

# Watch Out, These Three Food Industry Buzzwords Spell Trouble

Run, don't just walk away from these three types of food. Pet food makers are hoping to cash in on one of the fastest growing trends, betting that you won't catch on to the devious tricks. While these buzzwords may sound compelling, they're best avoided if you're looking for wholesome pet food.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The processed pet food industry wants a piece of the action, which means pet owners must stay alert for the introduction of lesser-quality products into a market segment that has traditionally been known for excellent-quality pet food
- Human-grade freeze-dried diets are a good alternative to, but not an ideal replacement for nutritionally balanced raw or gently cooked homemade diets

**Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published December 29, 2017.**

Freeze-dried pet food, which is a relatively innovation, is becoming increasingly popular. For example, in 2011 freeze-dried full meal sales were \$10.4 million, and freeze-dried treat sales came in at \$12.3 million. Just three years later in 2014, those numbers jumped to \$51.3 million in full meals and \$22.6 million in treats.<sup>1</sup>

In case you're wondering how food is freeze-dried, it's actually a simple process. The meat or fish arrives frozen and is tempered (thawed slightly) so it can be diced. The diced meat is placed on trays and the trays are placed on carts that are rolled into a blast freezer.

Once the blast freezing is complete, the trays of meat are rolled into a freeze-drying chamber. Once the freeze-drying is complete, the trays are rolled to a packaging area where the meat is packaged, tested for salmonella and other potential pathogens that could affect human health, and then shipped.

## Processed Pet Food Producers Want a Piece of the Growing Freeze-Dried Market

In response to the increasing demand from pet parents for freeze-dried diets, processed pet food producers are getting creative, and not in a good way. As John Milne of Canature Processing Ltd explains to PetfoodIndustry.com:

*"Freeze-drying technology was applied to pure meats, typically the ubiquitous beef liver freeze-dried treat, but we're now seeing freeze-dry technology being applied to freeze-dried + kibble (FD+K) pet food formulations. We're seeing that accelerated velocity going into the market, and these seem to be fusion diets.*

*We're taking raw meats — a single muscle meat like beef heart or pork heart, or an amalgam of red meats or poultry meats or fish meats — and those products are processed and put through the freeze-drying process. And we're coming out with freeze-dried cubes being added to the kibble."*<sup>2</sup>

There are some buzzwords here we need to be wary of:

- **Fusion diets** — These are blends of different kinds of pet food (plus something else) into a single product. Sounds really trendy and healthy, but most likely is anything but.
- **Amalgam of red meats or poultry meats or fish meats** — Beware of all unnamed meats. You want to know exactly which animal produced the meat you feed your dog or cat. In addition, an amalgam (mixture) of meats can run the gamut from highly nutritious to non-nutritious (or worse) depending on the source of the meat in the mixture.

## **Buyer Beware: Just Because a Pet Food Is Freeze-Dried or Dehydrated Doesn't Mean It's Good-Quality**

The processed pet food industry is planning to use freeze-dried technology to mix "multiple proteins and/or carbohydrates," as well as "functional ingredients." They'll find a way to freeze-dry all their favorite inexpensive, biologically inappropriate, starchy ingredients and ride the coattails of quality pet food manufacturers who've been producing excellent freeze-dried diets for years.

This is really a shame, because the freeze-dried segment of the pet food market has historically been reliably high-quality, featuring brands that use human-grade ingredients like Humankind and Dr. Bessant's Simple Food Project. But as the market expands and the processed pet food producers get in on the act, it's very concerning to think about what may end up in the freeze-dried aisle.

If you're a pet parent and like the idea of freeze-dried meals for your dog or cat, be sure to do your homework and stick with high-quality pet food companies. And make sure the brand you select is nutritionally balanced for all life stages.

## **A Step Up from Freeze Dried Pet Food**

It's important to realize that excellent-quality freeze-dried (or dehydrated) diets aren't the same as fresh raw diets, despite marketing gimmicks. Many freeze-dried brands are trying to cash in on the popularity of raw food diets, deceptively labeling them as raw food when they aren't.

Freeze-dried food is NOT raw food; one is fresh (i.e., it will rot if left at room temperature) and one is shelf-stable (meaning not fresh). Freeze-dried foods haven't been processed at high temperatures like processed dry food diets, which is good, and in many cases, the nutrient value has been retained minus a balanced fatty acid profile.

They're shelf-stable so they're very convenient, and to make them biologically appropriate, all you have to do is add water. They're a smart choice for pet owners who are always on the go, or who take hiking or camping trips with their pet, or for dogs and cats who go to day care or need to be boarded.

They're also an option for pet parents who can't or don't want to feed fresh raw food, however, nutritionally balanced, homemade fresh food diets is still recommended for optimal nutrition.

Fresh, living foods have an abundance of enzymes, fragile fatty acids and phytonutrients that are lost with any type of processing. These micronutrients are invaluable to health, over time, which is why unprocessed meals should be fed to pets as often as economically possible.

## **Sources and References**

<sup>1</sup> [PetfoodIndustry.com, June 16, 2015](#)

<sup>2</sup> [PetfoodIndustry.com January 9, 2017](#)

---