

## Are You Making This Common Pet Food Storage Mistake?

This is the first thing many pet owners do when they buy food for their pets, not realizing it can actually increase bacterial growth and hasten spoilage. Here's a much safer way to help keep your pet's food fresh.

**Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)**

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The enemies of dry pet food are time, heat, moisture and air
- Dry food loses nutrient value over time and can easily go rancid or grow pathogens if not stored properly
- Dry food is "fast food" for pets, promoting obesity and chronic disease, and is not an ideal food choice for dogs or cats
- A fresh, species-appropriate and balanced diet is a better choice for your pet's health

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If you purchase dry food for your cat or dog, which is not something I recommend unless you can't afford better food, the way you store it impacts its freshness. An unsealed bag of pet food in a warm pantry or garage can be the recipe for disaster when it comes to avoiding disease and intentionally creating wellness.

The enemies of dry pet food include time, heat, moisture and oxygen. The longer the food sits on a shelf (at the grocer or your house) the more vitamin degradation occurs.

Depending on the quality, source and stabilization of the fats in the product the kibble also has the potential to become rancid, and as pet food formulator Steve Brown says, "feeding rancid fats is worse than feeding no fats at all."

For this reason he recommends buying dry foods that do not contain additional essential fatty acids (EFAs) and recommends you add the delicate EFAs to your pet's dry food at the time of feeding.

If pet food is allowed to sit in warmer, humid climates or a warm room of the house the potential for bacterial and fungal growth on and in the food is also a big risk to your pet. Storing dry pet food in an airtight container in the freezer, refrigerator or cool, dark room is your best bet.

Obviously don't feed a food that's expired, and in fact Steve recommends you use up kibble within 30 days of cracking the bag to avoid many of the negative things that can happen to dry food over time.

For this reason, I recommend you avoid buying large-sized bags if you only have one pet or small pets; the food will go stale or bad (and at the very least may lose flavor) before you get a chance to use it up within this four-week, optimal timeframe.

When you open a new bag, don't pour the remnants from the old bag into the next, as you may transfer bacteria as well.

Keep the barcode around if the bag is gone, just in case there's a recall or a problem with the product. I offer these tips because I recognize many pet owners do purchase dry food for economic reasons.

However, there are many reasons why you may want to reconsider this type of food entirely.

Believe it or not, with some pre-planning, sale shopping and an ounce of resourcefulness on your part, you can create well-balanced, homemade meals for little more than that ultra-premium bag of dry pet food you're currently buying.

## What's Really in Dry Pet Food?

It goes without saying that feeding an animal kibble every day for its entire life will get boring for your pet. Will it sustain life? Sure, but assuming your pet will derive everything it needs to thrive from a monotonous diet of highly processed, synthetically fortified foods is a stretch.

And while it may meet basic nutritional requirements to keep your pet alive, it certainly does not provide the type of nourishment your pet needs for cellular repair, healthy detoxification and resilient organ function, long term.

What's my problem with feeding a pet an entirely processed diet their whole lives? Well, I have several issues with dry foods, but we'll start with the quality control issues with the raw materials going into kibble. Rendering plants create meat and bone meal from a mishmash of sources.

Parts of cows that can't be sold for human consumption (bones, digestive system, brain, udders, hide and more), carcasses of diseased animals, expired grocery store meat (including the plastic and Styrofoam packaging), road kill and even zoo animals and dogs and cats that have been euthanized. Slate reported:<sup>1</sup>

*"This material is slowly pulverized into one big blend of dead stuff and meat packaging. It is then transferred into a vat where it is heated for hours to between 220 [to] 270 degrees F.*

*At such high temperatures, the fat and grease float to the top along with any fat-soluble compounds or solids that get mixed up with them.*

*Most viruses and bacteria are killed. The fat can then be skimmed off, packaged and renamed. Most of this material is called 'meat and bone meal.' It can be used in livestock feed, pet food or fertilizer ... There is essentially no federal enforcement of standards for the contents of pet food.*

*... Indeed, the same system that doesn't know whether its main ingredient is chicken beaks or dachshund really cannot guarantee adequate nutrition to the dogs that eat it."*

There is one dry food company, **Carna4**, that prides itself on using ethically sourced, humanely raised meats and no synthetic nutrients from China (unlike all the other brands). So if you must feed kibble, I suggest this brand. However, there are still other issues with kibble, in general.

## Problems With Dry Food

Aside from the poor-quality meats, byproducts and synthetic vitamins and minerals, most commercial dry pet foods are based on high glycemic, genetically engineered (GE) corn, wheat, rice or potato — grains and starches that have no place in your pet's diet and create metabolically stressful insulin, glucagon and cortisol spikes throughout the day.

In fact, many of the "grain-free" dry foods have a higher glycemic index than regular pet foods due to the excessive amounts of potatoes, peas, lentils or tapioca included in the formulas.

Carbs also break down into sugar, which fuels degenerative conditions such as diabetes, obesity and cancer. In the last 50 years we've learned the hard way that feeding biologically inappropriate diets (low-fat, high-carb diets that permeate the pet food industry) do not create health.

In fact, the amount of chronic inflammatory and degenerative diseases is epidemic, all relating to diet and lifestyle, in my opinion. Further, low-quality proteins and fats (not fit for human consumption), when processed at high temperatures, create **cancerous byproducts**, like heterocyclic amines.

It's estimated that meat going into pet food undergoes at least four high-temperature cooking processes in an average bag of food, leaving the digestibility, absorbability and overall nutrient value highly questionable.

Most dogs and cats will thrive when given fresh, whole foods, which mimic their ancestral diet, but unfortunately, many must make do with entirely processed, largely inferior alternatives. Your pet may have adapted to this diet, but it's a recipe for chronic disease.

The low moisture content of dry food is also problematic, especially for cats. Dry cat food provides only about one-tenth the amount of moisture cats receive from prey animals, living foods and even commercial canned diets, which puts significant stress on their kidneys and bladder.

Dogs also tend to become excessively thirsty when fed a dry-food diet. The carb-heavy nature of dry food, along with the propensity for owners to feed more than their pet metabolically needs, is also a significant factor in rising rates of pet obesity. So, in my book, the issue is far less about how to properly store your pet's dry food as it is about choosing the best food for your pet in the first place.

## What Are the Best Choices for Pet Food?

A nutritionally balanced raw or gently cooked homemade diet is the top choice for pets, but you should only attempt this if you're committed to doing it right. If you don't want to deal with balancing diets at home, choosing to feed a pre-balanced, commercially available raw food is a great choice.

A freeze-dried/dehydrated diet is second best. Human-grade canned food is a mid-range choice, but hard to find, followed by premium canned food. Avoid semi-moist pouches, as most are made with an unhealthy chemical called propylene glycol.

Remember, too, that you can incorporate fresh foods into your pet's diet as treats. Blueberries, chia seeds in **coconut oil**, banana slices, raw pumpkin seeds and even fermented vegetables and kefir make great fresh-food snacks and provide your pet with a variety of nutrition and flavors.

If you're transitioning your pet over from a dry food diet, do so gradually. It may take your pet time to get used to the new healthier diet, but in many cases you'll find even your cat grows to love it and you'll love the health benefits (and smaller vet bills) from feeding a fresh, species-appropriate diet.

## Sources and References

[PetMD](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Slate April 2013](#)

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