

FACT SHEET

Naturediet Ingredients Vs. Other Pet Foods

"Whole chickens", "choice cuts of beef", "whole grain brown rice", "natural", "wholesome", ...if this were true we would not be writing this! This is exactly what the pet food manufacturers want us to believe. They use carefully chosen words and images in advertisements to persuade us that this is actually true.

What they do not say is that instead of whole chickens they have substituted chicken heads, feet, bones, intestines and bowels. The choice cuts of beef have been replaced with cow tongues, oesophagi, foetal tissue dangerously high in hormones, and possibly diseased even cancerous meat. The "whole grains" are usually "cereal by products." Many have had the starch removed and the oil extracted usually by chemical processing.

Then just to make sure the food is nutritious, the pet food companies "fortify" it with vitamins.

Why?

Because the ingredients they are using are not wholesome, and the harsh manufacturing processes like extrusion destroy what little nutritional value the food had.

Veterinary Surgeons and those involved in statistics on pathology now realise that most of the new and prevalent diseases of today's pets have only one cause – poor quality/unnatural diet. The rapid decline in pet health can be directly correlated with the advent of highly processed pet foods and chemical additives some 40 years ago.

Diet has changed in the last 100 years

Dogs have lived with humans for about 15,000 years. The traditional diet of our companion animals for the last several million millennia consisted of unprocessed mostly uncooked, raw foods or leftovers from what we ate.

The advent of highly processed chemical laden foods, about 40 years ago, suddenly shifted the nutrition base of our pets food, an abrupt change from the natural diet, which had lasted for thousands of years. Before the late 50's pet food contained more meat and fewer remnants of post human food production. Today, with competing demand for many of these ingredients, pet food manufacturers must look to other sources of ingredients for pet food.

Nutrition has come a long way in the last hundred years, but our understanding of it is far from complete. Medical journals abound with new information. But the reality is that all pets are different, each is an individual with a certain capacity for assimilation and a certain susceptibility to influence, which is modified by many different factors. Nutrition is not an exact science, and it will never be. While manufacturers claim that millions of pets thrive on a diet of commercial pet food, research and an increasing number of caring veterinary surgeons implicate processed food as a source of disease or as an exacerbating agent for a number of degenerative diseases. Kidney disease is now one of the top three killers of our pets. According to Plechner "Nature never designed canine or feline kidneys to handle the volume of impurities that comes their way." The result is fatigued, irritated, damaged and deteriorated kidneys and several years of life. Left untreated the toxic build-up leads to vomiting, loss of appetite, uraemic poisoning and death.

In the last few years large statistical studies have shown the link between the diet and a variety of degenerative diseases including cancer, heart disease, allergies, arthritis, obesity and dental disease.

Ingredients

Today, pet food science has advanced to induce pets to eat ingredients that they would never normally eat, science has learnt that you can take a mixture of inedible scraps, fortify it with artificial vitamins and minerals, and make it palatable. With chemical flavour enhancers, it is embalmed with a mixture of rendered fat laced with chemical antioxidants so that it can sit on shelves for up to a year. Then add chemical dyes to make it look pretty, for the owners, not the pets (dogs do not see colours as we do!), and extrude it at torturously high temperatures into pretty shapes...and call it "Wholesome" and "Natural"? This is legally permissible, but is it economical with the truth?

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What can you do?

First and foremost read the ingredients on every packet, tin or bag you buy. Compare the ingredients listed with the details in this report, and then make up your own mind. If the labeling is unclear ask the manufacturer to detail the ingredients and additives used. Cook fresh food (which is a tremendous effort) or use a food such as Naturediet, which uses only natural high quality, wholesome ingredients.

The details listed below have been prepared by Naturediet in order that you can make an informed choice on the food you feed your dog.

Ingredients in Naturediet

Meat

Premium quality meat such as chicken, lamb, rabbit and turkey provide high quality protein, with essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals.

Fish

Premium quality meat such as white fish, sardines, mackerel, salmon and prawns provide high quality protein, with essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals.

Whole Grain Brown Rice

Whole grain brown rice provides carbohydrate, vitamin E and minerals. Whole grains contain natural amino acids, which give considerable health benefits. We do not use wheat, soya and barley, which often cause allergic reactions.

