

Natural Pet Food: What You Need to Know

Food unfit for human consumption might be unfit for your pet too. Use these tips to buy organic and natural cat and dog foods instead.

By Yelena Galstyan



dog eating dog food

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pesticide linked with a variety of health problems including liver issues and mutations. Luckily, with pressure from the public, many brands have replaced this ingredient with more natural preservatives, like vitamins C and E, but some brands may still fall short.

He also advises to steer clear of the ingredient "meat and bone meal" which is the lowest quality protein that is often made with a percentage of animals that are 4-D: Dead, Dying, Diseased or Disabled.

[Greenopia.com](http://www.greenopia.com) rates pet food brands based on sustainable and humane production, packaging,

Many conventional pet food brands consist of animal byproducts and low-grade meats that are unsuited for humans but considered good enough for pet chow. If you wouldn't go near it, why feed it to your beloved pet?

Since nutrition directly influences health and resistance to disease, ideally you want pet food that is comparable to the food you eat, or close to it. There's not a lot of research out there on pet diets, but the anecdotal evidence suggests that natural or organic pet foods can improve skin and coat health, especially if the pet has allergies. Some claim that dogs fed natural food have better dental health and more manageable weights. Hey, you could potentially extend the life of your kitty or pooch, or at the very least, save on vet bills.

But aren't organic brands more expensive? Many green pet foods do cost more per ounce, but no need to fret. They also tend to have higher concentrations of nutrients, so you may not have to feed your pet as large of a meal, said Doug Mazeffa, research director at Greenopia.com, which rates the "greenest" [pet foods](#) on the market.

Mazeffa suggests looking at ingredient labels at your local supermarket before making a decision. Avoid ethoxyquin, a food preservative and

food grade and ingredients, recycled materials, building logistics and their overall supply chain. Companies that produce pet foods that are minimally processed without added drugs or hormones, and that are preserved with natural substances, rank higher. They also consider the transparency of the company (how well they report their ingredients), and their environmental goals and practices.

Mazeffa suggests looking for food that is certified organic and meets USDA standards for being free of pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and artificial preservatives like butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT). On average, cat food tends to be healthier, and contains more fish, Mazeffa said.

Below are the top performers in Greenopia's product ratings:

Best Organic and Natural Dog Foods

Honest Kitchen Dehydrated Dog Food (\$78 for 10 pounds — 43 pounds of rehydrated food — at thehonestkitchen.com or \$85 at amazon.com)

Karma Organic Dog Food (\$24.50 for 4.4 pounds at amazon.com)

Best Organic and Natural Cat Foods

Honest Kitchen Dehydrated Cat Food (\$41.50 for 4 pounds — 15 pounds of rehydrated food — at shop.thehonestkitchen.com or \$40 at amazon.com)

Natural Planet Organics Cat Food (\$18 for 6.6 pounds at Amazon.com)

Check out more [Greenopia ratings](#) to help you pick the right pet food off the shelf.