

The Whole  Dog Journal

Feed Your Dog Right

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The Whole Dog Journal

There's one decision you make every day that affects your dog's health, vitality, and longevity like no other. You know what it is. It's what to eat.

Quite simply, the first thing that should go into your dog's bowl is thought! The pet store shelves and cases are crammed with dog foods with fancy labels and too often, fanciful promises. But which dog foods—wet, dry, or raw frozen—deliver the most wholesome nutrition for your dog?

The answers are in this must-read new report called *Feed Your Dog Right*. In this report, Whole Dog Journal's editors offer a comprehensive guide for selecting wet, dry, and raw frozen foods. You'll learn what should be in the bag, can, or tub—and what shouldn't be. You'll know what to look for on the label before you put anything in the bowl.

This report will save you time and money. But most important, of course, it will save you from the problems and heartaches that an incomplete or unbalanced diet can cause. It will help you to added years of healthy, happy companionship with your dog.



So, good reading, and great feeding!

Nancy Kerns

Editor, Whole Dog Journal

Feed Your Dog Right

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How to pick the right food for your dog

Have you ever heard the expression, “One man’s meat is another man’s poison”? Well, that goes for dogs, too! Remember: No food is perfect for all dogs. With that in mind, consider the following when selecting a food for your dog:

- **Your dog’s age:**
Is he a growing puppy? Middle-aged? A senior dog? You may need to adjust the amount of protein and fat in your dog’s diet to best serve his needs. Ask your veterinarian what levels are optimum for your dog’s age.
- **Your dog’s sex:**
Dogs who are used for breeding and females who are pregnant or lactating have higher energy requirements than dogs who are neutered or spayed.
- **Your dog’s condition:**
Fat dogs, skinny dogs, and dogs who are just right have different requirements. Dogs who get a lot of exercise have different needs than dogs who do little or nothing.
- **Your dog’s health history:**
Does the dog have any medical conditions that can benefit from a special diet, such as allergies, cancer, digestive difficulties, or a tendency to form kidney stones?
- **Your budget:**
Can you really afford the most expensive foods? Do you have several dogs or just one? Giant dogs or small ones?
- **Product availability in your area:**
While some dogs owners are happy to pay for long-distance shipping to get the food they want for their dogs, others cite convenience as an important factor in their selection criteria.



The nutritional needs of large breeds and small breeds are not that different, except in puppyhood.



Most inactive, middle-aged, neutered dogs have very low caloric intake needs.

Five Common Mistakes to Avoid When Buying & Feeding Dry Dog Food

The vast majority of dog owners feed dry dog food to their dogs – and quite a few of them select and store the bags of food in a way that turns a wholesome food into a health hazard for their beloved companions. Are you handling your dog’s food in a safe manner? Or do you regularly make the following mistakes?

The best way to store dry dog food is in its bag; the best place to store the bag is somewhere cool, dry, and dark (and with a dog-proof latch!).

1. Grabbing and buying the first/top bag on the shelf. Always check the date/code on the bag, and buy the bag with a “best by” date that is as far in the future as you can find. And don’t buy bags that are within a few months or closer to their “best by” date.

Most foods that are made with natural preservatives are intended to be consumed within 12 months of manufacture, although companies extend this to as much as 18 months. But dry food is far less nutritious (oxidation slowly decreases the vitamin activity), and has far more potential to be rancid, the more time passes post-manufacture. (Note that foods that are packed in vacuum-sealed bags and flushed with nitrogen keep fresh longer.)

So, for example, if it’s July 2014, a bag that was just manufactured and placed on the shelf should have a “best by” date of July 2015 – buying that bag would be ideal. In contrast, avoid the bag with a “best buy” date that indicates the food should be consumed within the next few months.

2. Buying giant bags for your small or medium dog. It’s fine to buy the biggest bag if you have several large dogs, but the point is, you should be buying bags in sizes that are small enough so that the food is entirely consumed within two to three weeks, no more.

The longer the food is exposed to oxygen once the bag is open, the faster it oxidizes. While buying very large bags makes the most economic sense (the price per pound is always less if you buy in large bags), it may not make the most sense for your dog’s health. Many dogs start turning up their noses at a food by the time you reach the bottom of the bag, because by that time (especially if you have a small dog!), the fats in the food may be quite rancid – and dogs’ noses are far more sensitive to the odor of rancid fats than our noses are. Veterinarians have a phrase for what happens when dogs are not fussy and eat rancid food, suffering digestive upset after meals: “bottom of the bag syndrome.”