Fresh Whole Vegetables

Carrots aid in cleansing the blood and formation of good tooth enamel and are also high in vitamin A, which is a powerful natural antioxidant. Potatoes provide carbohydrate, phosphorous, potassium and iron, vitamins B6 and C. We only use a range of fresh vegetables not dried flakes.

Kelp

Seaweed is one of the best natural sources of vitamins, minerals and trace elements.

Ground Natural Bone

Ground natural bone in small amounts provides the calcium and phosphorous needed for strong healthy teeth and bones and helps to promote the correct working of the digestive system. The bone originates from the same animal as the meat within the recipe. WE DO NOT USE ANY BEEF BONES.

Natural Antioxidants Vitamins A, D3 and C

These prevent rancidity in the food and also act as free radical scavengers in the body. All are essential for the correct functioning of the immune system.

Ingredients contained in other pet foods

Tinned/Canned Foods

Canned food begins with ground ingredients mixed with additives. If chunks are required, special extruders form the chunks. The sealed cans are then put into pressure cookers and commercial sterilisation takes place, the canned mixture is cooked at very high temperatures. As with extrusion, this processing can include the addition of many additives to enhance the texture, colour and flavour of the food, along with gelling agents to bind the large amounts of added water, and destroys enzymes and nutrients.

Dry Food

Dry food is made with a machine called an extruder that cooks the food under extreme temperature and pressure with most of the ingredients already highly processed prior to undergoing this torture. The ingredients are blended together and the mixture then goes through the extruder where a die forces it into the desired shape and cooks it at high temperatures.

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Another 30-40 minutes is devoted to drying the food, after which it is sprayed with digest of fat and pre-digested foods to make it palatable. The reality is that this processing destroys enzymes naturally present in the food. These enzymes aid the normal digestive enzymes in the body in digesting the food, if they are not present, the pancreas is called upon to produce additional digestive enzymes, and this effectively overworks the organ.

Experiments have shown that animals fed on dry and highly processed foods over a long period of time have a severely enlarged pancreas, and are far more prone to diseases of the pancreas.

Many extruded pet foods use meat meals as their source of protein. These undergo a rendering process to dry them out into a meal, which includes extreme temperature processing. At this point, preservatives may be added that need not be declared in the final finished product, as the manufacturer can claim no added preservatives if they have not added it themselves.

These meals are then subjected to a further high temperature treatment in the extrusion process. The outcome of all this leads to the structure of the proteins being severely de-natured resulting in the animal's immune system not fully recognising the protein molecule, leading to an immune response and sensitivity to that protein source – allergy and intolerance.

Meat and Meat By-Products

Many dry foods use meat meals, which are highly processed dried powders. Canned foods often use “meat and animal derivatives” which can include by-products such as feather meal, feet and heads.

The meaty chunks you see are not chunks of real meat. ‘Meaty’ is the operative word because most contain some meat, permitted derivatives, and are held together with a variety of chemicals, gelling agents, binders and fillers. Many products contain fishmeal, particularly cat foods. We are particularly concerned about the use of fish-meals today as there has been world-wide concern about the pollutant contamination levels in these products.

When cattle, swine, chickens, lambs or any number of other animals meet their end at a slaughterhouse, the choice cuts, lean muscle tissue, and organs prized by humans are trimmed away from the carcass leaving the remnants for pet food. The majority of these remnants are of low quality and provide a questionable source of nutrition for our animals. “Meat by-products” is a misnomer since these by-products may contain little meat, if any. Chicken by-products include heads, entrails, lungs, spleen, kidneys, livers, stomachs, bones, blood and intestines

Meals are made from the above by-products but they undergo further processing to be dried and made into a powder form. The protein is severely de-natured during this process. The de-naturing changes the protein structure and it is this change which can often give rise to allergic reactions and food sensitivities so prevalent today. Why this happens is very logical. The immune system of all living creatures is designed to protect the body from invasion by foreign proteins, such as viral toxins, bacteria and chemicals. All of these are automatically destroyed by the immune system.

Dry foods almost always use meat meal.

“Digest” is a slurry of bacterially digested animal or poultry guts, and their contents. This is used as a flavour enhancer in many dried foods, to make otherwise unpalatable ingredients “tasty”. It is usually sprayed on to the finished product.

