



# Pet Food Labels

## AAFCO Guidelines

The pet food industry has lots of oversight to ensure consistency and safety. The regulatory framework governing pet food labeling in the United States results from a collaboration between the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). AAFCO is a voluntary association of local, state, and federal agencies charged by law to regulate the sale and distribution of animal feeds, pet food, and animal drug remedies. Although, the FDA is the primary federal agency responsible for enforcing the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (the Act), including the responsibility to regulate essentially all ingredients and additives used in animal feed, FDA delegates certain responsibilities to AAFCO with FDA's direct support and oversight to maintain uniformity in pet food regulation from state to state. Such as, creating model regulation, ingredient definitions, nutritional profiles, protocols, and pet food labeling guides.

### All pet foods must include the following on their pet food label:

- Product name and brand name
- Species name for which the food is intended
- Quantity statement
  - Net weight
- Guaranteed analysis
- Ingredient statement
- Nutritional adequacy or purpose statement
- Feeding directions
- Statement of caloric content
- Name and address of manufacture or distributor

## Nutritional Adequacy Statement

The nutritional adequacy statement, also known as the AAFCO statement, provides two pieces of information:

- 1) Foods can be formulated or tested to meet one of four life stages:
  - Gestation/ lactation
  - Growth
  - Maintenance
  - All life stage

Foods that are formulated for all life stages must ensure they meet the most nutritionally demanding life stage, which is gestation/ lactation and then growth. Therefore 'all life stage' foods are designed for pregnant/ lactating dogs and cats or puppies/ kittens.

**AAFCO does not define the life stage "senior".** While the current AAFCO standards reflect minimal nutritional standards to support health associated with two broad life stages- Growth (puppies & kittens) and Adult (1 year and older) – the scientific literature (Small Animal Clinical Nutrition, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.), as well as Hill's own research, recognizes that older pets have special nutritional needs. Hill's products contain nutrition that is optimal for the health and maintenance throughout the pet's life stages, including puppy/ kitten, adult, and mature adults.



# Nutritional Adequacy Statement

2) The nutritional adequacy statements for pet foods are determined by multiply ways:

### Formulation method

- The pet food is formulated with ingredients that contains all the nutrients that meet or exceed the AAFCO nutrients profiles.
- The pet food product must meet the nutrient requirements for the specific life stage established by an AAFCO recognized nutrient profile.

### Feeding trial method

- This method is also known as the “gold standard” for determining nutritional adequacy. The manufacturer must perform an AAFCO protocol feeding trial using the food being tested as the sole source of nutrition.
- Feeding trials are the best way to document how a pet will perform when fed a specific food.

### Intermittent or supplemental feeding only

- If a food is not complete and balanced or does not meet one of the other statements.
- Suitable only for short term, limited or supplemental
- Examples: Treats, gravies, therapeutic foods for short term use

(Name of product) is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog (or Cat) Food Nutrient Profiles for All Lifetstage

Animal feeding test using AAFCO procedures substantiate that (Name of Product) provides complete and balanced nutrition for maintenance.

“This product is intended for intermittent or supplemental feeding only”

## Naming Conventions

### If pet food name says..

### Pet food must contain at least % of named ingredient

Chicken, beef, seafood, etc. (ingredient without modifiers)	95% and above
Dinner, entrée, platter, formula, etc. ( <i>chicken dinner, beef entrée, seafood and beef platter, chicken formula, recipe, stew</i> )	≥ 25%
With ( <i>with chicken, with beef, with seafood etc.</i> )	≥ 3%
Flavor (chicken flavor, beef flavor)	No specific %, but ingredient list must disclose source of flavor*

\* Flavor example: "chicken flavor" can be imparted by: chicken, chicken meal, chicken by-Product meal, chicken flavor, etc. or animal digest/natural flavor parenthetically stating (source of chicken flavor).



## Guaranteed Analysis

Gives a minimum for crude protein and crude fat and a maximum for crude fiber and moisture. It does not give the actual amount of the nutrient. Looking at the targeted nutrient amount from the manufacturer's product literature is a better way to evaluate the nutrient content of the food.

