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# Help! What Should I Feed My Dogs and Cats? Part 2

Last month I began this series on what to feed our dog and cat friends. I started with my opinion that there is no absolute right way to do this. Whether to feed raw, dehydrated, home-cooked, or processed canned and dry foods is a decision you must make based on what works best for your animals and yourself. I kept to the basics and ended that column with a list of potentially problem ingredients in dry and canned foods to avoid.

In order to pick up where I left off, the ingredients to avoid are meat, meat meal and meat by-products, by-products of any kind, animal fat, animal digest, fractured or parts of grains, dyes, and chemical preservatives. I recommend avoiding the first five ingredients because they are too generic and do not identify the source of protein or fat. This means it could be anything from road kill to euthanized dogs and cats from rendering plants. Seriously!

By-products are basically the worst of the leftovers, such as necks, feet, and intestines. These are not necessarily bad, but definitely not good if it is the only meat type ingredient in the food, which is often the case with cheaper foods and treats.

The first five ingredients on a food label are the most significant and you want to see things like chicken meal, venison meal, lamb meal or whatever the meat source is as a meal form in the first position. Meal is the most concentrated form of the meat, already dried, so there is no moisture to make it heavier. If you see just chicken, lamb, or turkey listed, that is good as it means the whole fresh version is used, but ingredients are listed by weight and this version includes the water weight so there really isn't much meat there. It should be in the second position, behind the meal, at the highest.

The higher quality foods will use and list whole grains such like whole brown rice, corn, oats, or barley. Watch out for parts of grains like corn gluten meal, especially if you see the same ingredient listed in several different forms. This is a labeling trick that is truly deceptive. If all forms of that particular grain were put together they would have to become the first ingredient on the label.

There are so many natural preservatives available these days there is no reason to buy a food that still uses chemicals. BHA, BHT and ethoxyquin are the most common still in use. Look for them on the labels of food, biscuits, and treats.

So, start reading those labels and for more detailed information on this subject I suggest you get a copy of the latest edition of *Food Pets Die For* by Ann Martin, a New Sage Press publication that



*Our Animal Friends*  
 by Martha Norwalk

will be available this month. This book also includes instructions and recipes for home cooked meals for both dogs and cats.

When it comes to dry and canned foods, feed the highest quality you can afford. You can improve the quality of any processed diet by adding some of the food you make for yourself — as long as it is good quality stuff like lean meats, vegetables and whole cooked grains — make a little extra to put into your animal's meal.

If you are feeding canned, dry, or home-cooked meals to your animal friends it is a good idea to add a plant based digestive enzyme to the meal. These are usually in powdered form and you can find them at any good pet store. Be sure the food is cool



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when you add the enzymes or the heat will destroy them. This is especially important if you have an animal with allergies and/or skin problems.

All cooked and processed foods are exposed to heat, light, and oxygen, and this begins to destroy the important nutrients in the food. You can make up for this and improve a cheaper diet by adding The Missing Link supplement made by Designing Health. It is made from human grade, all natural, raw food sources and comes in a powdered form that you add