Animal and Poultry Fat

Poultry fat and animal fats are rendered fats, which may include used restaurant grease. The grease is usually blended with vegetable fat. Restaurant grease contains fats which have been heated and reheated to high temperatures, and hence contain trans-fatty acids, which are known to be carcinogenic. Fats rapidly become rancid, so they are normally preserved with chemical preservatives and chemical anti-oxidants. Some manufacturers claim their products are preserved with natural Vitamin E but fail to disclose that the raw materials have been treated with chemical anti-oxidants.

Rice

The biggest problem is that many manufacturers use large quantities of rice bran. The problem with this is two fold:

- Rice bran is by no means a bad product, but the rice bran used in pet food manufacture is usually a poor quality product, remnants of the cattle food industry.

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- Rice bran contains “phytates” which bind the availability of calcium and phosphorous in the food. The result of this can be that animals fed for long periods on rice bran products become deficient in calcium and phosphorous. Early signs of deficiency show as ravenous hunger, craving indigestibles, eating of faeces. The chronic signs of deficiency manifest as bone or nervous disorders.

The solvent-extracted rice bran is probably the worst. This is a waste product of the petroleum industry. It is a cheap bulking agent used in some cheap pet foods. The oil is solvent extracted with BENZENE one of the most toxic hydrocarbons.

Wheat, barley and maize

Many animals and people are allergic to wheat and wheat products. Wheat is not a natural grain to dogs and cats, but it is a cheap bulking agent widely used in pet food manufacture. Wheat gluten is a complete protein, which is easily damaged and changed during processing. An experiment was done with people who were wheat gluten sensitive, and it was found that they reacted far less to organic sources of wheat. From this one can only conclude that is more likely to be changes effected by the processing which causes the most trouble.

Whole grains are rarely used; more common are “cereal by-products.” These never give the same health benefits as whole grains. The intensive processing most grains undergo changes the protein formation in the outside membrane, and it is these changes which are now recognised to cause most allergic reactions.

Soya

Soya is another common ingredient in many pet foods. Soya is virtually unusable by the animal's body and dogs actually lack the essential amino acid to digest soya protein.

Soya has been linked to bloat and gas in many dogs. It is used by manufacturers to boost the claimed protein content and add bulk. It is not always easy to identify the presence of soya in pet food as it can be present in meaty chunks, vegetable derivatives or texturised vegetable protein, and may not be declared as an ingredient in its own right.

Vegetables

“Derivatives of vegetable origin” – Soya extract, textured vegetable proteins.

Egg

Rarely used in other pet foods in any significant quantity, as they are very expensive.

Bone

Bone meal is often used in large quantities as a bulking agent. This can give rise to high ash levels, which is a waste product. Excess in the diet predisposes animals to urinary problems, crystal and stone formation.

Antioxidants

Most manufacturers use BHA, BHT and Ethoxyquin. Even those, which state “no added BHA, BHT or Ethoxyquin”, are still likely to have these chemicals in the raw materials. The law only requires manufacturers to declare materials added during the manufacturing process. Most meat meals and oils are preserved with one or more of these chemical antioxidants. All of these chemicals have been found to be detrimental to health and are banned in some foods in certain countries. See our ‘Feeding for health’ fact sheet.

Ethoxyquin

Ethoxyquin was invented in 1921 as a rubber stabiliser. Soon after, it was found that it was a superior food anti-oxidant. It has been used in the pet food industry for over 49 years and is added to almost all meat meals, oils, fats and fat soluble vitamins in their initial preparation as raw materials before the ingredients reach the pet food manufacturer. Ethoxyquin is an exceptionally potent and cost effective preservative. Manufacturers do not have to declare the make up of the raw materials, only ingredients added during the manufacture process. Ethoxyquin is still present in most meat meals, most oils and vitamin and mineral supplements used to make dry and tinned foods.

BHA (Butylated Hydroxyanisole)

BHA is made from the p-methoxyphenol and isobutene. It is not permitted in foods intended specifically for babies or young children, except to preserve added Vitamin A.

A Japanese study found that BHA and BHT levels were cumulative in the body and that both, along with ethoxyquin, induced excess tissue growth in the stomach and cytotoxicity.

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BHA has been found to promote cancer of the fore-stomach in rats by inhibiting communication between cells especially growth regulatory signals. Man and dogs do not have fore-stomachs, but we do have similar cells lining the mouth, throat and gullet.

