



## Southside Animal Hospital

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### What Should I Feed My Pet?

Just walk down the grocery store aisle and you see a large variety of pet food brands. Then you come here and you see many more options. How do you choose which food is best for your pet? It can be a daunting task.

#### The Purpose Of Proper Nutrition

Food is more than just something you give so that your pet isn't hungry. It provides energy for your pet. Food also provides the proper nutrients for your pet's development and maintenance of normal body function. Some food is used medically to treat certain conditions such as bladder stones and obesity. There are some foods that are used to prevent certain disease conditions that your dog may be prone to getting. The nutrients and additives to accomplish this can vary greatly from food to food. Therefore, buying the least expensive food is not always the best choice. You need to consider your pet's individual needs and **make a choice for your pet's optimal nutrition.**

#### How Do I Choose The Correct Food?

The place to start is with the AAFCO statement. This is a statement that informs the consumer how the nutrients in the food were tested and for what life of stages the food is appropriate. There are three possible statements. We only recommend pet foods that say, "**Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that (name of food) provides complete and balanced nutrition for (appropriate life stage).**" The other statements are for foods that I feel may provide inadequate nutrition and energy for your pet.

Second, you want to look at a food that is appropriate for your pet's life stage. There are four life stages under AAFCO standards: Adult Maintenance, Growth, Gestation/Lactation, and All Life Stages. The AAFCO statement will tell you the appropriate life stages that the food is approved for.



Third, look at your pet's individual needs. Companies that make higher quality food will make food that is specific for certain needs. Examples are *large breed puppy*, *indoor cat*, *neutered cat*, and *senior* pet foods. We would recommend you provide a food that is as specific as possible for your pet's needs. This will provide more optimal nutrition for your pet. In some cases, your pet may need to be placed on prescription food for specific medical problems. We will recommend these to you.

Fourth, you should find a food your pet enjoys. If your pet eats his food well, you will be less likely to supplement him with table food or excessive treats. When you find

a food that fits this, stay with that one food. This prevents your pet from becoming a picky eater.

### **How Much Should I Feed?**

Every dog food is different in the amount of kilocalories per cup. Start with the recommendation for your pet's weight on the food you are feeding. This will be a correct amount for some pets, but may be too much or too little for others. If your pet begins to get thin, increase the amount. If your pet begins to gain weight, decrease the amount.

### **What About Treats?**

It is acceptable to give some treats to your pet. It can be a good way to train your pet or build a bond between the two of you. However, most treats are very high calorie. You should limit the number of treats you give your pet to keep him from becoming overweight. Think of each treat as a candy bar. How many candy bars should you eat in a day? Your dog should not have 8 candy bars a day either. You may consider giving 1/4 of a treat at a time, instead of a whole treat, so that you can treat more often without giving a large number of treats. Fresh green beans and baby carrots are also low calorie treats that many pets enjoy.

**Never start giving your pet table food!** This can start a vicious cycle where your pet gets picky and will not eat his pet food. This also predisposes your pet to vomiting, diarrhea, pancreatitis, and obesity.

### **Preventing Obesity**

**A fat cat or dog is not a healthy pet.** You should not allow your pet to become overweight. Obesity varies a variety of health risks including urinary tract disease, and pancreatitis. Obese animals average an average of three times an ideal body weight. This can shorten their life span by an average of two years. Obesity is a serious problem.



Obesity predisposes your pet to a variety of health risks including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and arthritis. Animals that are obese develop these conditions years earlier than pets at an ideal weight. In addition, obese pets die earlier than animals at an ideal weight. Obesity is a serious

Feed your pet an appropriate amount of food. Do not give table food. Keep treats in moderation and try to give lower calorie treats. Always feed a measured amount of food so that you know how much your pet is eating.

After neutering, your pet's metabolism will slow down. You need to swap to a lower calorie food at that point. If it is a puppy, you can swap to an adult food. Some diets are specifically formulated for neutered animals. With some foods you can just decrease the amount that you feed your pet.

Getting your pet plenty of exercise is also another way to help avoid obesity. It allows your pet to burn calories. This can be anything from walks with your dog, playing fetch with a ball, having your cat chase a laser light, or your cat playing with a feather toy. This can also facilitate a bonding experience between you and your pet. You may also get some beneficial exercise for yourself. So start exercising with your pet early on in life and form healthy habits for your pet.