3. Storing the food in a warm or damp place. Read the label; it will almost always suggest storing the food in a cool, dry place. Again, this is to preserve the wholesomeness of the food and to retard the process of oxidation. Look for a cool, low cupboard or shelf in the pantry.

4. Dumping the food into another container. I know, I know, it’s far easier to scoop food out of a plastic bin than it is to scoop it out of the bag. But there are several problems with bins. First, many are not made with “food-safe” plastic – material that is resistant to degradation caused by contact with fat (keep in mind that dog food is a relatively high-fat food). Fat can cause the type of plastic used in things like plastic garbage cans and totes to accelerate the rate at which BPA and other plasticizers leach out of the container and into the dog food.

Second, if you don't completely empty and clean out the bin in between each bag of food you dump into it, you are effectively "seeding" each new batch of food with rancid fats that are in the old food in the bottom of the tub and the fat that covers the container. It's far safer to keep the food in the bag, and keep the bag in a container.

The practice of dumping the food into another container leads to the next mistake you should avoid...

5. Throwing away the bag before your dog has finished all the food. If your dog becomes ill, the type of food and its date/code number will be critical information to have on hand. Your vet will want to know what exact food you fed the dog. If it develops that the food causes a serious illness or death, the manufacturer and the FDA will need the information to conclusively tie the food (and the specific lot of food) to the problem. If you are not absolutely certain and/or can't prove what variety of food you fed to your sick dog, it's will be very difficult to make the company take responsibility for the problem.

Choosing Good Foods

How to select superior dry dog foods (note the plural: foods).

What's the best food for your dog? It's a question that only you can answer, because you are the only one who is in a position to gauge, on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis, how your dog responds to what you feed him.



Dry food is not the healthiest diet for your dog. If you want to provide the very best, most natural diet possible for your dog, you'd feed a well-researched, home-prepared diet comprised of fresh foods. Or, next best, a well-formulated, commercially made frozen raw or dehydrated diet. Next best would be a top-quality wet food; even poor quality wet foods usually contain a higher percentage of animal protein (and a much lower percentage of grain) than good dry foods.

Of all of these forms of dog food, kibble is probably the least natural for the dog. But its popularity is mainly based on three factors: It is relatively stable and therefore very convenient for the owner to buy, store, and feed. It's usually less expensive, calorie for calorie, than other forms of food with comparative ingredients. And most dogs do fine on a dry food diet.

Just keep it in the back of your head that if you want your dog to eat the ideal, evolutionary canine diet – because he's got persistent health problems? because he's a show or sports competitor and you want an edge? because you've lost your last three dogs to cancer and you want to know you did everything possible to give this dog the very best? – you'll need to look to something other than kibble, even the highest-quality kibble available.

No food is best all dogs. There is no single diet that works best for all humans, or every individual of any other species, so why people think there might be a single ideal food for every dog is beyond us!

To find the best foods for your dog, you have to try a lot of foods, and make it a point to observe your dog for signs that his diet is or is not agreeing with him. If he has chronic signs of compromised health, such as persistently goopy or runny eyes; infected or smelly ears; inflamed, itchy skin; severe gas; or frequent diarrhea, and these conditions improve, well, hurray! If these things worsen, try another food.

We strongly recommend that you keep some sort of diet journal – at a minimum, with notes on the calendar – to keep track of what foods you feed your dog, and what his response to each product has been. We keep a journal of health- and training-related events in our dog’s life, and note the date each time we open a new bag of food. We store dry food in its original bag until it’s all consumed, but once it’s empty, we cut out the ingredients list, “guaranteed analysis,” and date/code from the bag and tape these bits of packaging into the dog’s journal. This sort of journal can help you identify foods or even individual ingredients that are problematic for your dog; in case of a pet food disaster, it can also help prove what your dog ate, and when he ate it.

Switch foods regularly. We know; you heard that you shouldn’t switch your dog’s food, or his stomach will get upset. If you ate only one food every day for weeks and months, and then ate something else, your stomach would get upset, too. But very few people eat a diet that never varies from day to day. Human nutrition experts agree that a well-balanced, varied diet is critical for human health; so why do so many people believe that variety is bad for dogs?

