

Kitten Preparation

Part 2

Feeding Your Kitten

To live a long, healthy life, your kitten needs proper nutrition. Here are some things to consider when selecting an appropriate diet for your cat.

Necessary Nutrients

Cats are obligate carnivores, which means that they rely on nutrients found only in animal products. Cats evolved as hunters that consume prey that contains high amounts of protein, moderate amounts of fat, and a minimal amount of carbohydrates, and their diet still requires these general proportions today. Cats also require more than a dozen other nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, fatty acids, and amino acids.

Although your cat needs certain amounts of each specific nutrient to be healthy, more is not always better. This is particularly true of vitamins and minerals, so the use of supplements is usually not necessary if you are feeding a balanced and complete diet. Supplements can be harmful to your cat, and they should never be given without a veterinarian's approval. Cats should have access to clean, fresh water at all times.

Types of Commercial Cat Food

Commercial cat foods are formulated as dry, semi-moist, and canned. These products differ in water content, protein level, caloric density, palatability, and digestibility.

Dry Food

Dry food contains between six and 10 percent water. Depending on the specific formulation, a mixture of ingredients are combined, extruded, and dried into bite-sized pieces. Ingredients may include:

- meat and/or meat by products (aka organ meat – liver, heart, gizzards, and meat trimmings)
- poultry and/or poultry by products (again organ meat and trimmings)
- grain and/or grain by products (soybean meal, Vitamin E* etc.)
- fish meal (generally Pollock trimmings left over from human food manufacturing)
- fiber sources
- milk products (milk proteins)
- vitamin and mineral supplements

*Yes, Vitamin E is a soybean by product. It cannot be obtained by any other source and cannot be manufactured synthetically.

The pieces of dry food are often then coated with flavor enhancers, such as animal fat, to make the food more appetizing.

Dry cat food is relatively inexpensive, and stores easier than canned food. It is important to store unused portions in a cool, dry location, and not to use the food after its expiration date. It's a good idea to store dry cat food in its original packaging even if it's in an airtight container to help prevent nutrient deterioration and maintain flavor.

Canned Food

Canned cat food has a moisture content of at least 75 percent, making it a good dietary source of water. It is generally the most expensive type of cat food, but is also highly palatable for most cats. Many different varieties are available, which can be helpful if your cat has a texture preference (pate vs chunk and gravy). Canned food has the longest shelf life when unopened, but any unused portion of opened canned cat food should be refrigerated to maintain quality and prevent spoilage. Gourmet canned cat foods generally feature meats, such as kidney or liver, and whole meat byproducts as primary ingredients. Many brands, however, are nutritionally incomplete, and it is recommended to stick with a Science Diet brand.

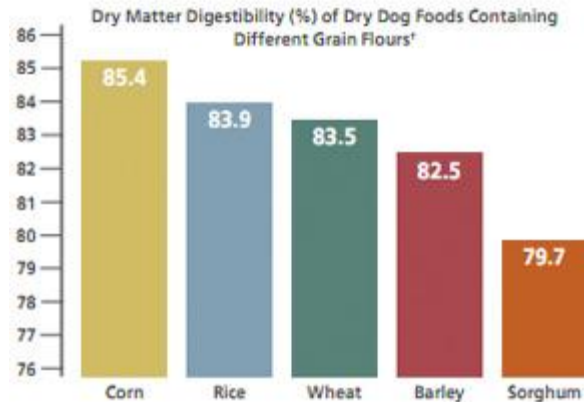
Food Myths:

MYTH 1: Corn is just filler.

FACT:

A filler is an ingredient providing no nutritional purpose. Corn is NOT a filler. Corn is a nutritionally superior grain compared with others used in pet food. It contains nutrients not found in other grains and includes:

- Essential fatty acids for healthy skin and coat
- Beta-carotene, vitamin E and lutein - nature's antioxidants
- Highly digestible carbohydrates for energy



- Quality proteins for muscle and tissue growth

You'll be interested to know that protein in corn is more digestible than rice, wheat, barley or sorghum.

