



# Pet Food Myths

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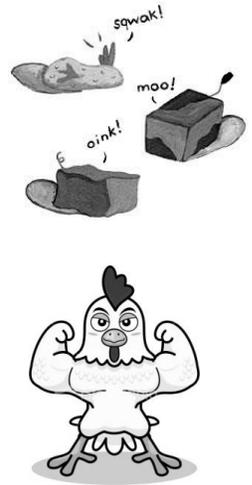
Pet health nutrition can be complicated and confusing for many pet owners who are looking for the very best products to feed their four-legged family members. Pet owners need to look beyond the ingredient list and base their pet food decisions on the actual NUTRITIONAL needs of their pets.

It is important to understand all the elements on a pet food label. Many names, statements and claims can be misleading to the purchaser making them invest in a food that can be less beneficial for their pet.

This information helps break down and explain some common food myths in regards to pet foods and nutritional needs.

## “REAL MEAT” AS THE FIRST INGREDIENT

“Real meat” is often advertised as the first item in the ingredient list. There is, however, no official AAFCO\* (Association of American Feed Control Officials) Definition of “real meat” and there is no “false meat” to which it is presumably being compared. There is no distinction between “real meat” and meat or meat by-products with regard to the quality of protein and amino acid content. The use of “real meat” does not ensure higher quality or quantity of dietary protein. It may actually be an inferior ingredient to meat meals. It is a marketing term intended to imply a fresher or more wholesome source of protein- a claim which cannot be nutritionally substantiated. Also remember, ingredients are listed on the label by weight, and raw chicken weighs a lot, since it contains a lot of water. If you look further down the list, you’re likely to see ingredients such as chicken or poultry by-product meal, meat-and-bone meal, corn gluten meal, soybean meal, or other high-protein meal. Meals have had the fat and water removed, and basically consist of a dry, lightweight protein powder. It doesn’t take much raw chicken to weigh more than a great big pile of this powder, so in reality the food is based on the protein meal, with very little “chicken” to be found.



## CORN: FILLER OR VERSATILE SOURCE OF NUTRIENTS AND ENERGY?

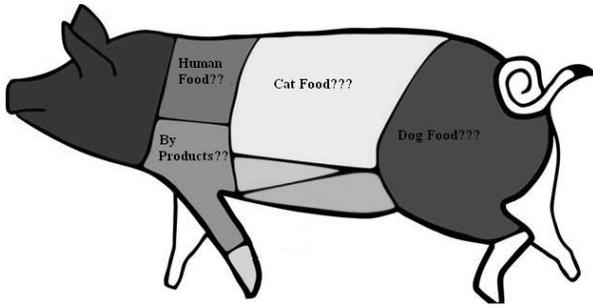


Corn is an excellent source of energy because it contains approximately 80% carbohydrate. The starch of corn from the highest grades can be more than 95% digestible. In addition to the high digestibility of the starch portion, corn contains a moderate amount of fat (oil). The fat in corn is particularly high in linoleic acid, which contributes to a healthy coat and skin. Corn is also an important source of carotenoids, nutrients that are converted to vitamin A.

Biologic functions that rely on inclusion if carotenoids in the diet are vision, skin health, reproduction, bone and muscle growth, and immune defenses.

Corn gluten is the protein portion of corn. Corn gluten meal is the dehydrated form. Its digestibility is as high as many meat and fish meals. The amino acid profile of corn gluten meal is different from and complementary to meat-based protein amino acids, making it possible to complete the nutrient puzzle and thereby formulate a complete and balance diet.

## BY-PRODUCTS.... DON'T JUDGE US BY OUR NAME!



By-products are simply the parts of slaughtered animals that people do not normally eat or choose to eat. By-product ingredients used in **reputable** pet food are “left-overs” from the very same animals slaughtered and plants harvested for human foods. They may include the heart, lungs, liver or other organs and meat trimming but must exclude feathers, hair, hide, hooves, manure and stomach contents. They are safe and approved for use in pet food by federal and state government regulatory agencies.

Meat by-products are an excellent source of protein, fat, starches, vitamins, minerals and other essential nutrients. It is unfortunate that the term “by-product” has received a negative marketing spin that creates a number of unappealing perceptions with the public. The appeal of “no by-products” claim may be understandable from an emotional perspective, but from a scientific point of view, such perceptions have no real meaning in terms of assuring a high-quality, safe and nutritious pet food. Some “by-products” such as the liver, kidneys, tongue and heart are considered delicacies in some countries and consumed by humans!

## NATURAL, ORGANIC, HOLISTIC, OH MY!

The types and sources of ingredients used in the making of commercial pet food and the safety and reliability of the final product are understandable concerns for pet owners. There are trends in the marketing of pet foods today that make safety or quality implications based on certain descriptive qualifiers. Some terms used in advertising different pet

food products, however, may create misunderstandings or generate unproven health expectations for the concerned pet owner.

### “Organic” is not synonymous with “natural”

The definition of “natural” adopted by AAFCO\* is very broad. Artificial **preservatives**, colors or flavors are not permitted. However, natural formulas may contain vitamin and mineral supplements that cannot be naturally obtained, if designated on the label. The term “organic”, on the other hand, has a very strict legal definition under the USDA National Organic Program. These products have a specifically defined production process under which food animals and plants are produced and handled. There are no official rules that govern the labeling of organic pet foods. There is no scientific data to support claims and no defined assurance that organic foods are more nutritious than other foods.

Buyer beware: some companies are adept at evading the intent of both of these rules. For instance, the name of the company or product may be intentionally misleading. Some companies use terms such as “Nature” or “Natural” or “Nature’s”, etc whether or not their products fit the definitions.

### “Human Grade” ingredients

A lot of pet foods claim they contain “human grade” ingredients. This is a completely meaningless term — which is why the pet food companies get away with using it. The same applies to “USDA inspected” or similar phrases. These are strictly marketing terms, not defined by AAFCO\* or the USDA and cannot be accurately used to describe any pet food.



*\*AAFCO is a non-governmental organization consisting primarily of federal, state and foreign feed officials whose responsibilities include: Developing standards and promoting uniformity of laws pertaining to the quality and safety of pet foods, their regulation and enforcement, Developing and revising official feed ingredient definitions and feed labeling requirements, Developing protocols for assessing nutritional adequacy of manufactured pet foods. Although adaptation of AAFCO standards is voluntary, most states adopt and enforce AAFCO pet food regulations.*