

Cats Need Wet Food

By Beth Taylor and Steve Brown

The natural diet of cats is meat.

Cats are meat eaters, designed to thrive on a wide variety of small prey animals, eaten fresh and whole. Their natural diet is high in water and protein, with a moderate amount of fat, and a very low percentage of carbohydrate.

Dry cat food is high in grain.

A diet of dry food is high in carbohydrate, between 35 and 50 percent. "Diet" and "Lite" foods have even more.

Dry food contains almost no water. Dry cat food is convenient to feed, and relatively inexpensive, but it's the opposite of the natural diet of cats. Cats have no dietary need for any carbohydrate.



Cats need to get water from their food.

Cats are descended from feline desert dwellers. They couldn't stroll over to the watering hole for a drink, and cat tongues are not very well designed for drinking water.

Cats are adapted to obtain most of their water from their prey, which contains more than 75 percent water. Cats who eat dry food consume only half the water they need, compared to those that eat wet food, and live in a state of chronic dehydration.

The common health problems of cats are related to diet.

There is increasing evidence, published in peer-reviewed veterinary journals, that many of the health problems seen in cats are the result of diets inappropriate for a feline. Dry, grain-based foods fed to a meat eater, over time, result in both chronic and life-threatening diseases, like these:

Obesity: Since cats are designed for a high-protein, moderate-fat, low-carbohydrate diet, it is not surprising that obesity is often seen in cats. Diet cat foods have even more carbohydrate than regular ones, and less fat, so they depart even further from the natural diet of cats, making it harder for them to lose weight.

Diabetes: The high level of carbohydrate in dry cat food contributes directly to the development of diabetes in cats. Blood sugar levels rise when cats eat dry food. When this is an ongoing event, insulin-producing cells "downregulate," which leads to diabetes.

Kidney disease: Kidney disease is the most common cause of death for cats. The kidneys require an abundant supply of water to do their job. Without water to process the byproducts of the digestion process, the kidneys are overloaded, become damaged over time and unable to do their job.

Bladder Problems: Cystitis, bladder irritation and bladder/kidney stone formation are also strongly

connected to dehydration. If the body is well hydrated, these problems are minimized.

Inflammatory Bowel Syndrome and Disease: These problems are often characterized by vomiting and diarrhea and are very common in cats. Cats who eat a species-appropriate diet rarely suffer from these issues.

Dental disease: Dry food has a high sugar (carbohydrate) content, which has been shown to cause dental decay.

For cats to derive any supposed abrasive benefit from dry foods to be seen, they would have to actually chew their dry food. Since dry food shatters in their mouths and they then swallow the pieces, there's no abrasive action from chewing something hard.

Cats who eat dry food often have very severe dental problems. Many factors contribute to dental health, but it is clear that a high-carbohydrate diet is not beneficial!

The Solution: An Appropriate Diet for the Species

It's simple: Cats need to eat a diet that is high in protein and water, with a moderate amount of fat, and almost no carbohydrate.

Most of the health problems we've discussed here are either radically improved or eliminated by eating a diet that meets the needs of a carnivore -- one which closely resembles the nutritional balance provided by a mouse. For example, many veterinarians now treat diabetes in cats with a meat-based canned diet.

We'd like to go a step further, and prevent these diseases.

Feed your cat a meat-based diet!

We suggest you buy canned food that is designed to be complete, or complete frozen diets that have very little vegetable content. No grain sources should be listed in the ingredient panel. There are grain-free canned cat foods that have some vegetables in them, but vegetables should not be a major component ([read our article](#) on how to compute these percentages).

"All meat" diets are just that, and they will not meet your cat's nutritional needs alone.

Make the switch successful!

It sounds simple to just switch your cat's food. After all, meat tastes better than dry food, but your cat may disagree. Dry foods are designed to be tasty, and many cats are addicted to them. Often, cats are not open to the idea of variety, especially if they have only been fed one food (as we have been advised by pet food companies for decades). Creativity and patience may be needed to switch your cat.

Cats will starve themselves, and they are not good candidates for the tough love approach. Some very serious conditions can occur if cats do not eat for an extended period, especially if they are overweight. A slow switch will prevent problems.

