

# Selection of best food for pets

Muhammad Abdullah Qureshi<sup>1\*</sup> and Muhammad Ahsan<sup>1</sup>

## 1. University of Agriculture, Faisalabad.

\*Corresponding Author: [abdullah5902070@gmail.com](mailto:abdullah5902070@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Being a pet owner, the well-being of our pet is of utmost importance. Most of us consider our pets as our own family members and we take care of them like a family member. But many of us don't know which feed stuff is good for them and which is bad for their health. Sometimes we took over care of our partners by providing them the food we ourselves eat not knowing that this might cause serious health issues for them.

#### Introduction:

Being a pet owner, the well-being of our pet is of utmost importance. Most of us consider our pets as our own family members and we take care of them like a family member. But many of us don't know which feed stuff is good for them and which is bad for their health. Sometimes we took over care of our partners by providing them the food we ourselves eat not knowing that this might cause serious health issues for them. A vital aspect of pet care is nutrition, as a balanced and appropriate diet plays a significant role in promoting your companion's overall health and longevity. Selecting the right diet is nowadays difficult due to the overabundance of pet feed options available in the market. While providing the feed stuff to our pets we must know all of the composition ingredients, which will ultimately affect the growth and health of the animal [1].

#### Understanding Your Pet's Nutritional Needs:

Before delving into the intricacies of pet food, it is essential to understand your pet's nutritional requirements. Nutritional requirements for our pets vary with different breed, species and age of the animal. Different breeds and species all require a special and unique diet plan. Most common pets in Pakistan are cats and dogs, rarely birds. Birds, reptiles, rabbits and other exotic breeds have a specific dietary need [2]. So, we are focusing on feed stuffs and requirements for dogs and cats.

#### Dogs:

Dogs are omnivores and they require high-quality proteins to maintain muscle mass and repair tissues. Chicken is a very good source for protein in dogs, it must be provided in feed because their muscles are in dire need of protein. Fats are the main essential source of energy which must be present in the feed. We must look for the fat contents while purchasing the feed pack for our dogs. Carbohydrates are the source of instant energy but some breeds of dogs do not require high-carb diet. While minerals and vitamins play vital role in overall health of the animal which also includes proper immune function and providing bone strength [3].

#### Cats:

Cats are obligate carnivores which must require meat in their diet. Meat is very essential to fulfil their nutritional requirements. Chicken is added to their feed which satisfy their requirement for meat and also a source of protein. Protein and amino acids are very essential for the normal functioning of body organs also for the maintenance of muscles. An essential amino acid named Taurine is required to cats for their eye and heart health. Normal physiological processes require balanced amount of minerals and vitamins. So, they must be added in their diet. For proper coat health and skin support fats are mandatory [4]. We must check the nutrients composition while buying feed.

#### Selecting the Right Pet Food

1. Read the Label: When choosing pet food, carefully read the label to understand the ingredients. Look for high-quality proteins as the primary ingredients (e.g., chicken, beef, fish), and avoid products with excessive fillers or artificial additives.
2. Life Stage Considerations: Pet food is often formulated for specific life stages, such as puppy/kitten, adult, and senior. Choose food that aligns with your pet's age and activity level.
3. Special Dietary Needs: Some pets have specific dietary requirements due to allergies, sensitivities, or medical conditions. In such cases, consult your veterinarian to identify suitable diets.
4. Avoid Harmful Ingredients: Certain ingredients can be harmful to pets, such as chocolate, onions, garlic, and xylitol. Always check the label to ensure your pet's safety [5].
5. Wet vs. Dry Food: Both wet and dry pet food have their advantages. Wet food provides hydration and may be preferred by pets with dental issues, while dry food can help maintain dental health.

6. Homemade Diets: Homemade diets can be challenging to balance correctly, and they may not provide all the necessary nutrients. If you opt for a homemade diet, consult with a veterinary nutritionist to ensure it meets your pet's needs.

#### Addressing Common Nutritional Misconceptions

**Grain-Free Diets:** While grain-free diets gained popularity, recent studies have linked them to an increased risk of heart disease in some dogs [6].

**Raw Food Diets:** Raw diets can carry the risk of bacterial contamination and nutrient imbalances [6]. If considering a raw diet, discuss it with your vet and follow proper food handling guidelines.

**Vegetarian or Vegan Diets:** Cats are obligate carnivores and cannot thrive on a vegetarian or vegan diet [7]. Dogs are omnivores, but a vegetarian diet requires careful planning to meet their nutritional needs.

#### The Role of Water and Hydration

Water is a crucial component of a pet's diet. Always ensure your pet has access to fresh, clean water. Proper hydration supports various bodily functions, aids digestion, and helps regulate body temperature [8]. Monitor your pet's water intake, as changes can indicate health issues.

#### Obesity and Weight Management

Obesity is a common health concern for pets, leading to various health problems, including joint issues and diabetes. To prevent obesity, monitor your pet's food intake, provide regular exercise, and avoid excessive treats. If your pet is overweight, do proper exercises and consult your veterinarian for a tailored weight management plan [9].

#### Transitioning to a New Diet

Abrupt changes in diet can lead to digestive upset. If you need to switch your pet's food, do so gradually over 7-10 days, mixing increasing amounts of the new food with the old to allow your pet's digestive system to adjust [10].

#### Conclusion

Pet nutrition is a vital aspect of responsible pet ownership, significantly impacting the overall health and well-being of your beloved companion. By understanding your pet's specific nutritional needs, reading food labels, and making informed choices, you can provide them with a balanced and appropriate diet. Regularly consult with your veterinarian to address any dietary concerns or health issues, ensuring your pet leads a happy and healthy life by your side.

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