



Choosing a Pet Food

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRY, SEMI-MOIST AND WET PET FOODS?

Despite the large number and variety of commercial pet foods available, pet foods can be grouped into one of three basic physical forms that vary primarily by their water content.



The form does not determine the quality of the food. The type of food to feed typically is decided by pet or owner preference.

- **Dry food** typically contains < 20% moisture, except in Europe (< 14%) and Brazil (< 12%).
 - The crunchy kibbles are convenient to feed and store, and often cost less to feed than wet or semi-moist foods on a cost-per-calorie basis.
 - Due to their lower moisture content, dry foods do not spoil and can be fed free-choice, if desired.
 - A potential disadvantage of dry food may be lower palatability when compared to semi-moist and wet diets.
- Water content of **semi-moist pet food** can range from 20% up to 65%, except in Europe (14% to 60%).
 - Semi-moist foods are convenient to feed, easy to store and generally more palatable to pets than dry food.
 - Semi-moist foods may contain readily available simple carbohydrates that are not recommended for diabetic cats and dogs or those that need blood glucose regulation.

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- **Wet foods** contain $\geq 65\%$ moisture, except in Europe ($\geq 60\%$ moisture).
 - Since these foods have high water content, they are a source of dietary water and contribute to pet hydration.
 - Wet foods typically contain higher levels of protein, phosphorus, sodium and fat than dry or semi-moist foods when compared on a dry-matter basis.
 - Wet food typically offers greater palatability at a higher cost than dry and semi-moist diets on a cost-per-calorie basis.

Additional Resources

Association of American Feed Control Officials. (2020). *2020 Official publication*. <https://aafco.mocaworks.com/v25/n1/#/home/>

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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.