnivores, require certain nutrients in their diet that are not found in dog foods. Pet foods are formulated to meet the unique essential nutrient requirements of each species and to provide optimal nutrition for a long, healthy life.



Key Messages

- Cats and dogs have different nutrient requirements. Although similar ingredients may be used, dog and cat foods are not formulated to the same recipes. Dog food will be deficient in several key nutrients required by cats.
- Consuming a small amount of food intended for the other species should not be an issue. However, it is not recommended to feed cat food to dogs or vice versa.
- If a cat is fed only dog food, deficiencies in protein, amino acids, fatty acids and vitamins would be expected.
- Since cat foods tend to be more calorically dense and higher in fat and protein, dogs fed only cat food may gain extra weight, experience gastrointestinal upset or develop pancreatitis if sensitive to fat levels.

Additional Resources

Armstrong, P. J., Gross, K. L., Becvarova, I., & Debraekeleer, J. (2010). Introduction to feeding normal cats. In M. S. Hand, C. D. Thatcher, R. L. Remillard, P. Roudebush, & B. J. Novotny (Eds.), *Small animal clinical nutrition* (5th ed., pp. 361–372). Mark Morris Institute.

Case, L. P., Daristotle, L., Hayek, M. G., & Raasch, M. F. (2011). *Canine and feline nutrition: A resource for companion animal professionals* (3rd ed.). Mosby Elsevier.

Fascetti, A. J., & Delaney, S. J. (2012). Feeding the healthy dog and cat. In A. J. Fascetti & S. J. Delaney (Eds.), *Applied veterinary clinical nutrition* (pp. 75–94). Wiley-Blackwell.

The Purina Institute aims to help put nutrition at the forefront of pet health discussions by providing user-friendly, science-based information that helps pets live longer, healthier lives.