

Pet  
Care





# What's in your Pet's Food

When it comes to choosing your pet's food, it's just as important to read the labels for his food as it is for yours.

Here are some common ingredients in pet food and what they mean for you and for your pet.

## BY PRODUCTS, MEAL AND MORE

These terms commonly refer to what's left after animals are slaughtered for human consumption, PetMD says. This includes blood, organs and more. Rendered animals that are unfit for human consumption can also be added to pet food. The meal refers to dried protein solids from rendered carcasses. These ingredients often serve to keep protein levels high in pet food.

## NATURAL PET FOODS

Foods labeled as natural fall under the jurisdiction of the Association of Animal Feed Control Officials. Food can only be called natural if it has ingredients from only plant, animal or mined sources. It cannot be highly processed or contain chemically synthetic ingredients, such as artificial flavors, preservatives or colorings.

## INGREDIENTS

The AAFCO has established four rules about ingredients in pet food.

1. At least 95% of the food



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must be the named ingredient. If the label says "chicken cat food," it has to be 95% chicken. If two ingredients are named together, such as "chicken and liver for cats," the first ingredient must be the higher percent and both ingredients together must make up 95% of the total weight.

2. When the named product

contains at least 25% but less than 95% of the total weight, the name must include a descriptive term, such as dinner, entree, grill or formula. For example, "liver dinner dog food" must contain at least 25% liver.

3. The "with" label identifies extra or special ingredients that make up at least 3% of the

food. For instance, "dog food with chicken" can have only 3% chicken.

4. Flavor in the title means that a specific percentage of meat is not required but it must contain an amount of flavor sufficient to be detected.

## AAFCO STATEMENTS

Look for a statement on your

pet's food from AAFCO. Fetch by WebMD says most pet foods meant to be fed regularly will say "complete and balanced," meaning it can be fed daily.

A statement that says "supplemental and intermittent use" means that it's meant as a treat and should make up no more than 10% of your pet's daily calories.

# Exercising your Dog

Just like with people, different kinds of dogs need different levels of exercise to be happy and healthy.

How much exercise is good for your pup depends on your dog's age, health and breed. Border collies, for instance, bred for long days of running after sheep, will need much more exercise than a couch potato basset hound. Keep the future dog's energy level in mind when you're choosing a puppy to bring home.

## PUPPIES

No matter your dog's breed, it's universally true that puppies have more energy than adult dogs. They require more exercise in short bursts, the American Kennel Club says, so several short walks or play sessions throughout the day are preferable to one longer walk. Your vet or breeder can give you a good idea of how much exercise your very own puppy or dog needs, so talk with them about it at your next appointment.

## DOGS

An adult dog's exercise levels vary widely. Talk to your vet about how much exercise is healthy for your dog – this is especially true if your pup is prone to health problems related to hip dysplasia or respiratory issues. If you're dog isn't used to exercise, work him up into a regular



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routine, just like you would if you hadn't been to the gym in a while.

### OTHER IDEAS FOR GETTING SOME EXERCISE

Other than walks around

the block, which are great for you and for Fido, here are some other ideas for getting some exercise with your pet from the AKC.

**Hiking.** Take your dog along on your next outdoor adventure. Just make sure to

follow rules about leashing and check your pup carefully for ticks afterward.

**Swimming.** If your dog loves the water, taking him for a dip with you is a great idea. Swimming provides low-impact exercise for their joints

and a life jacket can help your dog stay in the water longer and get more of a workout.

**Fetch.** Go beyond just balls and toss frisbees or other toys. Vary the terrain, too. Toss a ball uphill or chuck a frisbee into the water.



# How to Find a Great Vet

Finding a good veterinarian is every bit as important as finding a good family doctor, because a veterinarian is a family doctor, just for your four-legged, feathered and clawed friends.

Here are some tips for finding a great vet from the American Veterinary Association.

## MAKE SURE YOUR VET FITS YOUR LIFESTYLE

Consider location, office hours, payment options and the range of services provided. You also want to look at the friendliness of the doctors and staff; they're going to be with you on some of the best and worst days. Find a veterinarian who can best meet your pet's needs and with whom you feel comfortable establishing a long-term relationship.



