

CLIENT NUTRITION INFORMATION SHEET

Pet nutrition is one of the most complex and wide-ranging aspects of pet health.

Your pet's nutrition forms the foundation of their overall well-being and, in some cases, can contribute to serious health issues. On the other hand, certain diets, such as veterinary-prescribed foods, can help prevent or manage medical conditions. Understanding what you're feeding your pet and the impact it can have is essential to responsible pet ownership. This document is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for a veterinary examination or professional medical advice.

Richmond Veterinary Clinic's guide to pet nutrition:



What purpose is my pet's food serving?

Your pet's food serves a greater purpose than simply keeping them fed. Just like humans, the quality and type of food your pet eats builds the foundation for their health and well-being. Pets with health concerns need diets that support their medical needs and provide proper nutrition. These diets are called prescription diets.

Pets without health concerns typically eat a diet that supports their life stage and breed size. For example, a 12-year-old Dachshund may eat a senior diet for small breed dogs, while a 10-month-old Boxer may eat a puppy diet for large breed dogs. For cats, foods are mainly separated by life stage, as breed size doesn't vary as much. Many foods are considered appropriate for "all life stages." These diets are great for adult pets (aged 1-7), but puppy/kitten (under 1 year old) and senior (dogs over 7 and cats over 9) specific diets are recommended, as they include extra vitamins and nutrients tailored to those life stages.

Cats are obligate carnivores, so they require a diet primarily consisting of meat to meet their nutritional needs. A good guideline for feeding cats is ½ cup of dry food or 5.5 oz of wet food per day.

Your veterinarian can guide you in creating a specific diet plan for your pet. A diet plan should include:

- Food type, name of food, and caloric density
- Amount to be fed per meal
- Frequency of feeding
- Treat type, name of treats, and caloric density



Quality matters

When shopping for pet food, quality is an important factor in the decision-making process. While expensive foods are not always higher in quality, it's common for inexpensive options, such as those found at dollar stores, to contain lower-quality ingredients. That said, there are many foods with quality ingredients that are also budget-friendly. When choosing food for your pet, consult your veterinarian or a certified pet nutritionist to determine what's best for your pet's needs.



What kind of diet does my pet need?

The 5 main types of pet diets are kibble, canned food, “fresh” food, raw food (freeze-dried or frozen), and home-cooked.

Let's break down each type:

1. Kibble (\$-\$\$)

Kibble is the most common type of pet food. It consists of dry, brown pellets packaged in bags for easy storage and long shelf life. It's convenient, generally affordable, and available in a wide variety of formulas.

2. Canned Food (\$-\$\$)

Also popular among pet owners, canned food is a hydrated option that typically comes in pâté or stew form. It is stored in cans and should be refrigerated after opening. This type of food is often more palatable to pets and provides added moisture to their diet.

3. “Fresh” Food (\$\$)

Fresh pet foods are a newer option and often resemble human food. These diets are usually frozen and sometimes labeled “human-grade,” meaning they are legally safe and suitable for human consumption according to the FDA or USDA. They typically consist of lightly cooked meats and vegetables ground into small pieces.

4. Raw Food (\$\$-\$\$\$)

Raw food consists of uncooked meat and nutrients, usually formed into patties or nuggets and kept frozen. Freeze-dried raw food is made by freeze-drying the raw patties or nuggets to remove moisture without using heat, preserving most of the original nutrients. It can be stored at room temperature but maintains similar nutritional value to frozen raw food.

5. Home-Cooked (\$\$\$)

Home-cooked meals are the least common but can be highly nutritious when done correctly. This method requires daily effort, guidance from a veterinarian, and careful balancing of nutrients. It's essential to include all necessary supplements to ensure your pet receives complete nutrition.

So, which food does my pet need?

Your pet's dietary needs will vary based on factors such as breed, age, lifestyle, body condition score (weight), and any medical conditions. For example, most pets can eat kibble without issue, but a pet with kidney problems may benefit from a canned or frozen diet, which helps increase moisture intake.

Ultimately, the best diet for your pet depends on what you, as the owner, are comfortable managing in terms of maintenance and cost. There are quality food options in every category listed above. The most important step is to have a conversation with your veterinarian to determine what will work best for both you and your pet.