



FEEDING YOUR PET ON A BUDGET

The food you choose to feed your pet is one of the most important decisions you can make for their health. With family budgets under strain, UK Pet Food's animal nutritionists give advice on what to consider when choosing a nutritious and balanced pet food.

SOMETHING TO SUIT ALL PURSES AND PREFERENCES

There is a range of pet food to suit most purses, needs and preferences so pet owners don't need to compromise on good nutrition.

LOOK FOR THE TERM 'COMPLETE' ON THE PET FOOD LABEL

This is our top tip. Buying a 'complete' prepared pet food ensures a nutritionally balanced meal that provides all the nutrients a pet needs. Dogs need around 37 essential nutrients in their daily diet for healthy bodily function, and cats, around 40. There are very good 'complete' pet foods available at all price points.

DON'T COMPROMISE HEALTH WITH A HOMEMADE DIET

Home prepared diets, table scraps and leftovers from family meals shouldn't replace a specially formulated pet food, as there is a strong chance it won't provide the right nutrients in the right proportions.^{1 2} Human food can also be highly calorific and may contain some ingredients that are toxic for pets such as onion, garlic, and grapes.

DO SOME RESEARCH BEFORE DECIDING WHICH PET FOOD

A bit of research will help owners make sure they are choosing the best formula for their pet at the best price. Look to the experts for help. Manufacturers have free carelines that will provide guidance. Vets and local pet shops will also be able to provide advice.



A NOTE ON CHECKING THE PET FOOD PACKET LABEL

There are two ways in which the ingredients can be displayed on the label, and these are defined under regulations.

'Category labelling' will list the ingredients under terms such as 'meat and animal derivatives', 'cereals', and 'derivatives of vegetable origin'. This enables the manufacturer to use ingredients depending on what is seasonably available, which can be more cost effective. Using 'categories' does not make the product any less nutritious.

A 'fixed formula' pet food will have the ingredients listed by their individual names, for example, lamb, rice, chicken. This can be useful for some pets with sensitive tummies, and you wish to avoid certain ingredients. This type of food can be more expensive.

LOOK FOR A UK PET FOOD MEMBER

Pet food manufacture is regulated by over 50 pieces of legislation and UK Pet Food members formulate their diets in line with best practice guidelines.

You can scan the QR code below to check to see if your brand is produced by a UK Pet Food Member and read more about this in our factsheet.



MORE ADVICE ON DIETS AND NUTRITION CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.UKPETFOOD.ORG



TOP TIPS FOR SAVING MONEY ON PET FOOD

1. HUNT DOWN AN OFFER

Check if your brand of choice or your supplier has offers or loyalty discounts.

2. BUY BIGGER

If you have the space, bulk buying is a more economical and environmentally friendly way to shop. Keep an eye on 'best before' dates and store appropriately to prevent problems.

3. HOW MUCH YOU NEED TO FEED DIFFERS FROM BRAND TO BRAND

Don't just look at the cost per kg of the food you are buying. Work out how long the bag will last to calculate the cost per day of feeding that food.

4. DON'T FEED MORE THAN YOUR PET NEEDS

Many owners overfeed their pets because they think the manufacturer's recommended portion looks too small, or they don't read the label and simply fill up the bowl. Follow the feeding guidelines and check your pet is a healthy size using the Pet-Size-O-Meter adjusting the amount fed to maintain your pet at a healthy body condition.

IN SUMMARY...

The most important steps in budget-friendly pet food purchasing are to choose a 'complete' diet appropriate to the pet's life-stage and any additional needs they may have - and do your research to get the best deal you can. All 'complete' pet foods are subject to the same stringent legislation to ensure safe and nutritious products.

CONSIDERING A CHANGE OF DIET?

Any sudden change in diet might cause a stomach upset in your pet. If you're switching diets, this should be done gradually over a period of 4-7 days. Always consult a vet if in doubt.



IN CRISIS

For pet owners in crisis, there is some support in the form of pet food banks. UK Pet Food has worked alongside FareShare, which coordinates the distribution of pet food to those in need. Some member companies have also signed up this scheme or other local schemes. You can also locate your nearest food bank on the RSPCA website and Blue Cross website - among others.

References:

1. Roudebush P, Cowell CS. Results of a hypoallergenic diet survey of veterinarians in North America with a nutritional evaluation of homemade diet prescriptions. *Vet Dermatol* 1992;3:23-28.
2. Stockman J, Fascetti AJ, Kass PH, Larsen JA. Evaluation of recipes of home-prepared maintenance diets for dogs. *JAVMA* 2013;242:1500-1505.



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