MYTH 2: By products are low quality ingredients.

FACT:

A by product is something produced when making something else. For example, a by product of soybean processing is vitamin E. Other food by products include: vegetable oils, beef bouillon and gelatin. Also, Hill's:

- Selects those by products that allow it to add nutrient-rich organ meats
- Avoids excess minerals from bones found in less expensive meat meals

MYTH 3: High temperatures destroy nutrients during the pet food making process.

FACT:

At Hill's, they prepare their pet food through a "quick cooking" process. Important nutrients are actually more digestible after cooking than before. Also:

- It is true that cooking can lead to the loss of some vitamins. However, we formulate our products so that we meet our precise nutrient targets after cooking
- Our Guaranteed Analysis statement on each bag reflects these post cooking levels

MYTH 4: Raw foods help pets live longer.

FACT:

Feeding raw meat, eggs and bones pose dangers for your pet because of excessive levels of nutrients like protein, calcium and phosphorus. These foods also increase the risk of broken teeth, gastrointestinal issues and exposure to bacteria such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*.

Choosing a Food

Commercially prepared cat foods have been developed to give your cat the correct balance of nutrients and calories. Basic minimum nutritional requirements for cats have been established

by the Feline Nutrition Expert (FNE) Subcommittee of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), and manufacturers use these standards in producing cat foods.

A cat's nutritional requirements change through different stages of life. These stages include kitten, adult, senior, pregnancy, and lactation. It is important to feed appropriately for each life stage. Over a cat's lifetime it can develop medical issues that can require special foods.

Science Diet is the number one choice among veterinarians, and for good reason. Science Diet is unique in its high-quality and safety of the foods from start to finish. They run tests on every batch of food before it is released to ensure no contaminated food ever leaves the warehouse. They also run extensive tests to ensure the food is doing exactly what it's labeled to do – kitten growth, adult maintenance, hairball control, senior maintenance, etc. Science Diet is also nutrient packed and highly digestible so you feed little (1/2 cup per day at every life stage) and therefore there's less in the litter box.

Homemade Diets

Making your own cat food is a difficult and time-consuming process, as the recipe may not contain the right quantities and proportions of nutrients for your cat. It is generally recommended that cat owners purchase nutritionally balanced commercial foods, unless a veterinarian recommends a home-formulated recipe for medical purposes. In that event, your veterinarian will likely recommend a recipe developed by veterinarians certified in animal nutrition.

Treats

While giving your cat an occasional high-quality treat is not generally harmful, they are usually not a complete and balanced source of nutrition and should only be fed occasionally. A good rule of thumb is not to let treats exceed 10 to 15 percent of a cat's daily caloric intake. In addition, some treats should be avoided completely. Although raw meat is an excellent source of many nutrients, it is not recommended as a food or a treat for cats, because it is a potential vehicle for toxoplasmosis and other infectious diseases. Some cats that have consumed canned fish products meant for humans (tuna, salmon, etc.) have developed urinary issues and potentially serious neurological disorders. Dairy products (milk, cheese, ice cream, etc.) are not recommended as a treat for cats, as many cats are lactose-intolerant and can develop gastrointestinal problems if fed dairy products.

Other Considerations

Cats can be choosy about where they eat. Keep in mind that heavy-traffic areas, noise, the presence of other animals, dirty food containers, or nearby litter boxes can deter a cat from eating. Try to be sensitive to your cat's eating behavior, and make necessary adjustments.

Maintaining a healthy weight is another important consideration. Obesity is the most common nutrition-related problem in cats, and makes cats susceptible to a number of health problems, including arthritis, urinary tract infections, and diabetes. Ask your veterinarian to help you determine the ideal body weight for your cat and follow their suggestions for adjusting your cat's diet to reach and maintain that weight.