### Required on the pet food bag:

**Protein** -----*Minimum*

**Fat** -----*Minimum*

**Fiber**-----*Maximum*

**Moisture** -----*Maximum*

After the four required nutrients, ash may be listed, which is voluntary and will be identified as a maximum. Pet food labels can also include other voluntary guarantees. In addition, claims about the content of specific nutrients in the product would necessitate that nutrient to be guaranteed.

The maximum moisture declared on a pet food shall not exceed 78%. If the moisture level is above 78%, the product must indicate to the consumer that it is high in moisture. Example: stew, in gravy and in sauce.

## Ingredient Statement

Ingredients are listed in descending order by their predominance by weight in non-quantitative terms according to the product's recipe. The nutrient value of ingredients cannot be identified within the ingredient statement. Ingredients must be named according to AAFCO definitions. AAFCO defines many feed ingredients therefore, names of ingredients must be either common or usual name of ingredient (i.e., sugar, apple, peas, etc.) or the AAFCO defined ingredient name. (i.e., why we have chemical sounding vitamins and mineral).

Chicken, Whole Grain Wheat, Cracked Pearled Barley, Whole Grain Sorghum, Whole Grain Corn, Corn Gluten Meal, Chicken Meal, Pork Fat, Chicken Liver Flavor, Dried Beet Pulp, Soybean Oil, Lactic Acid, Flaxseed, Potassium Chloride, Iodized Salt, Calcium Carbonate, Choline Chloride, vitamins (Vitamin E Supplement, L-Ascorbyl-2-Polyphosphate (source of Vitamin C), Niacin Supplement, Thiamine Mononitrate, Vitamin A Supplement, Calcium Pantothenate, Vitamin B12 Supplement, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Riboflavin Supplement, Biotin, Folic Acid, Vitamin D3 Supplement), minerals (Ferrous Sulfate, Zinc Oxide, Copper Sulfate, Manganous Oxide, Calcium Iodate, Sodium Selenite), Oat Fiber, Taurine, Mixed Tocopherols for freshness, Natural Flavors, Beta-Carotene, Apples, Broccoli, Carrots, Cranberries, Green Peas.



## Definitions

Term	Defined	Definition
Organic	YES	<p>According to the USDA – Pet food may use the term Organic when produced in accordance to the USDA organic regulations. These regulations explain the composition and labeling requirements for each Organic claim...</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Look for this seal</b> </p>
Natural	YES	<p>Under AAFCO guidelines the term “natural” is defined. Each ingredient must also conform to the AAFCO definition of natural. AAFCO allows a disclaimer such as “Natural with added vitamins, minerals, and other trace nutrients, (Hill’s disclaimer i.e. with added vitamins, minerals &amp; amino acids).</p>
Holistic	NO	<p>There is no definition of this term under laws devoted to pet foods. Any manufacturer can make claims of “holistic” in literature and brochures regardless of ingredients chosen.</p>
Human Grade	YES	<p>Every ingredient and the resulting product must be human edible (human grade). They must be stored, handled, processed, and transported in a manner that is consistent and compliant with regulations for current good manufacturing practices (cGMPs) for human edible foods. (please note: this term cannot be used in reference to a single ingredient (i.e., human grade chicken) but rather only to the entire product as a whole).</p>

## Calorie requirement

Calories are now required on dry, canned and treats, excluding chew toys like rawhides. The statement shall be expressed both as kilocalories per kilogram (kcal/kg) of product and kilocalories per familiar household measure (e.g. cups or cans) or unit of product (e.g. treats or pieces)

Example- (Dry food) Calorie content 3659 kcal ME/kg (363 kcal ME/cup)



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Pet food example used: Science Diet® Adult Advanced Fitness Original

[http://www.aafco.org/Publications: AAFCO Official Publication 2016 and Pet Food Labeling Guide](http://www.aafco.org/Publications:AAFCO%20Official%20Publication%202016%20and%20Pet%20Food%20Labeling%20Guide)