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## HOW TO LOOK FOR A VET

Ask a friend. Talk to some of your pet-owning friends about why they chose their veterinarian and what they like and dislike about their practice.

Breed clubs and special interest groups. Area breed clubs for certain kinds of animals can be great resources of information because they have established a strong relationship with practices that are

familiar with the health problems for that particular breed. You can also look into special interest groups in your area, such as reptile clubs and more.

Your current veterinarian. If you're switching vet practices because you're moving, you can ask your current vet for a recommendation in your new city. If you've just moved and need a vet, find one before your pet needs one. An emergency isn't a great time to find

out you don't get along with the veterinarian or their staff.

## WHEN YOU FIND A VET

Once you've narrowed down your list, pay a visit to the office. Discuss your pet and ask questions about fees, services and payment policies. Here are some questions to consider:

- What are the regular office hours?
- Who covers the practice

when the veterinarian isn't available?

- Do they have after-hours coverage or do they refer emergency cases to another clinic?

- What is the average wait time for an appointment?

- How are telephone calls handled?

- How do the staff and doctors interact with your pet?

- What methods of payment are accepted?

- Does the hospital accept pet insurance?

- What financial assistance is available?

- Are there non-medical services, such as boarding or grooming?

- Is the facility clean and orderly?

- Can you tour non-public areas?

- What professional affiliations does the staff have or maintain?

# Dog Grooming 101

Keeping your pet healthy and hygienic is an important part of pet ownership.

Your dog or cat will feel better and look better when you keep them groomed. While dogs take care of some grooming themselves, they need your help from time to time. Here are some grooming tips for you from the ASPCA.

## BATHING

Human shampoos aren't toxic, the ASPCA says, but they can contain fragrances and chemicals that may irritate your dog's skin. It's best to choose a shampoo formulated just for dogs.

You should bathe your dog at least once every three months, the ASPCA says, but some dogs require more frequent baths if they spend a lot of time outside or have skin problems.

Start your dog's bath time by giving them a good brushing to remove dead hair, then put them in a tub or sink with about four inches of warm water. Using a sprayer or a plastic pitcher, completely wet your pup, taking care not to get water directly in their eyes, ears or nose. Massage in shampoo, working from head to tail, then rinse and repeat as needed. Dry your dog with a large towel, or, if needed a hair dryer, taking care not to get it too close to his sensitive skin.

If your dog has loose skin or wrinkles, clean the folds of skin with damp cotton, such as a



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cloth or a swab. Always thoroughly dry the areas between the folds.

## DENTAL CARE

Bacteria and plaque-forming foods can cause build-up on your dog's teeth, causing gingivitis, tooth loss and other health problems. The ASPCA

recommends brushing your dog's teeth two to three times per week.

To get your dog used to teeth brushing, start by massaging their lips with your finger in a circular motion for 30-60 seconds once or twice a day for a few weeks. Then, move on to their teeth and gums with a bit

of dog-formulated toothpaste. Next, introduce a toothbrush formulated for dogs or cats. Notice that it's smaller than your toothbrush and has softer bristles.

Place the toothbrush in your dog's mouth at a 45-degree angle and clean in small, circular motions. Work on one area

of the mouth at a time, lifting your dog's lips as necessary. The side of the tooth that touches the cheek usually has the most tarter, and giving a final downward stroke can help remove it. Don't fight your dog over the inner surfaces of their teeth; only a small amount of tartar accumulates there.



# Cat Grooming 101

Cats do a lot of their grooming themselves, sometimes very loudly or at the worst possible time.

But there are some times when they need a little human help, too. If your cat doesn't tolerate your grooming attention, make an appointment with your vet or a professional groomer to let them take care of it, the ASPCA says.

## BATHING

Most cats can efficiently give themselves a bath, but if they get into something sticky or smelly, you may need to take matters into your own hands. The ASPCA advises making bath time when Kitty is at her most mellow, perhaps after an intense play session. And cut those claws before bath time for your own safety.

Start the bath with a good brushing. Then, place cotton in your cat's ears to keep water out. Place a rubber mat in the sink or tub where the bath will take place, then add three or four inches of warm water. Use a sprayer or plastic cup to wet your pet, keeping water out of the cat's eyes, ears and nose. Massage in cat shampoo – avoid human shampoo, which can dry out her skin – mixed one part shampoo to five parts water. Work from head to tail in the

direction of hair growth.

