

15 Tips for Choosing the Best Food for Your Dog



Choosing your dog's food is one of the most important decisions you will make as a pet parent. Your dog's genetic tendencies will be either enhanced or suppressed based on his nutrition throughout his lifetime. In other words, the foods you choose to feed your dog are either going to help him or hurt him. He will have different needs at different times but choices made today will affect him years from now. As a loving pet parent, it's your job to bring out the best in him!

Below are 15 things to look for and look out for in your dog's food to help you make smart choices.

READ THESE:

1. First off, you must read the ingredient list. Never buy a food based on the pet food representative who happens to be at the pet store that day, or because you like the picture on the bag. Don't fall for clever marketing and tricks. Bring your glasses. Read the list.
2. Now read the guaranteed analysis chart. The nutrition labels on dog food are much different than what's on our food. You must learn to read and understand the guaranteed analysis if you want to bring out the superhero in your dog.
3. Don't stop reading now! The AAFCO statement is next. All dog foods (not treats) must include an AAFCO statement somewhere. This statement tells you what stage of life the food is designed for (adult dogs, all life stages, puppyhood, etc.) It also tells you if the food was calculated by a computer using a recipe (formulated) or if it was actually tested on live dogs (feeding trials.) There are pros and cons to each so don't get too hung on that just yet. But you should at least know what is going into your dog's body.
4. One last thing, read the "Best by" date. In a perfect world it will be 10-11 months away, but you want at least 6 months. This means the food was made recently and hasn't sat in a warehouse for months before making it to the pet store shelf.

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AVOID THESE:

5. Avoid artificial colors, flavors and preservatives like BHA, BHT, and erythoxyquinol. Instead look for natural preservatives such as tocopherols (Vitamin E), Rosemary, and Vitamin C.
6. Avoid added sweeteners like sugar and corn syrup to name a few.
7. Avoid foods where the first ingredient is a by-product or meal.
8. Avoid foods that do not specify the source of fat. Animal fat is not specific enough.

LOOK FOR THESE:

9. Look for whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.
10. Lots of protein should be at the top of the ingredient list.
11. The animal protein should be named. For instance, it should say chicken, not “poultry.” We want specifics.
12. The animal protein should be paired with a protein meal, ideally within the top 3 ingredients. If your dog’s food has chicken as the primary protein source, then you want to see chicken meal listed within the next 3 ingredients.

FINAL POINTS TO REMEMBER

13. Shop locally at a trusted independent pet supply store with knowledgeable staff. If the staff is helpful and knows their products they can be a good resource to help you and your dog. Many veterinarians trained in physical rehabilitation have additional knowledge in using foods to help bring out the best in your dog as well. Your local rehab vet is often times an excellent resource.
14. Switch foods periodically, but not too often. Variety can be a good thing but you don’t need to try every protein source available or every brand to ensure your dog is getting all the nutrients he needs. Changing foods too often can lead to GI upset.
15. Watch your dog! Every dog is unique and each dog’s nutritional needs are unique! If your dog seems to thrive on one food but not another, it doesn’t matter how superior the food may appear to be, it’s not the best choice for your dog!

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