Say your dog eats one food, day after day, year after year. And say that food contains a little more of this mineral than is ideal, or not quite enough of that vitamin, or an unhealthy ratio of this nutrient to that one. Over time, lacking any other foods to help correct the excesses, insufficiencies, or the imbalances, these problems can contribute to the development of disease.

When you switch your dog’s food, do it gradually, over a couple of days. Start with 75 percent of the old food and 25 percent of the new food at one meal; slowly increase the amount of new food (and decrease the amount of old food) over a few days, until he’s eating only the new food. Try different varieties, as well as products from different companies. If you change foods often, your dog will adjust more and more smoothly.

One more thing: Don’t feed foods comprised of exotic proteins (such as rabbit, kangaroo, bison, pheasant, etc.) if your dog does well on the more common proteins (such as beef, lamb, chicken, and turkey). It’s extremely useful to have a few completely novel proteins held in reserve for use in an “elimination diet” (in which you feed him a diet comprised of, usually, a single novel protein and a single novel grain) in case your dog ever develops a food allergy.



Don’t obsess about which food is the very best. It’s better for your dog to rotate between three to four very good foods.

WDJ's Dry Food Selection Criteria

TRAITS OF A GOOD DRY DOG FOOD

- **Lots of animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.** Ingredients are listed by weight, so you want to see a lot of top quality animal protein at the top of the list; the first ingredient should be a “named” animal protein source (see next bullet).
- **A named animal protein – chicken, beef, lamb, and so on.** “Meat” is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein “meals” should be from names species (look for “chicken meal” but avoid “meat meal” or “poultry meal”).
- **When a fresh meat is first on the ingredients list, there should be an animal protein meal in a supporting role** to augment the total animal protein in the diet. Fresh (or frozen) meat contains a lot of water, and water is heavy, so if a fresh meat is first on the list, another source of animal protein should be listed in the top three or so ingredients.
- **Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.** Fresh, unprocessed food contain ingredients in all their natural, complex glory, with their fragile vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two food “fractions” (a by-product or part of an ingredient, like tomato pomace or rice bran), especially if they are low in the ingredients list. But it's less than ideal if there are several fractions present in the food, and/or they appear high on the ingredients list.
- **A “best by” date that's at least six months away.** A best by date that's 10 or 11 months away is ideal; it means the food was made very recently. Note: Foods made with synthetic preservatives (BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin) may have a “best by” date that is as much as two years past the date of manufacture.

TRAITS OF LOW-QUALITY DRY FOODS

- **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** Some non-muscle parts of food animals (i.e., the internal organs) are highly nutritious – in some cases, higher in protein and fat, as just two nutrient examples, than muscle meats. But there are many other parts of food animals that have much less nutritional value – and are worth so much less (in dollars) to the processor, that they are considerably less carefully harvested, handled, processed, and stored.
- **A “generic” fat source such as “animal fat.”** This can literally be any fat of animal origin, including using restaurant great. “Poultry” fat is not quite as suspect as “animal fat,” but “chicken fat” or “duck fat” is better (and traceable).
- **Added sweeteners.** Dogs, like people, enjoy sweet foods. Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little of the animal protein).

- **Artificial preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin.** Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (forms of vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Preservation is necessary to keep the fats in the food from oxidizing and turning rancid. Natural preservatives do not preserve the food as long as artificial preservatives, however, so owners should always check the “best by” date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.
- **Artificial colors.** The color of the food makes no difference to the dog; these nutritionally useless chemicals are used in foods to make them look appealing to you!

All Wet? Alright!

These products may be healthier than their kibbled counterparts.

Wet foods are frequently made with higher-quality ingredients than their dry counterparts, most significantly, fresh, whole meats. They also generally contain a higher percentage of meat than dry foods; most dry food extruders can't handle foods that contain more than 50 percent meat. Wet foods usually contain way fewer chemical additives than dry foods. Artificial colors and flavors are actually uncommon in wet products; because of the moist, fragrant nature of the meat-based contents, artificial flavoring and other palatants are rarely needed to attract dogs to otherwise unappealing food.



Of course, palatability is why the guardians of fussy old dogs and cats end up buying canned foods – you don't want older or sick animals skipping meals. But the higher palatability of wet foods also indicates that the food more closely resembles what dogs are hard-wired to enjoy, namely, meat! Dogs generally like canned food more than kibble because it tends to contain more meat and more fat than dry food.