Rinse Kitty with the sprayer or cup, removing all the residue because it can irritate the skin. Wipe your cat's face with a wet washcloth, then wrap her in a large towel and dry her in a warm place away from drafts. If your cat doesn't mind the noise, you can use a blow dryer on the lowest heat setting.

## SKIN PROBLEMS

Excessive Itching and scratching can be a symptom of a wide range of issues, the ASPCA says. Some symptoms of skin problems include:

- Constant scratching, licking and chewing at the skin, especially around the head and neck.
- Scabs, redness or inflammation.
- Round, scaly patches on the face and paws.
- Dry, flaky or irritated skin.
- Hair loss and bald patches.
- Rashes, swelling, lumps or skin discoloration.
- Drainage of blood or pus.

Visit the vet as soon as you notice any abnormality in your cat's skin. It can be any of a range of issues from stress to allergies to more serious infections.





# Dog Park Etiquette

A trip to the dog park is a great way for your pup to get some exercise and have some fun with new puppy friends.

Benefits to dog parks include unleashed play and socialization. The Trust for Public Land reports that dog parks are one of the fastest growing park amenities in the U.S. Here's how to get your pup ready for a dog park playdate.

## WHEN YOU CAN VISIT

The American Kennel Club says that puppies younger than 4 months old or who have not had all of their vaccinations shouldn't visit dog parks or be around dogs you don't know. Dogs who spend time in dog parks should be vaccinated for Bordetella, leptospirosis and canine influenza, the AKC says, and female dogs that are in season should also stay at home.

Dogs who visit parks should also learn basic obedience commands, such as come, down and stay, and be socialized to other dogs before you go. If your pup is reactive or dog-aggressive, it's best he stay home, as should dogs that guard their owners, water, food or toys.

## EVALUATING A DOG PARK

Visit the dog park alone at first, so you can make sure it's safe and will be a fun experience for your pet.

The AKC says to inspect the fencing, making sure it's

secure and keeps dogs from crawling either under or over, with no holes or rough edges. It should also have secure gates, with double gates being the safest. This forces owners and pups to go through one gate, close it, then open another before entering or leaving, keeping dogs from escaping.

Parks should also be clean, free of trash, broken equipment and dog poop. Remember to clean up after your dog while he's in the park. Leave personal dog toys, balls, food or treats at home; these can cause doggy disagreements that can quickly get out of hand.

## WHEN YOU GO

Listen to your dog, the AKC says. If you get there and a gang of pups rushes the entrance, wait for the pack to disperse before entering. Take off your dog's leash as soon as you get into the fence so he won't feel trapped. If other dogs repeatedly roll your dog to the ground or chase your pup, intervene so that he feels safe. And don't stay too long. Thirty minutes to an hour should be plenty of play time. If a dog wants to just hang out with you or stands by the gate, listen to him and take him back home.





# Microchipping your Pet

Microchips are electronic chips enclosed in glass, about the size of a grain of rice, that carry information about your pet and you, its owner.

They're helpful in case your pet gets lost. The chip doesn't have a battery. Instead, it's activated by a scanner to transmit the information.

