

# Still Feeding Kibble? At Least Choose This Less Revulsive Brand

Slate article depicts the gross, stomach-flipping junk that passes as your favorite four-legged family member's food. You'd never dream of eating it yourself, so skip it for your pet too. At a minimum, use this ethically sourced kibble brand with no Chinese ingredients.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you feed your pet kibble, did you know there are safe storage and serving guidelines you should follow?
- Many changes can take place in a bag of kibble — none of them good — including fat rancidity, bacterial and fungal growth, nutrient depletion, and storage mite infestation
- Most dry pet food also has a number of other problems, including poor-quality, rendered and high-glycemic ingredients, and extreme processing that creates cancerous byproducts
- As soon as a bag of dry food is opened, important dietary fats start to go rancid, and long-term consumption of rancid fats can negatively impact your pet's health
- A much better, convenient alternative to highly processed, shelf-stable pet food is a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate commercially available frozen diets containing high-quality animal protein, moisture, healthy fats and fiber, and low to no starch content

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published March 30, 2019.***

If you purchase kibble for your cat or dog (which isn't recommended — more about that shortly), there are some things you need to know about how to handle and store your pet's "convenience food" once you get it home:

- The enemies of dry pet food include time, heat, sunlight, moisture, and oxygen. The longer the food sits on a shelf (at the store or your house) the more nutrient degradation occurs.
- An unsealed bag of pet food stored in a warm pantry or garage can be a recipe for disaster. After opening, if dry pet food is allowed to sit in its original packaging in a humid, warm area of your home, the potential for rapid bacterial and fungal growth is high. It's best to store kibble in its original packaging, sealed at the top and then stored in an airtight container in the freezer. Ideally, use food within 30 days of opening.
- Don't feed dry pet food past its expiration date, and even better, once you open a bag, throw out any remaining food at the 30-day mark, since the older it gets, the more it degrades and the greater the potential for contamination. For these reasons, it's also best to avoid large-sized bags unless you can feed the whole bag in 30 days without overfeeding your pet(s).
- Don't mix old with new pet food. In the event the older bag of food contains contaminants, transferring it to a new bag of food can contaminate the new kibble as well.

# The Ugly Realities of Convenience Pet Food

For example, as soon as a bag of dry food is opened, important dietary fats start to go rancid, and long-term consumption of rancid fats can negatively impact your pet's health.

Also, because 99% of kibble is processed multiple times and at extremely high temperatures, effectively inactivating many of the vitamins and minerals in the food, manufacturers assume the finished product is grossly nutritionally deficient. That's why the final production step involves spraying on a synthetic nutrient mix, as well as a palatability enhancer to entice your pet to eat something wholly unnatural.

The sprayed-on, synthetic nutrient mix contains cheap, feed-grade vitamins (often from China and contaminated with heavy metals), including metal oxides and sulfates that speed the oxidation of fats, ultimately resulting in rancid fats in a formula that may or may not be safe to feed as little as a week after it is opened.

Ninety-nine percent of pet food companies don't evaluate how long the nutrients last in their products once the bag is opened, for obvious reasons; the answer won't build trust or faith in their product.

There's also significant potential for the presence of opportunistic bacteria and mycotoxins in dry pet food, and the longer kibble is stored, the greater the risk to your pet and anyone in the family who handles the food. Mycotoxins are tasteless and odorless fungi that have incredibly detrimental health consequences ranging from liver failure to cancer.

And as if all that wasn't bad enough, storage mites can also proliferate in dry food. These tiny mites start out in grain silos and from there find their way into dry foods like cereal, grains and kibble. Pets can develop a hypersensitivity to storage mites, resulting in itchy inflamed skin, hair loss and recurrent ear infections.

## Is the Main Ingredient in Your Pet's Food 'Chicken Beaks' or Worse?

While most kibble is formulated to meet the basic nutritional requirements of dogs and cats, it doesn't provide optimal nutrition, nor adequate nourishment for a pet's lifetime.

The problem starts with the quality of the raw ingredients used to produce most dry pet food. Rendering plants create meat and bone meal from a variety of suspicious sources, including parts of cows that can't be sold for human consumption, including bones, the digestive system, the brain, udders, hide and more pieces and parts not allowed in the human food chain.