It's all about ingredients

Somehow, the price of the lowest-cost pet foods don't seem to rise much, while the price of the highest-cost foods seems to spiral ever-higher. What's up with that?

The answer is ingredient quality. While the price of a product shouldn't ever be considered the sole indicator of a quality food, you have to keep in mind that products that contain high-quality ingredients will necessarily be priced a lot higher than bargain brands. If that can (or pouch or plastic tray) is inexpensive, what's in it can't possibly be “what's best for dogs,” which is meat.

Mighty meat

We strongly believe that there is nothing more nutritious and healthful for dogs than a well-formulated, home-prepared diet containing fresh, “human-quality” ingredients. If you're not up for home-preparation, however, there are some compelling reasons to feed canned food to your dog as part or all of his diet.

The main reason is that good canned foods contain far more meat than any kibble can be manufactured with. Dogs have absolutely no nutritional requirement for carbohydrates – they can not just live, but can thrive on diets that contain only protein and fats. The fact that they are wondrously able to make use of just about any type of food we give them, grains included, doesn't mean that grain-heavy diets are what's best for them. Many holistic practitioners believe that the canine obesity epidemic and rising incidence of canine diabetes and allergies are due to the biologically inappropriate diets we feed to dogs. Animal proteins (meat, fish, and eggs) are what dogs have evolved to eat; we're asking for trouble, many believe, by feeding them such an unnaturally carb-rich diet.

Other benefits

It's also unnatural for dogs to eat such a dry diet. Most kibble contains about 10 percent moisture. Meat and fish contain anywhere from 50 percent to 80 percent moisture. Feeding canned foods, which contain (on average) about 78 percent moisture, is therapeutic for dogs who have any sort of kidney ailment, and may be beneficial for all dogs.

Most dogs digest wet foods with far fewer digestive problems (such as excessive gas, diarrhea, or constipation) than dogs who eat dry kibble.

Wet food is far more palatable to most dogs than dry food. This is a huge benefit to any dog who needs to gain weight, whether due to illness, age, or high activity. (It can be a hazard, though, to dogs who are fat or prone to becoming overweight. Most canned foods are much higher in fat than most dry foods, so if your dog is fat or at risk of pancreatitis, look for canned foods with lower percentages of fat.)

Canned foods (the term describes all wet foods that are cooked inside a sealed container, whether it's a can, pouch, or plastic tray) enable us to feed a diet that is biologically appropriate (with a high moisture content and a high inclusion of animal protein) and yet is shelf-stable – without the need for artificial or natural preservatives. (That stability lasts longer than even artificially preserved kibble, too.) When vitamin/mineral supplements are added to ensure the diets are “complete and balanced,” the overall benefits of canned food are compelling.

Selecting a good one

If you're sold on the idea of canned food, great! Now it's time to look for good ones. As always, the best way for a consumer to do this is to examine the label, skipping the pretty pictures of steaks and the marketing verbiage.

You need to know what is actually in the food, and how much protein and fat will it deliver to your dog. Ingredients appear on the label in order of their presence in the formula by weight. And the protein and fat content appears in the “guaranteed analysis” portion of the label.

Which product is best for your dog? We can't tell you that. Price or local availability influences some dog owners' decisions.

The most important criterion, however, should be your dog's response to the food. Keep an eye on his coat, eyes, ears, stool, mood, energy, appetite, and grooming habits. If he develops itchy paws, diarrhea, excessive gas, goopy eyes, or ear infections a week or two after changing foods, consider changing again. Note the ingredients in the food you tried, in case you begin to see a trend – an intolerance of chicken, for example. But if his health improves after changing foods, you're on the right track.

