

Nutrition Service: Client Resources

Alternative Pet Diets

Some alternatives to conventional commercial pet foods are listed below:

- Home-prepared diets
- Natural, organic, or human food-grade diets
- Vegetarian diets
- Raw food diets

Pros and Cons of Alternative Diets for Your Pets

PROs	CONs
Home-Prepared Diets	
<p>Alleviates concerns about wholesomeness/nutritional value of commercial food.</p> <p>Pets may prefer the taste over commercial food.</p> <p>May be necessary for diagnostic or therapeutic reasons.</p>	<p>Requires specialized knowledge to formulate a complete and balanced diet.</p> <p>Online recipes may be deficient in one or more essential nutrients.</p> <p>Difficulty in finding appropriate ingredients and supplements.</p> <p>Greater investment of time, and likely of money.</p> <p>Responsibility for correct preparation and quality control lies with the pet owner.</p>
Natural, Organic or Human Food-Grade Diets	
<p>Gets away from additives, preservatives, coloring and flavorings being in pet food.</p> <p>Some regulatory oversight of labeling of these foods exists.</p>	<p>Rules for labeling pet food as organic are pending.</p> <p>No government standards for defining the terms <i>human-grade</i>, <i>holistic</i>, or <i>premium</i> with respect to pet food.</p> <p>Food needs to be used in accordance with its shelf life.</p>

Vegetarian Diets	
<p>May fall in line with a person's own convictions.</p> <p>Easier for dogs to have vegetarian diets because their nutrient requirements are not as stringent as cats'.</p>	<p>Formulating a complete and balanced vegetarian diet can be challenging.</p> <p>Several essential nutrients for cats are found only in animal ingredients.</p> <p>Synthetic nutrients would be required, and as such, the diet would not be natural.</p> <p>Protein requirements are higher in cats and dogs than in humans.</p> <p>Many home-prepared vegetarian diets are inadequate.</p>
Raw Food Diets	
<p>Owners can home-prepare diets or use commercially available products.</p> <p>Anecdotally have been promoted for their health benefits.</p>	<p>Risk of contamination by <i>Salmonella</i> and other bacteria, which puts pets and their owners at risk.</p> <p>Raw food diets have been found to have nutrient excesses and deficiencies.</p> <p>Not good for animals with increased nutrient demands, i.e., newborns.</p> <p>Bones can cause tooth fractures and obstruction of, or trauma to, the esophagus, stomach, and/or intestines.</p>

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