**Myth or Fact?**

**Grain-Free**

**Grain-free diets are healthier.**

**It's a Myth**

Many pet owners believe that grain-free pet foods are easier to digest, provide pets with better nutrition and are less likely to cause allergies than pet foods containing grain.

**The Facts**

Properly processed grains are highly digestible.

* While uncooked grains are poorly digested by dogs and cats, properly cooked grains in pet foods are highly digestible.
* Dogs and cats can digest the carbohydrates from grains with an efficiency of greater than 90%.1,2

Diets containing grains provide excellent nutrition.3

* Grains are carbohydrates, which are an important source of energy.
* Grains also contain fiber, which supports gastrointestinal health and decreases the total fat and calories in a diet.
* Essential fatty acids and other nutrients in grains contribute to a healthy skin and coat.
* Concentrated protein sources from grains, such as corn gluten meal, can be highly digestible sources of many essential amino acids.

Grains are unlikely to cause allergies.

* Less than 1% of dogs are sensitive to grains.
* True food allergies are caused by immune reactions to proteins in the diet.
* Allergies to proteins in grains can occur, but are far less common than allergies to other protein sources, such as beef or dairy.4

**Remember**

Properly processed grains provide needed nutrients as part of a nutritionally complete and balanced diet.

**Myth or Fact?**

**By-Products**

**By-products are poor-quality ingredients.**

**It's a Myth**

By-products are sometimes thought to be low-quality ingredients that shouldn't be included in pet foods.

**The Facts**

By-products are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients.

By-products defined:

* A by-product is any ingredient that is produced or left over when some other product or ingredient is made.
* Broths and gelatin are examples of meat by-products in human foods.
* By-products in pet foods that meet Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) guidelines come from clean animal parts other than meat, such as liver, kidneys and other organs.1
* Purina purchases all by-products from USDA-inspected plants. They must meet stringent criteria for nutrient content, production and quality assurance.

By-products

**What they can be**

Liver
Kidney
Lungs
Spleen

**What they can't be**

Feathers
Hair
Hide
Hooves
Intestinal Contents

By-products can be more nutritious than meat alone.

* Muscle meat is deficient in many nutrients, including calcium, other minerals and vitamins. Many of these missing nutrients are abundant in meat by-products or poultry by-products.
* By-products are also an excellent source of protein and amino acids.
* For example, poultry by-product meal contains 60% to 70% protein and can be highly digestible.2

**Remember**

By-products used in Purina© diets are high-quality ingredients that can boost the nutritional value of a pet food.

**Myth or Fact?**

**Preservatives**

**Pet food preservatives are harmful.**

**It's a Myth**

Some consumers believe that preservatives are unsafe ingredients that shouldn’t be added to foods for humans or pets.

**The Facts**

Preservatives are added to ensure pet food remains wholesome and nutritious during distribution and storage.1

* Preservatives called antioxidants are added to commercially prepared dry foods to help prevent spoilage and breakdown of nutrients.
* The preservatives used in Purina® pet foods are the same ones approved by the FDA for use in human foods.

Fats, proteins and vitamins are the critical nutrients that require preservation during storage.

* Fats may break down during storage if not properly preserved.
* Antioxidants guard against oxidative destruction of fat and other nutrients to help preserve the nutritional quality of the food.

Preservatives or antioxidants can be categorized into two basic types: natural antioxidants that are derived from nature and synthetic antioxidants.2

* Natural antioxidants are found in certain grains, vegetable oils, herbs and spices.
* The most effective and commonly used natural antioxidants are mixed tocopherols (vitamin E compounds) that are primarily obtained from soybean oil or other vegetable oils.
* Synthetic antioxidants are more effective and stable than natural antioxidants.3
	+ Synthetic antioxidants are 5 to 10 times more effective than natural antioxidants.
	+ They are more stable and better able to withstand the heat, pressure and moisture used during cooking.
	+ Because higher levels of natural antioxidants are needed, they are sometimes used in combination with synthetic antioxidants to provide an adequate level of protection.
	+ Some of the FDA-approved synthetic antioxidants commonly used in both human food and pet foods include BHA, BHT and TBHQ. These have been proven safe for use in the approved amounts.

**Remember**

Given the proper information, you can confidently choose foods for your pets that are properly preserved, safe, and provide the guaranteed nutrient content and quality throughout their shelf life.

**Myth or Fact?**

**Corn**

**Corn is a poorly digested "filler" that causes allergies.**

**It's a Myth**

You may hear that a plant-based ingredient such as corn is a "filler" that shouldn't be included in a pet's diet because it is poorly digested and can cause allergies.

**The Facts**

Corn is an excellent source of many nutrients.

* "Fillers" may be defined as feed ingredients with little or no nutritional value. Based on this description, corn is certainly not a filler.
* Corn provides a good source of carbohydrates, protein and essential fatty acids in the diets of dogs and cats.
* Corn can be found in many forms, all of which can contribute to nutritious diets. For example, corn gluten meal contains 60% to 70% protein and is an excellent source of essential amino acids. And whole corn or corn meal provides highly digestible carbohydrates as an energy source.
* Corn is a good source of linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid required by both dogs and cats.
* It also contains abundant amounts of antioxidants, such as vitamin E and beta-carotene.

Corn gluten meal is highly digestible.

* Corn gluten meal is easy to digest, making its nutrients readily available to your pet.
* Corn gluten meal contains many essential amino acids, so when it is properly combined with other protein sources, it can contribute to highly digestible and nutritious diets.

