

### PET FOOD ADDITIVES

Additives are used in both human and pet food to provide nutrients and to help ensure the quality, safety, texture, consistency, appearance, odour or taste. Some additives are derived from naturally occurring materials (usually plants) and others are manufactured substances.

#### THE USE OF ADDITIVES IN PET FOOD IS STRICTLY REGULATED

The pet food industry operates to stringent standards and complies with more than 50 pieces of legislation to produce pet foods of the highest quality and safety. As part of this, all prepared pet foods manufactured by members of the UK Pet Food are required to comply with the Animal Feed Regulations 2015. These regulations cover the use and labelling of additives in pet food and enforce GB & EU legislation.

#### ADDITIVES ARE SUBJECT TO A RIGOROUS AUTHORISATION PROCESS

In Great Britain, the Food Standard Agency (FSA) authorises additives on the grounds of safety, technical need and efficacy. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assesses additive safety and efficacy within the EU which is then authorised by the EU commission.

The authorisation process is rigorous. If safety requirements are not met, the additives are not approved for use regardless of how technologically useful the particular additive might be. Once an additive has been approved, it is assigned an identification number, the number assigned helps identify what the additive is authorised for. These replace the old identification numbers, also known as E numbers.

#### ARE ADDITIVES DANGEROUS TO PETS?

**NO!**

As with human foods, the use of additives in pet food is strictly regulated by the required authority. They authorise additives on the grounds of safety, technical need, and efficacy. The authorisation process is rigorous and food/pet food additives are assessed to ensure safety.

#### EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF ADDITIVES IN PET FOOD: NUTRITIONAL ADDITIVES

As in human food, Additives may be used, for example, to protect the nutritional values and goodness or enhance the nutritional profile of a product so that it can deliver complete nutrition (e.g. the addition of vitamins, minerals, amino acids). Pets need a balanced, complete diet with all the nutrients available to ensure they remain healthy & happy. Cooking food can decrease the level of some nutrients, such as vitamins, so they need to be added back in. Pet food is made using natural products and the levels of nutrients can vary for many reasons, like the time of year. Adding nutritional additives makes sure the pet food contains the right amount your pet needs.

#### ZOOTECHNICAL ADDITIVES

This group of additives are added to pet food to favourably affect the animal's welfare and maintain good health. An example are probiotics, these are live bacteria or yeasts which are typically added to pet food formulations to support digestive health. In the regulations, they are classed as gut flora stabilisers.

#### SENSORY ADDITIVES

These are added to enhance the taste, aroma, colour, and palatability of pet food. This group includes flavour enhancers, colourants, and aroma compounds.

#### TECHNOLOGICAL ADDITIVES

This group includes additives that serve technological functions in pet food production, such as emulsifiers, stabilizers, and thickeners. These additives help maintain the texture, consistency, and overall quality of the pet food.

#### FOOD SAFETY AND LONGEVITY

Preservatives and antioxidants are two specific types of technological additives that are very important for maintaining food safety as well as extending the shelf life of a product. Spoiled foods carry the risk of food poisoning and both preservatives and antioxidants help prevent spoilage from bacterial contamination and stop fats from going rancid.

#### BENEFITS OF ANTIOXIDANTS

There are two types of antioxidants used in pet food:

**Technological Antioxidants:** These are added to maintain food safety and extended shelf life, supported by years of research.

**Nutritional Antioxidants:** These additives, such as Vitamins C and E, not only serve an antioxidant function but also promote good health by combating free radical damage to the body.





**ADDITIVES CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE THE NUTRITIONAL PROFILE OF A PRODUCT**

**THE REGISTER OF FEED ADDITIVES**

Both Great Britain and the European Union have introduced an electronic feed additive register, available online. It sets out a list of feed additives permitted for use in feed and provides reference to the individual feed additive authorising regulations.

**DECLARING ADDITIVES ON PACK**

They are declared under the heading 'Additives'. Additives with a legal maximum for any non-food-producing species must be declared on pet food labels. When they are added. Any other additives, which don't have a legal maximum can be declared voluntarily when added.

**ARE THE ADDITIVES IN PET FOOD LINKED WITH BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES IN PETS?**

There is no proven scientific evidence to suggest a link between behavioural problems in pets and additives in pet food (Case 2014\*). The most common causes of behavioural problems in pets include fear, inadequate early socialisation and training, and poor behavioural/emotional husbandry.

Professor Peter Neville, Founding Partner of the Centre of Applied Pet Ethology, stated that in over 25 years of veterinary referral behaviour practice he has never seen a single case of a behaviour problem in dogs that could be directly linked to additives in pet food.

**WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?**

All pet food companies can provide further information on the additives in their products and contact information is on the pet food packaging.



\* Case, L. P. (2014). *Dog Food Logic: Making Smart Decisions for Your Dog in an Age of Too Many Choices*.