The vast majority of pet foods are made with ingredients rejected by the human food industry. They also may use the carcasses of diseased animals, expired grocery store meat (complete with plastic and Styrofoam packaging), road kill, zoo animals and euthanized companion animals, including horses and other beloved family pets (which is how euthanasia chemicals ends up in pet food).

Here's a stomach-flipping description of the process of spinning these raw ingredients into pet food from an article in Slate aptly titled "A Dog-Eat-Dog World:"

*"This material is slowly pulverized into one big blend of dead stuff and meat packaging. It is then transferred into a vat where it is heated for hours to between 220 [to] 270 degrees F. At such high temperatures, the fat and grease float to the top along with any fat-soluble compounds or solids that get mixed up with them.*

*Most viruses and bacteria are killed. The fat can then be skimmed off, packaged and renamed. Most of this material is called 'meat and bone meal.' It can be used in livestock feed, pet food or fertilizer ... There is essentially no federal enforcement of standards for the contents of pet food.*

*... Indeed, the same system that doesn't know whether its main ingredient is chicken beaks or Dachshund really cannot guarantee adequate nutrition to the dogs that eat it."<sup>1</sup>*

There is one dry food company, Carna4, that prides itself on using ethically sourced, humanely raised meats, and no synthetic nutrients from China (unlike most brands). So, if you must feed kibble, choose this brand. However, there are still other issues with kibble, in general, including the amount of starch in these foods.

## **Is Convenience More Important Than the Long-Term Health of Our Pets?**

As described above, the majority of mass-produced dry pet food is a blend of poor-quality meats, byproducts, and synthetic vitamins and minerals. In addition, most kibble contains high-glycemic, genetically engineered (GE) corn, wheat, rice or potato — grains and starches your dog or cat has no biological need for, and which create metabolically stressful insulin, glucagon and cortisol spikes throughout the day.

In fact, many popular grain-free diets have a higher glycemic index than regular kibble due to the excessive amounts of starchy ingredients (e.g., potatoes, peas, lentils, tapioca) used in the formulas. As we know, carbs break down into sugar, which fuels degenerative conditions such as diabetes, obesity and cancer.

Even worse, the poor-quality proteins and fats used in most kibble, when processed at high temperatures, create cancerous byproducts such as heterocyclic amines. The meat that goes into dry pet food is put through at least four high-temperature cooking processes, leaving the digestibility, absorbability and overall nutrient value highly questionable.

The low moisture content of dry food is also problematic, especially for cats. Dry cat food provides only about one-tenth the amount of moisture cats receive from prey animals, living foods and even commercial canned diets, which puts significant stress on their kidneys and bladder. Dogs also tend to become excessively thirsty when fed a dry diet. The carb-heavy content of dry food, along with overfeeding, is also a significant factor in rising rates of pet obesity.

## **Kicking the Convenience Pet Food Habit**

In the last 50 years, we've learned the hard way that feeding nutritionally unbalanced, biologically inappropriate diets to pets does not create health. In fact, chronic inflammatory and degenerative diseases in dogs and cats are at epidemic levels, and the problem can be traced directly to diet and lifestyle.

But in this day and age, convenience is very important. That's why pet parents should transition away from shelf-stable, highly processed pet food and instead opt for frozen, raw or minimally processed real food diets made with biologically correct, human-grade ingredients. Today, dozens of innovative companies offer a wide range of alternatives to the poor-quality “fast food” products the pet food industry has pushed the last 50 years.

A nutritionally balanced raw or gently cooked commercial diet is one of the top choices for pets. With the explosive growth of this category of pet food, competition is fierce, so you must do the same due diligence with fresh food companies (in terms of evaluating claims) as you would for any other company. In other words, fresh food companies now range from terrible to impeccable when it comes to ethics, quality, nutritional adequacy and corporate transparency.

The good news is there are many ethical companies now making human-grade and even portion-controlled, shipped-to-your-door custom deliveries. There are also lots of locally owned, independent pet food retailers who are very well-educated about these issues and happy to help you make the transition from feed-grade fast food (kibble) to human-grade fresh food.

**Sources and References**

[PetMD, May 22, 2014.](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Slate April 2013](#)

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