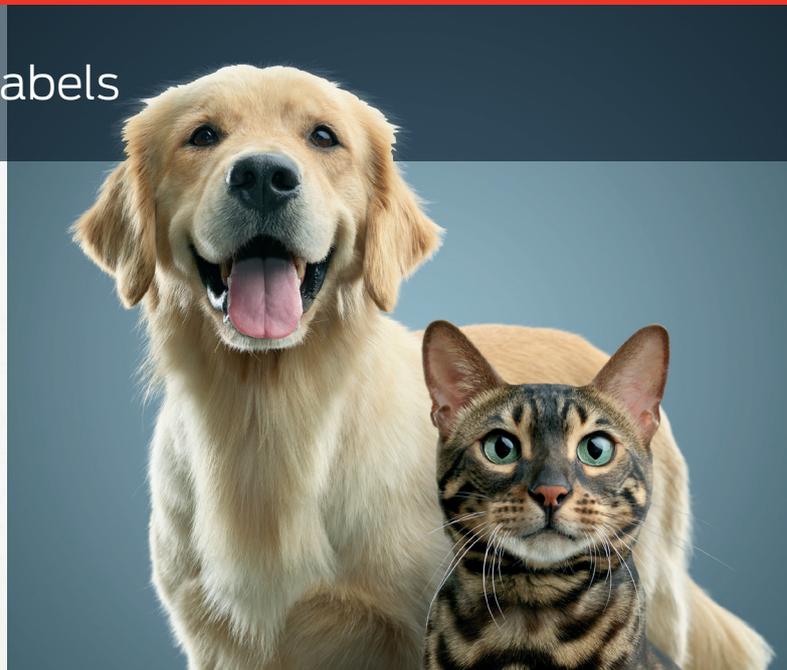


HOT TOPIC

Feeding guidelines on pet food labels



In focus

Feeding guidelines are designed to help owners determine the quantity of food to feed their pets to ensure an optimal body condition, but owners may be unsure how to use them.

The Purina Institute provides the scientific facts to support your nutritional conversations.

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How to use feeding guidelines

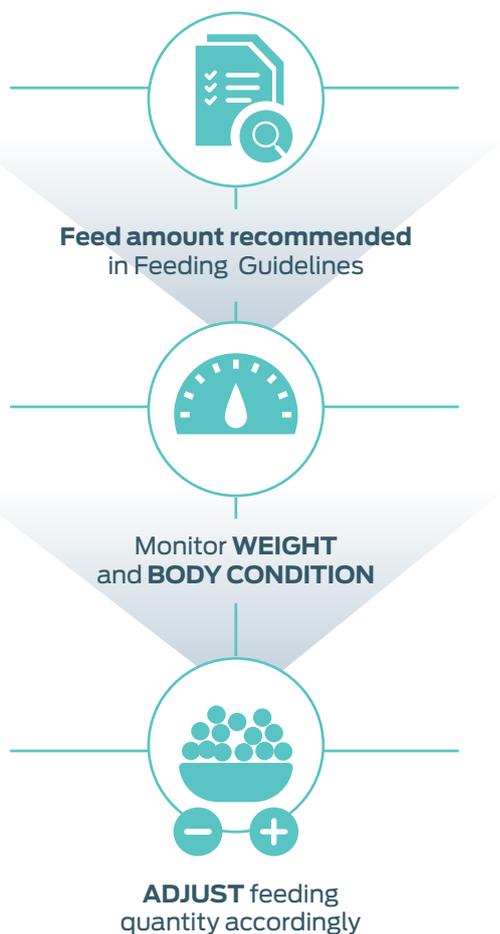
Pet food regulations require that all pet foods labeled as 'complete and balanced'¹ or 'complete pet food'² must include feeding guidelines on the label.³ Many commercial treats and snacks will also provide feeding guidelines regarding how many to feed per day.

Key points to remember:

- Since the calorie content of all pet foods differs (i.e., some dry complete pet foods can vary in calorie content by as much as 30%), it is important to check the guidelines on the label, particularly when starting a pet on a new food. The recommended daily feeding amount can then be divided into the preferred number of meals per day.
- Feeding guidelines are calculated based on the calorie content of the food and the average calories a pet needs, according to their body weight and life stage.⁴ For example, puppies and kittens need more calories per kilogram of body weight than an adult because additional calories are required for growth.

■ The quantities stated in **feeding guidelines are based on an average pet and should be used as a starting point** to determine how much to feed. Each pet is an individual and many factors, such as their activity level, age, breed, reproductive status and the environment in which they live,³ can all impact the amount of calories a pet needs.

Individual requirements can vary widely between animals of the same body weight – sometimes as much as 50%.⁵ Less active adult pets may need fewer calories to keep them at a healthy weight, whereas more active pets of the same body weight will burn up more calories and hence may need more food.



How do you know you are feeding the correct amount of food?

Regularly monitoring both the pet's weight and body condition using the **Purina 9-point Body Condition Score system** (available for both dogs⁶ and cats⁷) will indicate if the pet is receiving the correct amount of calories for their individual needs. If a pet gains or loses weight, feeding amounts can be adjusted as needed.³

How an ideal body condition looks and feels:

	Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering
	Waist easily seen when viewed from above
	Abdomen tucked up when viewed from the side
	Observe waist behind ribs
	Ribs palpable with slight fat covering
	Abdominal fat pad minimal

Should the quantity of food be adjusted when giving treats?

It is important to remember that all treats and snacks add calories. Therefore, the calories from treats should be counted towards the total daily calorie intake, reducing the quantity of the main meal accordingly.

Feeding treats or small amounts of human food can contribute a surprising amount of calories, especially when considering that dogs and cats need significantly less than ourselves. Most manufacturers of treats and snacks provide a guideline on how many to feed per day. When feeding a complete food it is generally recommended that treats do not exceed 10% of a pet's daily calorie intake.⁸

10kg BWt
450 calories / day

Small piece of bacon = **10%** daily calories

4.5kg BWt
270 calories / day

Small piece of cheese = **15%** daily calories

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- 7 Laflamme, D. P. (1997). Development and validation of a body condition score system for cats: a clinical tool. *Feline Practice*, 25(5-6), 13–18.
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