

Results of This Study Are Appalling, Be Careful

Be forewarned, the results of this study are appalling — and troubling. It's the antithesis of truth, and your pet will do anything but thrive if you walk down this dangerous path. This is doubly true if your four-legged friend is a kitty. Buy into their fantasy at your pet's peril.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The processed pet food industry is investigating just how much carbohydrate content cats can tolerate in their diets
- The strictly carnivorous nature of cats and a growing nutritional awakening among cat parents pose a problem for an industry that has made its fortune selling biologically inappropriate grain- and carb-based cat food
- It's simply a fact that cats' bodies aren't designed to digest carbohydrates efficiently, and the majority of carbs in a cat's diet convert to sugar and fat — leading to obesity and related diseases
- Animal meat is an essential source of protein, vitamins and water for cats — there is no adequate substitute
- Feed your cat a healthy variety of foods by offering a combination of homemade raw (or cooked), commercially available balanced raw, dehydrated raw and/or human-grade canned

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published April 10, 2018.

A study conducted by two university researchers (one in Canada and one in Belgium) discuss how cats digest carbohydrates.¹ The title of the published report was concerning: "Cats and Carbohydrates: The Carnivore Fantasy?"

It's puzzling as to why veterinary researchers would title their study to suggest cats aren't really carnivores (and should therefore be fed carbs). The likely explanation was found toward the end of the report — One of the researchers is the Royal Canin Veterinary Diets Endowed Chair in Canine and Feline Clinical Nutrition at the Ontario Veterinary College.

Many veterinary schools leave all their nutrition training and collaborative research in the hands of very large processed pet food companies, in this case, Royal Canin.

Is Big Pet Food Out to Prove Cats Aren't Carnivores?

As dog parents become ever more determined to feed their pets species-appropriate diets, the processed pet food industry has responded by becoming just as determined to convince the world dogs are omnivores, not carnivores, and can therefore safely and healthfully eat diets high in grains and starches.

Felines present an even greater problem for Big Pet Food because as obligate carnivores, they have even less ability than dogs to digest carbs (and, like dogs, they have no nutritional requirement for them), and pet parents are catching on.

How is the processed pet food industry supposed to continue to sell massive amounts of biologically inappropriate grain- and carb-based diets to cat owners who are increasingly demanding diets designed for true carnivores? Apparently, one way is to push the idea that it's a "fantasy" that cats require meat-based versus plant-based diets, and then conduct studies with a predetermined outcome to offer as evidence.

The Goal — Learn Cats' Maximum Tolerance for Ingredients They Don't Need and Can't Digest

Here's an example of how things may evolve. This is from PetfoodIndustry.com, referencing the same study discussed above:

"Once cats do manage to digest carbohydrates, they can't use the end products, such as glucose, as well as dogs do. Scientists found that uptake of the simple sugar, or monosaccharide, glucose took twice as long in cats as in dogs. Cats also seem to lack the ability to alter their uptake of digested carbs based on the quantity in their diet, which dogs are able to do.

However, the authors of the literature review noted that research is inconclusive on what concentration of sugars is needed to reach maximum uptake in cats' intestines. That means scientists don't know if the carb concentration in cat food is beyond or below what cats' digestive systems can use.

*One early study, from 1977, did find that cats could digest 40 to 100 percent of the starch in cat foods, depending on the carbohydrate source."*²

This is a perfect example of just how focused processed pet food producers are on learning how much dogs and cats can tolerate of the biologically inappropriate ingredients in their formulas.

Anyone interested in the long-term health, longevity and vitality of dogs and cats should be focused on offering the full range of dietary nutrients their bodies are designed to make the best use of — not how many inappropriate ingredients they can tolerate and in what quantities.

