

Approved Dog Foods for Best Health and Nutrition

Courtesy of The Whole Dog Journal

What to look for in a dog food:

Animal protein at the top of the ingredients list

Ingredients are listed by weight, so ideally a food with have one or two animal proteins in the first few ingredients.

Named animal protein source

Chicken, beef, lamb and so on. "Meat" is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein "meals" (i.e. "chicken meal") should also be from the named species.

When a fresh meat appears high on the ingredients list an animal protein meal in a supporting role, to augment the total protein in the diet. Fresh or frozen meats do not contain enough protein to be used as the sole protein source in a dry food. They contain as much as 65-75 percent water and only 15-20 percent protein. IN contrast, animal protein "meals" - meat, bone, skin and connective tissue that's been rendered and dried --contain only about 190 percent moisture, and as much as 65 percent protein.

Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains. Fresh unprocessed food ingredients contain wholesome nutrients in all their naturally complex glory, with their fragile vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two food fragments, especially if they are low on the ingredients list. But if there are several present in the food, and/or they appear high on the ingredients list, the lower-quality the food.

Organic ingredients: locally sourced ingredients

Both of these things are better for our planet.

What to look OUT for:

Meat by-products or poultry by-products

Higher-value ingredients are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than low-value ingredients (such as by-products) by the processors. The expense of whole meats and meat meals doesn't rule out poor handling and resultant oxidation (rancidity), but it makes it less likely. For these reasons, we suggest avoiding foods that contain by-products or by-product meal.

Added sweeteners

Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little healthy animal protein).

Artificial preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin

Natural preservatives such as tocopherol (forms of vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve the food as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the "best by" date on the label and look for relatively fresh products. NOTE FROM LINDA: I purchase giant bags of kibble and freeze all of it except what will be used in one week. I've heard too many stories of the kibble becoming rancid and the dog suffering stomach upset and/or diarrhea. Freezing keeps the food fresh.

Artificial colors

The color of the food makes no difference to the dog; these nutritionally useless chemicals are used in food to make them look appealing to YOU!

List of manufacturers and dry foods approved by WJD for 2010:

Addiction Foods: Salmon Bleu, Viva La Venison, La Porchetta

Artemis Pet Foods: Fresh Mix (5 varieties), Osopure (2 varieties for small dogs)

Back to Basics: Chicken and Pork formulas

Bench & Field Pet Foods: Holistic Natural Canine

Blue Buffalo Company: Blue Life Protection Formulas (3 puppy, 5 adult, 1 weight control, 1 senior), Blue Longevity (puppy, adult, mature), Blue Wilderness (2 varieties), Blue Organics (1 variety)

Blue Seal Feeds: By Nature (6 varieties) By Nature Organics (1 variety)

Breeder's Choice Pet Foods: ActiveCare (2 varieties) Advanced Pet Diets Select Choice (6 varieties) AvoDerm Natural (10 varieties) AvoDerm Natural Original Oven-Baked (3 varieties) Health Food for Dogs, Pinnacle Holistic (4 varieties)

Burns Pet Health: Burns offers 3 varieties

Canidae Corp: 7 varieties including 2 grain-free varieties

Canine Caviar Pet Foods: Canine Caviar Holistic Beneficial (5 varieties including 2 puppy, 2 adult, and 1 special needs) Holistic Grain Free (1 variety, venison & split pea)

Castor & Pollux Pet Works: Organix (3 varieties) Ultra mix (4 varieties)

Champion Pet Foods: Acana (10 varieties) Acana Grain-Free (3 varieties) Orijen (6 varieties all grain-free)

Della Natura Commodities: Wenawew (3 breed based varieties and 1 vegetarian variety)

Diamond Pet Products: Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul (4 varieties), Premium Edge (6 varieties), Professional Pet Food (7 varieties), Taste of the Wild (3 varieties)

Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance: Natural Balance Original Ultra (4 varieties), Natural Balance Limited Ingredient Diets (6 varieties), Natural Balance Vegetarian, Natural Balance Organic

Dogswell, LLC: Happy Hips (with glucosamine and chondroitin), Shape Up (lower fat), Vitality

Drs. Foster & Smith: Drs. Foster & Smith Dog Food (5 varieties)

Evanger's Dog & Cat Food Company: Evanger's Dog Food (3 varieties)

Firstmate Pet Foods: FirstMate Grain-Free (6 varieties), FirstMate Classic (4 varieties), SKoki Grain-Free (6 varieties), Skoki Classic (4 varieties)

Fromm Family Foods: Fromm Four-Star Canine Entrees (6 varieties), Gold Nutritionals (5 varieties), Fromm Classics (2 varieties)

Laughing Dog, Inc: Young Dog, Brave Dog, Wise Dog

Life4k9 Pet Food: Life4k9 (2 varieties)

Lincoln Biotech: Zinpro

Merrick Pet Care: Merrick Dog Food (7 varieties), Before Grain (3 varieties)

Mulligan Stew Pet Food: Mulligan Stew (3 varieties)

Natura Pet Products: California Natural (8 varieties), Evo (6 varieties), HealthWise (5 varieties), Innova (11 varieties), Karma

Nature's Variety: Nature's Variety Instinct Grain-Free (3 varieties), Nature's Valley Prairie (5 varieties)

Omnipro Pet Foods: OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato

Perfect Health Diet Products: PHD Viand

Pet Chef Express: Pet Chef Express

Pet Valu: Performatrin Ultra (3 varieties)

Petcurean Pet Nutrition: Go! Natural (4 varieties), Now! (4 varieties all grain-free), Summit Holistics (3 varieties)