WDJ's Wet Food Selection Criteria

TRAITS OF A GOOD WET DOG FOOD

- **The highest possible inclusion of top-quality animal proteins.** Look for a whole, named source of meat as the first ingredient (meaning the product contains more of that ingredient by weight than anything else). There are some good foods that list water or broth as the first ingredient and a meat ingredient second – but we'd choose a product with meat first on the label over one that listed meat second.
- **“Named” sources of any animal protein or fat,** whether it's a muscle tissue (in which case it will appear as chicken, beef, buffalo, etc.) or an organ meat (in which case it should specify which species it came from, for example, “beef liver”).
- **Whole grains or vegetables** (if any are used in the formula).
- **Limited (if any) use of grain or vegetable by-products.** For example, a food containing potato starch as the sixth ingredient would be preferable to one with the same ingredient in the third position on the ingredients panel. And a food that contained just one grain or vegetable by-product (such as oat bran) would be preferable to a product containing several (such as potato starch, oat fiber, and tomato paste).
- **The words “complete and balanced.”** Some manufacturers produce a few wet food products that are meant for “supplemental or intermittent” use only. These products do not meet the specifications for a “complete and balanced diet” as defined by the model regulations developed by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) and adopted by each state. While these “supplemental” foods may be useful as part of a varied diet, they can't be relied on to provide all the nutrients your dog needs.

TRAITS OF LOW-QUALITY WET FOODS

- **Unnamed animal sources,** such as meat, meat by-products, poultry, poultry by-products, or animal fat.
- **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** There is a wide range in the quality and type of by-products that are available to pet food producers. And there is no way for a dog owner (or anyone else) to find out whether the by-products used are kept clean, chilled, and used fresh within a day or two of slaughter (as some companies claim), or are comprised of ingredients that were literally swept off a floor, dumped down the floor drains at the processing plant, and kept for hours or days on unrefrigerated loading docks and trucks. Because you can't know, avoid by-products.
- **Wheat gluten.** Wet foods often contain a thickener or binder. Various types of “gum” (such as guar gum, from the seed of the guar plant, and carrageenan gum, from seaweed) are common thickeners. Whole grains, potatoes, and sweet potatoes also can be used to thicken wet food. But wheat gluten (and some other glutens) are generally used in wet foods both to augment the protein content of the food (albeit with lesser quality amino acids) and to act as a binder, to hold together artificially formed “chunks” so that

they resemble chunks of meat. In other words, it's a signal that the real meat content of the product is less than ideal. If chunks of meat are present in a wet dog food, they should be actual chunks of meat.

- **Sugar or other sweeteners.** A food that contains quality meats shouldn't need additional palatants to entice dogs.
- **Artificial colors, flavors, or added preservatives.** Fortunately, these are rare in wet foods!

WDJ's Frozen Raw Dog Food Selection Criteria

These frozen diets, comprised mainly of raw meat, offer truly premium nutrition for your dog.

The more I've learned about the meat used in pet food, the more I've come to admire commercially produced frozen raw diets for dogs. The meat and poultry used in most of these diets are far fresher and more wholesome – far more like what most of us would think of as “meat” – than most animal protein ingredients in dry (or even canned) pet foods. The products tend to produce terrific results in the dogs who consume them.

Whether this is due to the ingredient quality or the fact that this type of diet is more biologically appropriate for canines than dry foods is anyone's guess. My guess is that both factors contribute to the success of the products.

Raw frozen diets are available in a variety of presentations. They may be formed into patties or nuggets, or packed into plastic tubs, tubes, also known as "chubs" or "sausages", or vacuum-sealed "flat-pack" bags.

Today, there are products available for every type of raw feeder: “complete and balanced” diets and ones meant for supplemental or intermittent feeding only; products that include bone and ones that use another calcium source. Frozen raw diets are available at a wide range of price points; just as with more conventional pet foods, the price tends to (but might not, depending on the company's size and marketing budget) correlate with the quality and provenance of the ingredients.

As a rule (there are always exceptions) raw frozen diets usually contain extraordinarily fine, fresh ingredients. Maybe it's because frozen raw products are the least-processed of all the types of commercially produced foods you can buy for your dog, and you can see the ingredients with your own eyes (and smell the freshness or lack thereof); they haven't been altered into anonymity by processing. Or maybe it's because this entire segment of the pet food industry is aimed at owners who are seeking out the healthiest diet possible for their dogs – owners who are independent enough that they have not been frightened away by tales of deadly bacteria.