Don't Be Fooled — Your Cat Will NOT Thrive on a Carb-Rich Diet

Cats' bodies aren't equipped to digest carbohydrates efficiently. They lack the salivary, intestinal and pancreatic enzyme activity necessary to thoroughly break down and digest carbs. And since domestic cats evolved to eat very low amounts of grains and starch, common sense tells us a diet high in carbohydrates might create ill health (and feeds the feline obesity and diabetes epidemic).

The activity of a cat's liver enzymes is designed to handle protein and fat as energy sources, not starches. The majority of carbs in a cat's diet are ultimately stored as fat. Cats were designed to consume less than 19% carbs in their diet. Higher levels require the pancreas to produce more insulin and more digestive enzymes to break them down. Many

cats end up with chronic pancreatitis, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and diabetes as a result of chronic dietary abuse.

Interestingly, you won't find carbohydrate content listed on your bag of cat food because manufacturers don't want you to know. Do this simple equation to find out how much sugar you're actually feeding: Add up the amount of protein, fat, moisture and ash (estimate 6% if it's not listed) and subtract from 100. That number is the percentage of carbs (sugar) found in your food.

It's easy to see why so many cats have chronic inflammatory and degenerative diseases — they're being fed a very unnatural diet of refined carbs they were never meant to eat.

The livers of cats also do not produce the enzyme necessary to metabolize simple sugars. Research shows that cats fed diets high in simple sugars become hyperglycemic. Most cats aren't attracted to sweet-tasting foods (unlike dogs and people), and instead prefer food that tastes like animal products. This is one of several clear indicators of the strict carnivorous nature of felines.

Unprocessed Animal Tissue Is an Essential Source of High-Quality Protein, Vitamins, and Water

Felines have a unique nutritional biochemistry that is significantly different from other animals. As obligate carnivores, they need to consume nutrients in animal tissue to meet their very specific nutritional requirements.

When it comes to protein, kittens require 1.5 times the amount as the young of other species. Adult cats need two to three times the amount of protein other adult animals require. This is because omnivores and other mammals use most of the protein they consume not as a source of energy, but for growth and body maintenance. Cats use protein for those purposes, and also as a source of energy.

When most animals are fed a low-protein diet, their bodies make adjustments to conserve amino acids to manage the deficit. But a cat's body should continue to use protein even when there's not enough in the diet, which is why protein malnutrition happens quickly in sick or injured cats, and cats suffering from anorexia.

In addition to their increased need for protein, cats have a higher requirement for certain specific amino acids, such as taurine, found naturally in animal tissue.

They also have a special requirement for vitamin A, which is available naturally only in animal tissue. They lack the intestinal enzymes necessary to convert B-carotene in plants to the active form of vitamin A. Vitamin A is essential for maintenance of vision, growth of bone and muscle, reproduction, and the health of epithelial tissues.

Vitamin D is also essential in the diets of cats because they lack the ability to synthesize it through their skin. The liver and fatty tissue of free-range animals is rich in vitamin D.

Domestic cats evolved from desert-dwelling ancestors, which is why they need to get most of their water from the food they eat. Felines are not as responsive as other animals to sensations of thirst or dehydration. When fed a dry food diet, cats aren't driven to search for another source of water to make up the difference between what their bodies require and what their diet provides.

This results in chronic mild dehydration, a condition that will ultimately result in disease, especially of the feline lower urinary tract and kidneys.

Cats as Carnivores Is No 'Fantasy'

As always, it's "buyer beware" when selecting commercially available cat foods. As hard as certain activist organizations and the pet food industry may try to convince you otherwise, dogs will remain scavenging carnivores and cats will remain obligate carnivores, and neither will evolve to require or efficiently digest carbohydrate-laden diets.

Feed your cat a healthy variety of foods by offering a combination of homemade raw (or cooked), commercially available balanced raw, dehydrated raw and/or human-grade canned. The diet you feed your pet should be nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate and made from high-quality protein sources.

Sources and References

¹ [Veterinary Sciences 2017, 4\(4\), 55](#)
² [PetfoodIndustry.com December 15, 2017](#)