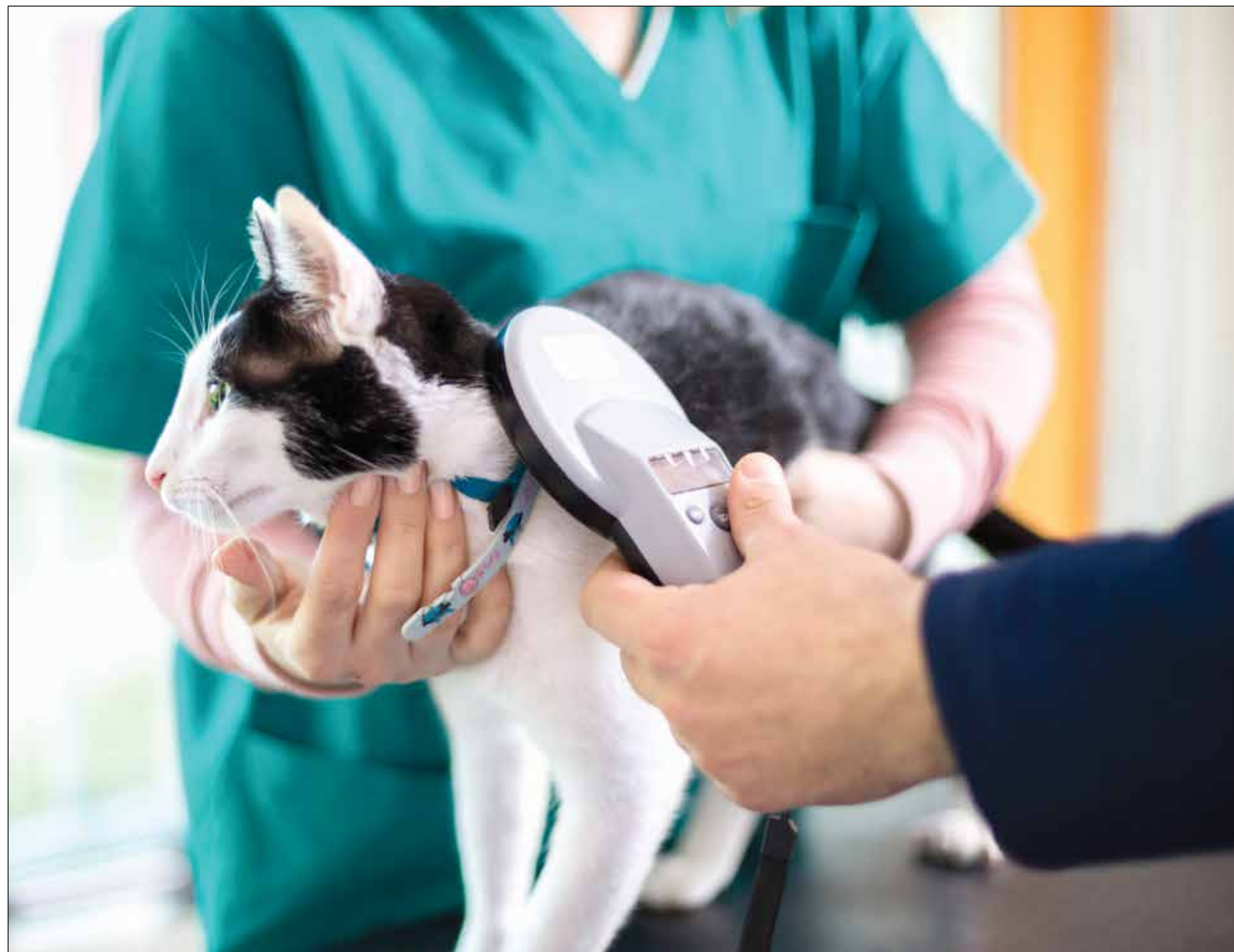
## HOW TO MICROCHIP YOUR PET

Your veterinarian can microchip your pet. A hypodermic needle injects the chip under the skin, and it's no more painful than your dog's usual vaccinations. No surgery or anesthesia is required, though the vet can do it while your pet is anesthetized for other procedures, such as spaying or neutering or dental treatments.

The microchip usually only includes an identification number and cannot track your pet if it gets lost. The vet scanning the chip will contact the chip's maker, give them the identification number, and that service will pass on your information to the vet.

## MICROCHIPS AND PRIVACY

Remember, these chips don't have tracking devices and can't be used to track you or your pet. The information



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you provide to the manufacturer's registry will only be used to contact you in the event your pet becomes lost and is found. You can usually choose to opt into or out of any other communications from that manufacturer.

Having the microchip placed is only the first step,

and it's up to you to register and maintain the information on file.

## MICROCHIPS AND LOST PETS

When a stray animal is found, usually one of the first things animal control, shelters or the vet will do is scan it

for a microchip. If your information is current, you can be reached quickly and reunited with your lost family member.

A study of more than 7,700 stray animals at shelters showed that dogs without microchips were returned to their owners 21.9% of the time, whereas microchipped

dogs were returned more than half of the time, the American Veterinary Medical Association said. For microchipped animals that weren't returned to their owners, it was usually because of incorrect owner information, so don't forget to register and update your information.