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

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

May fall in line with a person's own convictions.

Easier for dogs to have vegetarian diets because their nutrient requirements are not as stringent as cats'.

Formulating a complete and balanced vegetarian diet can be challenging.

Several essential nutrients for cats are found only in animal ingredients.

Synthetic nutrients would be required, and as such, the diet would not be natural.

Protein requirements are higher in cats and dogs than in humans.

Many home-prepared vegetarian diets are inadequate.

### Raw Food Diets

Owners can home-prepare diets or use commercially available products.

Anecdotally have been promoted for their health benefits.

Risk of contamination by *Salmonella* and other bacteria, which puts pets and their owners at risk.

Raw food diets have been found to have nutrient excesses and deficiencies.

Not good for animals with increased nutrient demands, i.e., newborns.

Bones can cause tooth fractures and obstruction of, or trauma to, the esophagus, stomach, and/or intestines.

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