

Causes Your Pet's Cells to Starve, Even While Providing Certain Macronutrients

They're trying to fool you with double talk. When they discuss the macronutrients your pet needs, it's time to do a double take. Don't be bamboozled by these lies and charades, or you and your pet will pay dearly, albeit so slowly it's barely discernible.

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

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The processed pet food industry is pushing the idea that dogs and cats today may be eating too much protein
- They are also promoting the misinformed view that carbohydrates, for which dogs and cats have no nutritional requirement, are a better source of energy than protein
- Another nonsensical statement by Big Pet Food is that high-protein pet food is contributing to the rise in obesity rates in dogs and cats
- Given the choice, both cats and dogs select diets high in protein and fat, and low in carbohydrates
- It's important to figure out how many carbs are in your pet's processed diet; it's even more important to transition your dog or cat to a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate fresh food diet

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One of the processed pet food industry's latest worries is that dogs and cats are eating too much protein. The answer? More carbohydrates. Yes, you read that right. According to PetfoodIndustry.com, "The current pet food trend of pushing protein levels ever higher may not be sustainable, for a variety of reasons, and research is lacking to understand the long-term effects on dog and cat health."¹

Apparently, they're not talking about animal protein levels, because the existence of wild cats and dogs is all the "research" anyone should need to understand the long-term effects of high-animal protein diets on canine and feline health.

If they're referring to **plant-based protein**, they're absolutely correct — there is no peer-reviewed scientific research on the long-term effects of biologically inappropriate protein sources on dog and cat health. One possible explanation: The biologically inappropriate kibble industry is estimated to generate a whopping 20 billion dollars this year.

However, anecdotally, there's lots of evidence that feeding dogs and cats diets their bodies weren't designed to consume greatly affects their health long-term, and not in a good way.

Fortunately, dogs and cats are among the most resilient animals on the planet. They're able to survive on diets they were never designed to eat. However, let's not kid ourselves — degeneration does occur as a result of inappropriate nutrition. It's just that the changes are gradual and often hidden until a disease is full-blown.

In my opinion, we've created dozens of generations of nutritionally compromised pets that suffer from degenerative diseases linked to nutritional deficiencies.

Big Pet Food Nutritionist Supposes That High-Protein Formulas Could Be Contributing to Pet Obesity

Here's a jaw-dropping bit of gas lighting from a senior nutritionist who works for a processed pet food manufacturer:

*"... [W]hile protein is one of the main macronutrients needed by pets — actually, the amino acids in protein ingredients are required by dogs and cats — it is not an ideal source of energy, unlike the other two macronutrients, carbohydrates and fats. Excess protein is stored in the body as fat, so today's high-protein, dense pet foods could be contributing to rising pet obesity if pet owners overfeed them."*²

I do agree that protein is not an ideal energy source: protein (amino acids) are building blocks. However, the notion that carbohydrates are a better source of energy for dogs, and especially cats, is nonsense. Fat is nature's very best energy source for carnivores, who actually don't have a carbohydrate requirement (more on that shortly).

Cats actually need much more protein in their diet than other animals. Kittens require 1.5 times more protein than puppies. Adult cats need two to three times the amount adult dogs require. While other mammal species use most of the protein they consume for growth and body maintenance, cats use it for those purposes and also as a source of energy.

When other species eat a low-protein diet, their bodies make adjustments to conserve amino acids to manage the deficit. But a cat's body must continue to use protein even when there's not enough in the diet, which is why protein malnutrition is common in sick, injured and anorexic kitties.

As for the nutritionist's assertion that high-protein diets could be contributing to the pet obesity epidemic? Ludicrous. In all my years of practice and life on planet Earth, I've never seen or heard of or read about a pet carnivore who got fat from eating too much animal protein. Carbs make mammals fat. And while excessive protein isn't healthy for any mammal, we must remember what species we're nourishing and what the source and quality of protein is before making assumptions.

Always Remember: Plant Protein Is NOT the Same as Animal Protein

It's important to understand that animal protein and plant protein are not equivalent forms of nutrition for dogs and cats, despite what many pet food "experts" and the industry would like us to believe. In addition, protein quality is extremely variable, including protein sourced from animals.

All protein has a biologic value, which is its usable amino acid content. Eggs have the highest biologic value at 100%. Fish is a close second at 92% (though I don't recommend feeding most fish to pets on a daily basis). Feathers, as you might guess, have zero biologic value.

Soy, another favorite ingredient of processed pet food producers, is very poor nutrition for pets, but it has a relatively high biologic value of 67%. Both soy and corn are included in many popular commercial pet foods because they provide a cheap way for pet food manufacturers to boost the total protein content on the guaranteed analysis printed on the label.

