

Understanding Pet Food Labels

Pet food labelling falls under EU legislation for animal feed. It doesn't have its own set of rules nor does it fall under the rules for human food. Some of the terms used are more tailored to the farmer than the pet owner.

The law requires that the label contains certain key pieces of information including a list of ingredients (referred to on the label as 'Composition'), additives and a nutritional analysis (referred to as 'Analytical Constituents') along with feeding guidelines.

The term 'complete' is a legal definition. Complete means that the product contains all the nutrients a pet needs to support its daily life when fed as directed.

'Complementary' pet foods are also available. A complementary food means that other food must be added in order to provide nutritional balance, for example a mixer biscuit or treats.

Various sugars – The term 'various sugars' is a category description which may refer to sucrose (cane sugar, commonly known as table sugar), fructose and glucose, or even honey, all of which are natural products.

Additives which can be used in pet foods may include vitamins, flavours, preservatives, antioxidants and colours. All additives must go through rigorous safety and efficacy tests before they can be used in pet food and this is strictly governed by EU legislation. To find out about specific additives used, please contact the manufacturer.

Crude ash / Inorganic matter / Incinerated residue – These are legal definitions (one of which will be used) which simply refer to the mineral content of the pet food. They are not added as ingredients.

BLOGGO COMPLETE PET FOOD FOR ADULT DOGS

The nutritional requirement of individual dogs varies according to size, age and activity level. The information given below is a guide only, more detailed information can be obtained from the contact numbers given below.

If feeding together with canned dog food it is recommended that these figures are halved and the meal is a 50:50 mix of dry and canned foods.

A bowl of fresh water should always be available.

Composition: meat and animal derivatives (4% chicken), cereals, oils and fats, minerals, various sugars

Additives (per kg): Colourants, Nutritional Additives: Vitamin D2 xy IU, Vitamin A xz IU, Copper sulphate monohydrate x mg, Zinc sulphate heptahydrate, y mg

Analytical constituents (%): Protein 28, Crude Fibres 1.5, Fat content 10, Incinerated Residue 5.

Most pet foods are made from a recipe using several ingredients.

These ingredients will be listed under '**composition**' in descending order of weight. This can be indicated by category e.g. meat and animal derivatives, which have been set by the regulations, or the label might provide a full individual ingredients listing which looks more like a human food label.

Meat and animal derivatives –

This category describes animal based ingredients used in pet foods (not including dairy which has its own category) which are by-products of the human food industry: These are from healthy animals slaughtered under veterinary supervision and are parts of the animals which are normally not consumed by humans (lungs, kidneys, tripes...)

What does 'Meat and animal derivatives (4% chicken)' mean?

Each pet food recipe includes a blend of different ingredients which are all combined into a food which will meet, in part or entirely, the daily nutritional requirements of the pet. The 4% declaration is a legal labelling requirement which represents the minimum percentage content of the named ingredient, for example chicken, that is guaranteed to be present by the manufacturer. Other nutritious meat and animal derivatives can also be present.

Where can I find out more information about a product? Pet food companies have customer care lines to answer any questions about their products (contact details are on the back of the pack). Many also have full product information on company websites. For more general information on pet food ingredients, please visit: www.fediaf.org

Feeding guidelines

Feeding guidelines are for the average pet and you also need to consider size, age and the level of activity when deciding how much to feed your pet. Start by feeding the suggested amount and keep an eye on your pet's weight and body condition.

The best way to check how things are going is to perform a body condition score on your pet. The Pet Size-O-Meter¹ is a tool developed by the British Pet Food Manufacturers Association to help doing this and is available through their website: www.pfma.org.uk.

Size of Dog	Weight of Dog	Quantity to Feed
Small	5 – 10 kg	A grams/day
Medium	10 – 20 kg	B grams/day
Large	20 – 40 kg	C grams/day
Giant	40+ kg	D grams/day

Cat Size-O-Meter

Size-O-Meter Score:

Characteristics:

1	<p>Very Thin More than 20% below ideal body weight</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribs, spine and hip bones are very easily seen (in short haired pets) Pronounced waist Obvious loss of muscle mass with no belly fat
2	<p>Thin Between 10-20% below ideal body weight</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribs, spine and hip bones easily seen Obvious waist Very little belly fat
< 3	<p>Ideal</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribs, spine and hip bones easily felt Visible waist A small amount of belly fat
4	<p>Overweight 10-15% above ideal body weight</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribs, spine and hip bones are hard to feel No defined waist Slightly sagging belly
5	<p>Obese More than 15% above ideal body weight</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ribs, spine and hip bones extremely difficult to feel under a padding of fat No waist can be seen Heavy fat pads on lower back and an obvious sagging belly – skin rolls may sway from side to side when walking

Derived from BCSC validated by: Laflamme DP. Development and validation of a body condition score system for cats. A clinical tool. *Feline Practice*. 1997; 28:13-17
Laflamme DP, Hume E, Harrison J. Evaluation of zoonotic measures as an assessment of body composition of dogs and cats. *Compendium* 2001;23(Suppl 9A):88

- Your pet is a healthy weight
- Seek advice about your pet's weight
- Seek advice as your pet could be at risk

Please note
There are some cases where the natural shape of a cat may mean this simple system doesn't translate as easily. For example, if your cat has a long coat it may be difficult to judge the shape. There are also some breeds of cats, such as Maine Coon, that are generally larger than the average moggie – however they should still have the same body shape. If you need help using this chart, please take it to your vet or pet care professional for advice.

¹ Body Condition Score Charts such as this Pet Size-O-Meter (PSOM) typically range from 1-5 or 1-9 in their scoring system. This 5 point PSOM has been designed to be used by pet owners to supplement their routine veterinary checks.

More advice can be found at www.fediaf.org

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