BHT (Butylated Hydroxytolene)

BHT is prepared synthetically from p-cresol and isobutylene. It was developed initially as an anti-oxidant for use with petroleum and rubber products. BHT is much cheaper than BHA, and the two are usually used together.

BHT has been found to cause cells to divide rapidly. Various reports have linked this additive with reproductive failures in experimental animals. It is not permitted in food for young children and babies.

Propyl Gallate (Propyl 3.4.5 trihydrobenzoate)

Propyl Gallate is derived from propyl ester of gallic acid. Gallic acid is produced from tannins extracted from nutgalls. Another method of production hydrolyses the enzyme tannase, which also occurs in specific fungal broths of *Aspergillus Niger* and *Penicillium Glaucum*.

Propyl Gallate is more effective on numerous types of fat than BHA, but loses much of its activity when used in baked goods, because it is unstable at high temperatures.

All alkyl Gallates may cause gastric or skin irritation in some people and some animals.

Preservatives

There are 42 chemical preservatives permitted by the Feeding Stuffs Regulations 1995. They are most prevalent in dry foods, as the packaging is not airtight. Three-quarters of pet food manufactured in the United Kingdom contains synthetic preservatives added by the manufacturer, of the remaining quarter, 95% includes ingredients already stabilised by synthetic preservatives.

Flavourings

Most dry foods have "digest slurries" added to make the otherwise unpalatable mixture more appealing. Digest consists of bacterially digested animal or poultry guts, which is usually sprayed onto the finished product.

Dry foods are usually sprayed with a coating of rendered fat, previously referred to in the section on fats, because dry food is highly unpalatable without this coating.

Many consumers are happy in the fact that dry food does not attract flies and can therefore be left out: ask yourself the question, why don't flies like it?

Colourings

There are numerous permitted colourings. Most dry and canned foods use some form of colouring to make the product look more attractive, but to whose eyes you might ask as dogs do not see colours as we do.

Some colours are synthetic, but even those termed "natural" like "Beetroot Red" may be natural to humans, but one has to question whether beetroot is really a natural product to dogs?

Sodium Nitrite is both a preservative and a colouring agent. It makes meat turn red hence it is used to enhance the colour of ham amongst other things. It is often found in red coloured pet food. Research found that it has the ability to combine with natural stomach and food chemicals to create nitrosamines, powerful cancer causing agents. The American Food and Drugs Administration tried to ban Sodium Nitrite based on potential carcinogenic effects: however food manufacturers lobbied successfully to have the ban repealed by pleading that there was no alternative on the market. Convenience rated higher than safety.

Fillers, Blenders, Fat Emulsifiers

There are approximately 58 permitted emulsifiers, stabilisers, thickeners and gelling agents. Some like carrageenan could be termed as natural products, but one needs to consider the process used to manufacture it.

Chemicals, even those with GRAS status (Generally Recognised as Safe) are not natural substances, and the body is not designed to naturally assimilate them.

Hence they place a major burden on organs such as the liver and kidneys, which are called upon to de-toxify all unnatural molecules.

Others such as polyoxypropylene polymers are distinctly man-made chemicals.

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Corn

Corn is widely used in pet foods. It might appear on the label as maize, corn, ground yellow corn, corn gluten meal. It is another grain that is not natural to dogs. A large number of dogs are allergic to corn. The other problem now is that much maize is genetically engineered, or genetically modified, and this brings with it a whole host of new problems, such as new toxins and unpredictable, health damaging effects. Corn syrup and corn gluten meal are widely used as humectants (ingredients which bind water molecules in order to prevent oxidation) – in so doing they also bind the water in such a way that the food becomes very sticky in the colon and may cause blockage.

Peanut Hulls

Used as a fibre source, more so in American products than in British made pet food. Peanuts are very susceptible to mycotoxin contamination, aflatoxin and vomitoxin.

Hydrolised Feather Meal

This is a cheap ingredient made from dried and processed feathers. Feather meal is a very high protein substance, but one which is not easily assimilated by the body. Some manufacturers making cheap foods use feather meal to boost the protein level in pet food. (If the food had a reasonable amount of meat content this would not be necessary!) Feather meal is never declared as feather meal because who would buy feather meal for their pets? It is normally declared within “meat and animal derivatives” or another similar non-specific category.

For more detailed information please read our fact sheet Holistic Health for Your Pets, which will help you make an informed choice about the food you feed your pet.

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