

## **Feeding Recommendations for Your Pet's Optimal Health**

At Wolf Rock Animal Health Center, we believe that nutrition is the foundation of lifelong health for your pets. While commercial marketing often emphasizes products labeled as “dog food” or “cat food,” the truth is that your pet’s nutritional needs are best met with real, high-quality food — just like the food we eat. When thoughtfully prepared, real food supports optimal wellness, vitality, and longevity.

### **Options and Flexibility**

At Wolf Rock Animal Health Center, we recognize that every household and every pet is different. There is no need to commit to only one type of food for your pet’s entire life. Flexibility and variety are key to supporting your pet’s nutritional needs. Unless your pet has specific dietary restrictions, offering a range of wholesome foods can promote better health and prevent chronic issues over time.

You may prepare homemade meals during certain seasons, and rely on frozen, canned, or even dry options during busier times. If you travel regularly, freeze-dried or dehydrated foods may offer convenience. In emergencies, even simple meals prepared from grocery store ground meat and canned vegetables can suffice temporarily. While not balanced for daily use, occasional meals like these are better than heavily processed options in a pinch.

For pet owners who primarily feed dry food, adding fresh components such as cooked or raw meats and properly prepared vegetables can significantly boost nutritional quality. Vegetables should be cooked, pureed, or juiced to enhance digestibility, as dogs and cats cannot fully break down raw vegetables otherwise.

Our role is to guide you through these choices and support you in making informed decisions for your animal’s wellbeing. High-quality food serves as a powerful form of preventive care, much like an insurance policy for your pet’s health. We consistently observe better coat quality, ideal body condition, reduced obesity, fewer joint problems, longer lifespans, and overall happier pets when optimal nutrition is prioritized.

### **Homemade and Fresh Frozen Foods**

For those who can commit to preparing food at home, we offer carefully designed recipes for healthy adult dogs and cats. These recipes ensure your pet receives a complete and balanced diet. For puppies, kittens, or animals with chronic conditions, it’s important to consult with our veterinarian to customize the diet accordingly.

Homemade food does require time, storage space, and some financial investment. However, it remains the gold standard in pet nutrition. For added convenience, excellent commercially prepared raw or gently cooked frozen foods are available from reputable companies. These options can be delivered to your home or found in specialty pet stores. While more expensive than homemade diets, many offer outstanding quality. We

advise against mass-marketed grocery store brands, which often contain low-quality ingredients and excess carbohydrates.

### **Freeze-Dried, Air-Dried, and Dehydrated Foods**

Freeze-dried, air-dried, and dehydrated foods provide convenience, especially for travel or busy periods. When sourced from reputable companies using human-grade ingredients with low carbohydrate content, they can be a good occasional option. However, due to the processing involved, they lack the vitality of fresh food and should not be used exclusively. Always rehydrate these foods before feeding to avoid dehydration and strain on your pet's digestive system.

### **Canned or Carton-Packaged Foods**

High-quality canned or carton-packaged foods offer a middle ground between fresh and processed diets. When made with human-grade ingredients, these foods can serve as a reasonable alternative. However, high-temperature processing and long-term storage can still impact nutritional quality.

### **Dry Kibble-Style Foods**

Dry kibble remains the most heavily marketed but least recommended option. Traditional kibble often includes hidden preservatives, high levels of carbohydrates, and fillers such as potatoes, legumes, lentils, and peas. These ingredients can contribute to chronic health problems including weight gain, dental disease, inflammation, skin issues, and even cancer. Additionally, high-heat processing creates harmful compounds known as advanced glycation end products, which are linked to serious health concerns. Even high-end kibble brands typically contain at least 30% carbohydrates because starch is necessary to form the kibble itself.

### **Understanding Pet Food Regulation and Ingredient Quality**

In the United States, pet food is regulated by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). While AAFCO establishes ingredient standards and labeling guidelines, it allows for the inclusion of many low-quality ingredients not fit for human consumption. AAFCO approval does not guarantee nutritional excellence.

When evaluating pet food, always research beyond the packaging. Visit manufacturer websites to examine their ingredient sourcing and nutritional analysis. Look for human-grade ingredients, USA sourcing, or imports from countries known for humane, environmentally sound farming practices. Pay close attention to carbohydrate content, especially in dry foods where levels may range from 30% to 60%. Lower carbohydrate levels are always preferable for your pet's long-term health.

### **Final Thoughts**

Feeding your pet high-quality, appropriate food is one of the most significant investments you can make in their lifelong health. We are here to help you navigate

these options and create a sustainable, balanced approach that works for both your pet and your household.

