

This Type of Canned Food Is Well Worth the Extra Cents

More and more owners are making the switch to wet pet food, usually a big improvement over kibble. However, there's also a huge range in quality for canned food as well. Here's my recommendation for the best canned food you could feed your dog or cat.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Consumer demand for wet pet food is increasing across the world
- Canned pet diets have much more moisture than kibble, and many have more protein and fat. They typically don't contain preservatives, and the taste is appealing to many dogs and cats
- If you feed a canned diet to your pet, my recommendation is to find a human-grade formula; these diets are typically made by smaller manufacturers, are sold in small independent pet stores and are considerably more expensive than feed- or animal-grade diets
- Set a goal to feed your pet the best diet you can afford, and as often as possible, offer your dog or cat fresh, whole, unprocessed foods

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According to a recently released "market intelligence report," consumer demand for wet pet food is growing across the globe.¹ I'll call this good news, because while I always recommend fresh over processed food for pets (and humans), most canned diets are preferable to kibble. According to PetfoodIndustry.com:

"Wet pet foods have significantly higher moisture content than dry pet foods because they contain about 70 [to] 85 percent water mixed with dry ingredients. The transportation and shipping of wet pet foods are more expensive than dry pet foods. Hence, wet pet foods are priced higher than dry pet foods.

As wet pet foods have more protein and fat contents than dry pet foods, pets often perceive wet pet food to be tastier than dry pet foods. Also, most wet pet foods do not contain any preservatives, and so, are meant for quick consumption."²

Wet pet diets are indeed much higher in moisture than kibble, which is a very good thing. Kitties fed dry diets tend to live in a state of chronic mild dehydration because their bodies need seven to eight times the amount of moisture kibble provides, and they don't make it up at the water bowl like many kibble-fed dogs do.

In my opinion, the reason so many older kitties wind up with kidney disease is because they've been fed a lifetime of kibble. Many canned pet foods contain more meat-based protein and fat than dry diets, and fewer preservatives, which is also a plus.

Dogs and cats are carnivores designed to thrive on a diet of animal meat and animal fat — not plant-based proteins, grains, cereals, legumes, carbohydrates, sugars or any of the other biologically inappropriate ingredients used in processed pet food, especially kibble. As a bonus, non-kibble addicted dogs and cats tend to prefer the taste of canned diets over dry diets as well.

The Type of Canned Pet Food I Recommend

With all that said, while as a general rule I would choose a canned diet over kibble, in my latest best-to-worst pet food rankings, the first appearance of canned food is at number 6, meaning there are five types of pet food I recommend ahead of it.

If you're feeding your pet a canned diet, I recommend a human-grade formula. The term human-grade in pet food means the finished product is legally suitable and approved as nourishment for humans. It is "edible." Feed-grade, which is more or less the opposite of human-grade, is finished product unsuitable for human consumption ("inedible"). It can only be legally fed to animals (other than humans).

Feed-grade ingredients are essentially waste products of the human food industry. The bulk of these ingredients are rendered by-products derived from meat slaughtering and processing plants; dead animals from farms, ranches, feedlots, marketing barns, animal shelters and other facilities; and fats, grease and other food waste from restaurants and stores.

Human foods are much more rigorously regulated than foods made for animals. Unlike the loosely controlled pet food industry, the FDA and USDA regulate human foods and conduct frequent, detailed inspections of the manufacturing facilities that produce food for people.

Only pet foods made in human-grade facilities, subject to the inspections and approval necessary to have human-grade status, can be legally considered 100% human-grade. Few pet food companies can meet these criteria, and in fact, the top pet food manufacturers in the world do not have a single pet food made with human edible ingredients.

If the package label or the manufacturer's website doesn't say the ingredients are human-grade, you should assume they aren't. Pet food made with human-grade ingredients is harder to find and is much more expensive than feed-grade or animal-grade canned food. Relatively small pet food manufacturers are where you'll find formulas containing human-grade ingredients. These diets are often sold in small independent pet stores that focus on high-quality foods.

Number 7 on my best-to-worst rankings is super premium canned food. These diets are typically found at big pet stores like Petco and PetSmart, as well as many conventional veterinary offices. Unfortunately, these diets contain feed-grade ingredients, but the moisture content is much more biologically correct than dry food. Many also have excellent protein, fat, fiber and carb ratios.

Feed Your Pet the Best Diet You Can Reasonably Afford

In case you're wondering, the five types of pet food I recommend before canned are a variety of nutritionally balanced, unprocessed, whole food diets. That's because the goal in feeding pets a diet they can truly thrive on is to mimic their ancestral diet as closely as possible without going broke.

My essential recommendation is to feed your pet (and yourself) as much unprocessed, fresh food as you can afford. If you can't afford to feed an entirely fresh, living, raw food diet, offer fresh food snacks instead. Research shows that providing SOME healthy foods to dogs and cats is better than no healthy food at all.

Other options to consider: Feed, for example, two to four fresh food meals out of 14 in a week, or do a 50/50 split, meaning one meal a day is a processed pet food, and the other is a fresh food meal. Take baby steps toward providing the best diet you can afford for your dog or cat, and keep in mind that any amount of species-appropriate fresh food snacks and meals is better than none.

5 Superfoods to Consider Adding to Your Pet's Diet

1. **Pumpkin** — Fresh pumpkin, either steamed or boiled (or canned 100% pumpkin), is relatively low in calories and high in soluble fiber, which is beneficial for pets with gastrointestinal (GI) upset. Pumpkin helps regulate bowel function, which relieves both diarrhea and constipation. Pumpkin is also an excellent source of potassium.
2. **Kefir** — Kefir is a fermented milk beverage that contains beneficial probiotics that support the immune system. Although regular, pasteurized cow's milk can be irritating to your pet's GI tract, fermented milk is different. One of the best and least expensive ways to add healthy bacteria to your pet's diet is to convert raw milk to kefir yourself.

All you need is one-half packet of kefir starter granules in a quart of raw milk (preferably organic), which you leave at room temperature overnight. Add 1 to 3 teaspoons of this super probiotic to your pet's food one to two times daily for overall improved GI defenses.

3. **Mushrooms** — Some mushrooms are poisonous, so obviously you'll want to avoid those. Non-toxic, beneficial varieties include shiitake, reishi, maitake, lion's mane, king trumpet, turkey tail and himematsutake mushrooms. All mushrooms that are safe for people are safe for pets.

Mushrooms can help regulate bowel function, but even better, they also contain potent anti-cancer properties and immune system enhancers. You can either lightly cook the mushrooms in a very small amount of olive or **coconut oil** before adding them to your pet's meal, or try out my **[mushroom broth recipe](#)**.

4. **Sardines** — Fish are a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential to your pet's well-being. If you supplement your dog's or cat's diet with fish, I suggest you use sardines packed in water. Sardines don't live long enough to store toxins in their bodies, and they're a terrific source of omega-3s.
5. **Fermented vegetables** — Fermented foods are potent detoxifiers and contain very high levels of probiotics and vitamins. Beneficial gut bacteria provided by probiotics break down and eliminate heavy metals and other toxins from the body, and perform a number of other important functions.

Adding 1 to 3 teaspoons of fermented veggies to your pet's food each day (depending on body weight) is a great way to offer food-based probiotics and natural nutrients.

Sources and References

[PetMD](#)

¹ [PR Newswire, August 21, 2017](#)

² [PetfoodIndustry.com, August 17, 2017](#)