



3 pet food label myths

With so many pet food options, choosing the right diet can be tricky. As your veterinary team, we can help you select the best foods based on our experience with many pets, ignoring the blizzard of marketing ploys designed to appeal to your emotional needs rather than your pets' nutritional needs.

Myth 1 Foods labeled premium are always better for your pet.

Truth: Some premium food companies may call out other manufacturers for using ingredients like corn or meat meals, knowing full well that pets do not need ingredients; they need the nutrients that are contained in ingredients. The nutrients contained in those ingredients are more important than the ingredients themselves. Manufacturers, nutritionists and pet owners simply can't predict a food's performance based on its ingredient list. There are too many unknowns: the amount of the ingredient present in the food, the quality of the ingredient or the exact identity and nutrient composition of the ingredient.

Myth 2 The best food for your pet is one that lists real meat as the first ingredient.

Truth: Some manufacturers also make unsubstantiated claims about ingredients and manipulate their own ingredient lists. For example, some dry food manufacturers tout real chicken, fish or beef as their first ingredient because the food contains more of this ingredient by weight than any other ingredient. What they don't say is that "real meat" is mostly water weight, which is removed when the food is made, moving it way down the ingredient list. They also neglect to mention that the technical term for "real meat" is mechanically deboned meat, also known as "white slime!"

Myth 3 The order of the ingredients is the most important factor in selecting your pet's diet.

Truth: Another trick some manufacturers play is called ingredient splitting, where they will list different carbohydrates separately—corn, rice, barley, wheat or oatmeal, for example—or list out different forms of the same carbohydrate, such as ground wheat and wheat flour, so these individual carbs appear lower in the ingredient list. Doing so makes it appear as if carbohydrates are not the first ingredient.

Fact: Your veterinarian chooses your pet's food based on your pet's physical exam, lifestyle, medical condition and other factors related to your pet's health. So before you reach for the food you heard about on a commercial, call your veterinary team first for a recommendation tailored to your pet.