Corn is not a common cause of allergies.

* Dogs and cats can develop allergies to any protein, including meats and grains. However, it is estimated that only 10% of allergic skin conditions in dogs and cats are caused by food.1
* Corn does not appear on the list of most common food allergies in dogs or cats.
* The most common food allergies in dogs are beef, dairy products and wheat, followed by lamb, egg, chicken and soy.2
* In cats, the most common food allergies are beef, dairy products and fish.

Corn is a high-quality ingredient.

* The quality of corn in pet foods can vary greatly.
* There are five grades of corn quality according to the USDA; grades 1 and 2 are traditionally used in human food products.
* Purina's standard for all of its pet foods is grades 1 and 2.

**Remember**

It's the overall quality of the pet food that makes it a good choice for your pet.

Corn is available in many forms and is used to create digestible and nutritious diets that deliver all the essential nutrients dogs and cats need.

**Myth or Fact?**

**Wheat**

**Wheat commonly causes allergies in dogs and cats.**

**It's a Myth**

There is a widespread misperception that wheat commonly causes food allergies and pet foods containing it should be avoided.

**The Facts**

Food allergies are uncommon in dogs and cats.

* Food allergies constitute only a small percentage of allergy problems in pets. While the exact incidence is unknown, it is estimated that only 10% of allergic skin conditions are caused by food.1
* Flea bites and environmental allergens, such as pollens, mold and dust mites, are more common triggers of allergic symptoms than food.2

Any ingredient can cause an allergy.

* An allergy is an abnormal reaction by the body's immune system to normal substances in the environment, including foods.
* Allergies can form to almost any food or ingredient, but the more animals are exposed to a food or ingredient, including wheat, the more likely it is that allergies will develop.
* Proteins, especially beef and dairy products, are the most common food allergens in dogs and cats.
* Genetics is also a factor in the development of allergies. Certain individuals are predisposed to becoming allergic to something, but no single food is more likely to cause allergies than another.
* The only way to truly diagnose a food allergy is with an elimination diet trial, which your veterinarian can prescribe.
* Unless it's been proven to be the culprit through appropriate testing, arbitrarily avoiding a single ingredient, such as wheat, won't prevent allergies from developing.

Wheat is a valuable pet food ingredient.

Wheat is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates for energy, as well as a source of protein.

Including wheat in a pet food as an energy source preserves the animal proteins in the diet for building and maintaining a pet's muscle and tissue.



**Remember**

Allergies to wheat are not common. And the only way to diagnose a food allergy is with an elimination diet trial, which your veterinarian can prescribe.

**Myth or Fact?**

**Cats and Carbohydrates**

**Carbohydrates cause obesity and diabetes in cats.**

**It's a Myth**

There is a misperception among pet owners that because cats are carnivores, they should only be fed meat.

**The Facts**

Like all mammals, cats obtain energy from three macronutrients: protein, fat and carbohydrate.1

* Many cells in a cat’s body require glucose, a form of carbohydrate, for energy.
* While cats in the wild eat minimal carbohydrates, the domestic cat’s digestive system can readily handle higher carbohydrate levels.

Although cats metabolize carbohydrates differently than dogs and other species, healthy cats can readily digest and metabolize dietary carbohydrates.2

* Carbohydrates in nutritionally complete and balanced diets provide energy, while protein is used for other important functions such as maintenance of tissues and support of the immune system.



The intake of excess calories— whether from protein, fat or carbohydrate — contributes to obesity and obesity-related diseases, such as feline diabetes.2

* An inactive lifestyle also can increase the risk for feline obesity and diabetes.
* Low-carbohydrate diets are usually higher in fat and calories, which increase the risk for obesity.

There are circumstances when a lowcarbohydrate diet is appropriate.

* For diabetic cats, transitioning to a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet may be beneficial.

**Remember**

Even though cats are carnivores, a feline diet containing high-quality carbohydrates serves as an excellent source of energy and allows the protein in the food to be used for other important functions.

**Myth or Fact?**

**Raw Diets**

**A raw food diet is the most natural and, therefore, the best diet for cats and dogs.**

**It's a Myth**

Many pet owners think feeding their dogs and cats food that mimics the raw diet of wild animals is the right thing to do.

**The Facts**

Raw diets may contain bacteria.

* Raw meat and poultry may be contaminated with harmful microorganisms, such as salmonella.1
* Feeding raw meat to pets can expose them to bacteria, parasites and protozoa.

Preparing and feeding a raw diet can also expose your family to harmful organisms.

* Members of the household will also be exposed to the same bacteria, protozoa and parasites when you feed a diet containing raw meat to a cat or dog.
* These microorganisms pose greater risk to the young, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

Salmonella contamination



Salmonella was found in raw diets and fecal samples from dogs fed raw diets.2 This poses a threat to members of the household.

Bones as part of a raw diet can be hazardous to pets' health.

* Raw (and cooked) bones can fracture teeth.
* Jagged or sharp points can tear the esophagus, stomach or intestines.
* Fragments of bone may become lodged in gastrointestinal tract.

Raw diets may not be nutritionally balanced or complete.

* Diets made of mostly meat or poultry and bones may be lacking in important nutrients.
* Calcium deficiency is a common problem with these diets, which can lead to impaired growth, spontaneous fractures and loose teeth.
* Vitamin A toxicity can occur if large amounts of raw liver are fed.

**Remember**

A raw food diet may not be the best choice for your pet. This type of food can expose your pet and your family to harmful microorganisms, physically injure your pet and lead to nutritional imbalances.