Digestion and assimilation are not measured for pet foods, so manufacturers can include other types of protein that have no biologic value for cats or dogs. This is where the quality question comes in. Because the pet food industry allows all types of recycled and **rejected human food and slaughterhouse waste** to be used as raw materials in pet food, it can be difficult to know if the protein you are feeding your dog or cat is providing bioavailable amino acids or not.

Another Stunning Statement: Carbohydrates Are a 'Main Macronutrient' Required by Dogs and Cats

Contrary to what the pet food nutritionist asks us to believe, carbohydrates are not a "main macronutrient" required by dogs and cats, alongside animal protein and fat. Neither the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) nor the European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) stipulates a requirement for carbohydrates in pet food, because dogs and cats have no nutritional requirement for carbohydrates.

The fact is, calories from carbohydrates should be less than 10% of the total calories consumed by your dog or cat each day, so clearly they don't represent a significant source of dietary energy.

Sadly, Big Pet Food is involved in a slobbering love affair with carbohydrates. The carb content of processed pet food, especially **grain-free formulas**, is typically many times the amount pets require. Excess carbs are converted to sugar, which is one of the main reasons the incidence of obesity, cancer, diabetes and several other chronic health conditions in dogs and cats is exploding.

Further, dogs and cats have short digestive tracts that are adapted to metabolize animal flesh and fat, not grains and simple sugars, including starch, and in addition, their bodies lack the enzymes necessary to digest and efficiently absorb plant-based foods.

Let's See What Cats and Dogs Choose to Eat When Given the Choice

"When cats were offered three diets with varying macronutrient profiles, they choose a high-protein, high-fat diet," writes Terrence O'Keefe in an article for PetfoodIndustry.com. "The total consumption of the three diets by cats, when averaged out, showed that cats preferred protein 50 percent to 52 percent by energy, fat 36 percent to 50 percent by energy, and carbohydrate 2 percent to 12 percent by energy.

In the same type of three-diet-offering study, dogs choose a high-fat, moderate-protein diet. The average result for these tests was a preference for 30 percent to 38 percent protein by energy, 59 percent to 63 percent fat by energy, and 3 percent to 7 percent carbohydrate by energy."³

It's clear from these study results and others like them that both cats and dogs naturally choose diets very low in carbohydrates. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, that's because low-carb diets are biologically appropriate for carnivorous canines and felines.

Determining the Carb Content of Dry Pet Food

If you're interested in learning what percentage of the food you're feeding your dog or cat is made up of carbohydrates, you won't find that info on the package label. So locate the "guaranteed analysis" on the bag of food and apply the following formula:

$$100\% - \% \text{ protein} - \% \text{ fat} - \% \text{ moisture} - \% \text{ ash (if not listed, use 6\%)} = \% \text{ carbs}$$

Fiber is indigestible roughage that doesn't break down into sugar, so you don't have to include it in the formula.

Example, cat food: Royal Canin Indoor Adult Dry Cat Food

$$100\% - 27\% \text{ protein} - 15\% \text{ fat} - 8\% \text{ moisture} - 6\% \text{ ash} = 44\% \text{ carbs}$$

Example, dog food: Royal Canin Medium Adult Dry Dog Food

$$100\% - 23\% \text{ protein} - 12\% \text{ fat} - 10\% \text{ moisture} - 6\% \text{ ash} = 49\% \text{ carbs}$$

In both these examples, the amount of carbohydrates far exceeds the amount a cat or dog is able to effectively digest and assimilate. And believe it or not, most grain-free dry formulas are even higher in carbs than regular formulas like the Royal Canin products.

If you're feeding a dry diet, it might be free of grains, but it can't be free of carbs, because carbs are necessary to form kibble. If you look at the package label, you'll see potato, sweet potato, lentils, peas (pea starch), chickpeas, tapioca or another carbohydrate source(s).

Carb-heavy pet food can lead to blood sugar fluctuations, insulin resistance, obesity, diabetes and other health problems in pets. Carb intake above your dog's or cat's daily needs triggers internal enzyme factors to store the excess as body fat.

The Biologically Appropriate Diet I Recommend

The goal should be to mimic your pet's ancestral diet as closely as possible. I recommend feeding a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate diet, which means food containing high-quality animal protein, moisture, healthy fats and fiber, with low- to no-starch content.

A **nutritionally balanced raw or gently cooked homemade diet** is my 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, a great alternative is to feed a pre-balanced, commercially available raw food. A freeze-dried/dehydrated (and reconstituted) diet is second best. **Human-grade canned food** is a mid-range choice, but can be hard to find.

Sources and References

[PetfoodIndustry.com May 29, 2018](#)

^{1,2} [PetfoodIndustry.com, May 29, 2018](#)