Here is our list of selection criteria for raw, frozen diets:

- **A named, whole animal protein (such as chicken, beef, pork, duck, etc.)** at the top of the ingredients list. No “generic” proteins (such as “meat” or “poultry”). No by-products.
- **A good source of calcium.** If raw, meaty bones are not used as the calcium source, another source will be needed to make the diet “complete and balanced.”
- **Every other food ingredient (such as fruits or vegetables)** should be whole and fresh; any grains present may be cooked but should be whole. No low-quality grain by-products (such as “cereal food fines”).
- **More information about the food than the minimum required by law.** The guaranteed analysis (GA) that is required on every pet food label need only contain the amount of protein, fat, moisture, and fiber found in the food. We feel most comfortable with products from companies who are able to share the complete nutrient analysis for their products. How can we feel confident that our dog is receiving “complete and balanced” nutrition if the maker can’t tell us how much calcium or phosphorus is in its food?
- **No added preservatives.** These aren’t needed in a frozen food.
- **No artificial colors.** These shouldn’t be present in any pet food!

Selecting a product

With so many good frozen raw diets on the market, how should you select the right one for your dog?

- Price and local availability will undoubtedly limit your options. Some of these products are pretty costly. It’s no wonder; they are made out of very expensive ingredients! Products that can be purchased in local retail stores are generally (but not always) less expensive than direct-shipped products. Direct-shipped products might be the only option for those of us who live far from stores that carry raw frozen diets. Only you know how much you can afford.
- Check to see make sure that it’s fresh! All frozen foods are more nutritious and appealing if they are thawed and consumed sooner rather than later. Look for a “best by” date; if the date/code lacks a date of manufacture, contact the company to learn the actual date of manufacture. Some companies suggest their products have a frozen shelf life of up to a year. Others aim to have their products consumed within three or four months of manufacture. If your preferred retailer doesn’t sell enough product to keep their stock fresh, ask if they can better manage their inventory. Otherwise, you may have to find another source – perhaps a company that ships product directly to you.
- Look for ingredients that suit your dog. Of course you’ve checked the ingredient list for quality; now examine it for any foods that don’t agree with your dog. If he’s allergic to or intolerant of certain proteins or grains, you need to make sure they are not in there.

- Check the fat content. These foods can be extremely high in fat. That might be fine if your dog is an active athlete, but potentially dangerous for a dog prone to pancreatitis, as one example.
- Decide whether you feel most comfortable with a pasteurized product or an untreated one. We've not seen studies that would lead us to avoid foods treated with a high pressure pasteurization process. But we also feel comfortable with feeding our dogs raw products from companies that use top-quality, naturally raised meats. You have to go with your own gut on this one.

The “Humanization” of Dog Food

Watch out for these strategies and make sure you read the ingredients!

Industry analysts frequently observe that “humanization” has been a hot trend in pet food for the past few years. The term is used to describe products containing ingredients that are popular in the human food industry, as well as those that are manufactured and/or packaged to resemble human food.

Both “humanizing” strategies – using trendy ingredients and making pet foods look like human foods – are being used with great success to market pet food. And nowhere is this strategy being used to greater effect than in the canned food category. Because – soup! stew! yum!

As always, you have to read the ingredients list to determine whether a product has received a flattering makeover, with label art and language that make prosaic ingredients appear better – or whether the food does actually contain whole, healthy, “real” food ingredients.

Don't fall for pretty pictures of ingredients on the labels of pet food; be advised that the “chicken” that is used in pet food doesn't look anything like those gorgeous whole roasted chickens you see on some labels. Beautiful photographs or illustrations of dewy spinach leaves and robust whole carrots, glistening slabs of beef steak, or fat cubes of chicken breast, don't indicate that those ingredients are present in that form, amount, or proportion.

Similarly, don't allow adjectives to influence your perception of the ingredients. “Poached salmon” and “baby carrots” sound terrific, but “salmon” and “carrots” are the same thing, and laudable in their own right. Also, watch out for the word “flavor” – it doesn't necessarily mean



the food contains whatever food the word “flavor” is attached to; it means only that the food contains a flavoring agent!

I expect marketing efforts to be disingenuous, so I don't take offense at these obviously manipulative tactics. However, there is one application of the term “humanization” that I find incredibly patronizing: when analysts credit humanization for the sales success of foods that contain genuinely top-quality, healthy ingredients, as if anyone who bought anything other than the least-expensive foods on the market was being silly and anthropomorphic.

Many of us buy pet foods with human-quality ingredients because we truly believe that fresh, clean, whole or lightly processed ingredients from reputable domestic sources are more likely to benefit our dogs and less likely to harm them than low-quality by-products from the other side of the globe – not because we want our dogs' food to appear to be as good (or better) than ours.