Here are some ideas to help you along:

1. Establish regular feeding times and put food away in between meals. For many reasons, it's best for their bodies not to have food available all the time. If you have dogs, you know what to do with leftovers! Feed multiple cats separately.
2. Consider dry food to be a snack only, not left out all the time. Leave out just a few pieces as a treat. Consider this the equivalent of "kitty junk food."
3. Offer bits of other kinds of fresh food that you are eating. They may be refused, but one day, they won't. Your goal is to get your cat to consider things as food other than dry, crunchy items.
4. Cat whiskers are very sensitive. If food is served in a bowl that interferes with whiskers, it could be enough to keep the cat from considering the food. A flat dish works well.
5. Cats generally prefer their food between room temperature and body temperature. The dry food cats are used to eating is designed to be very smelly. Warming the food releases the flavors and fragrances. Cats choose food by smell, and wet food is a lot less fragrant than a commercial food they have been eating. This is often the reason that the second half of a can of food is refused: The first time it was room temperature!
6. Trickery has been known to work with cats. Put the food on your plate, or hide it in a location cats know to be forbidden. When in doubt, creativity helps!

Additions and Considerations

Add sardines for good fats, or use fish oil. A meal of sardines once a week or one small sardine a day adds omega-3 fatty acids in their best form -- whole food. Because cats can't use plant sources of omega-3s at all, animal sources are necessary. If sardines aren't appealing to you, use a fresh, high-quality omega-3 fish oil supplemented with vitamin E.

Digestive enzymes and a glandular supplement are good additions to replace the parts of prey animals we normally don't feed cats: The stomach contents and smaller glands.

We think that the optimum diet for cats is **a raw meat-based diet**. However, if you feed your cat a canned diet that approximates the balance of his or her natural diet, their diet will be fully hydrated, and you will be much closer to providing your cat with optimum nutrition.

If you choose to feed a meat-based canned diet, find a way to simulate components lost in cooking or processing.

One way to add live food is with "cat grass," very popular with cats. It's often available in the produce section at the grocery store, or you can grow your own from a kit. This addition often takes the burden off the house plants! Dry "green stuff" is another choice ("Barley Cat" is one product). It takes a very small quantity of a dry product to do the job. Too much can make urine PH too alkaline, and cause some of the problems you're trying to avoid! Tiny pinches of dry green stuff go a long way.

For cats, good diet can make the difference between "Old Age" at 12 and 23. Cats who eat dry food are often old and feel quite ill at 9 or 10. Healthy cats can live a very long time, and that's what we hope for your feline carnivore!

Contact Steve or Beth for more information at bat31@earthlink.net.

Dr. Mercola's Comment:

There is indeed a special relationship that exists between pets and their owners that goes far beyond the sharing of a home together. Our happy-go-lucky, four-legged friends also provide us with constant unconditional love, devotion, friendship and something else that might not be at the forefront of most people's minds -- health benefits.

If you have a dog, I highly recommend you read their excellent book, [See Spot Live Longer](#). Using philosophies similar to my own regarding the importance of nutrition, See Spot Live Longer presents solid evidence that a good diet is just as important for dogs as it is for us. When fed a proper raw diet appropriate for their body, hundreds of people, including veterinarians, have witnessed vast health improvements in their dogs.

Authors Steve Brown and Beth Taylor, both pet health and nutrition experts, provide an all-inclusive argument for feeding your dog a naturally balanced raw meat, bone and vegetable-based diet that provides much higher quality nutrition than any dry or canned dog or cat food. By convincingly covering all the bases, readers will:

- Review case studies of dogs and cats with chronic illness that improved after fed a healthy diet of fresh food.
- Dispel the myths that are sabotaging your dog's health.
- Learn how the ancestral dog's diet compares to the modern diet dogs eat today.
- Realize the canine anatomical digest process to better understand why and when our animals are at risk from different types of food and potential toxins.
- Find out why dry and canned dog foods may be harming your dog.
- Find out what real fresh foods will protect your dog from cancer and other disease.
- Discover the importance of exercise and how keeping your dog fit will add years to its life.
- Learn practical, cost-effective solutions to feeding your dog better for a longer and healthier life.

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