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Vegetarian Cats and Dogs

If you have been feeding your animal companions commercial pet foods, you may be jeopardizing their health.

Supermarket pet foods are often composed of ground-up parts of animals that you or I would never consider eating. Most pet foods

contain the same pesticides and antibiotics that are found in commercial meat products for humans. If you are concerned about the health of your animal companion and about the cruelty of the meat industry, now is the time to stop buying meat-based commercial pet food.



Vegetarian Cats and Dogs

Many vegetarians and vegans feed healthy, meatless diets to their companion animals. One remarkable example is that of Bramble, a 27-year-old border collie whose vegan diet of rice, lentils and organic vegetables earned her consideration by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's oldest living dog in 2002.¹ Studies have shown that the ailments associated with meat consumption in humans, such as allergies, cancer and kidney problems, also affect many nonhumans. Pet food has also been recalled during mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), scares because of the risk that contaminated meat was processed into the food. One deputy commissioner states that cats especially "are susceptible to BSE".²

The nutritional needs of dogs and cats are easily met with a balanced vegan diet and certain supplements. James Peden, author of *Vegetarian Cats & Dogs*, developed Vegepet™ supplements to add to vegetarian and vegan recipes. They are nutritionally balanced and also come in special formulas for kittens, puppies and lactating cats and dogs.

Some people wonder if it's "unnatural" to omit meat from the diet of a dog or cat. Animals in the wild commonly eat quite a lot of plant matter. Besides, to feed them the meat that they would naturally eat, you would have to serve them whole mice or birds or allow them to hunt for themselves, an option that is unfair to native species of birds and other small animals, since companion cats and dogs have been removed from the food chain and have advantages that free-roaming animals lack. Vegetarian or vegan dogs and cats usually enjoy their food and good health, and a vegetarian diet for your animal companion is ethically consistent with animal rights philosophy.

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Important Supplements

Making vegetarian food for dogs is easy because dogs, like people, are omnivorous and usually hearty eaters. Recipes for vegetarian and vegan dogs are available along with the *VegeDog™* supplement from the Vegan Society. It is important to follow directions carefully. If you make any changes in ingredients, make sure that you do not change the nutritional balance of the recipe. If a dog receives too little protein, fat, calcium or vitamin D, his or her health could be jeopardized.

Additionally, some dogs need two amino acids called L-carnitine and taurine which are not generally added to commercial dog foods and can be insufficient in homemade dog food as well. A deficiency of these nutrients can cause dilated cardiomyopathy, a serious, often fatal illness in which the heart becomes large and flabby and can no longer function. This illness generally strikes young or middle-aged dogs who are deficient in L-carnitine or taurine because of breed, size, individual genetic make-up or diet. Supplemental L-carnitine and taurine can be bought at your local health food shop.

Cats are often more finicky than dogs, and their nutritional requirements are more complicated. Cats need a considerable amount of vitamin A, which they cannot biosynthesize from carotene, as dogs and humans do. Insufficient amounts may cause loss of hearing, as well as problems with skin, bones and intestinal and reproductive systems. Cats also need taurine. A feline lacking taurine can lose eyesight and could also develop cardiomyopathy. Commercial pet food companies often add taurine obtained from molluscs. James Peden found vegetarian sources of both taurine and vitamin A, plus arachidonic acid, another essential feline nutrient. He then developed veterinarian-approved supplements *Vegecat™* and *Vegekit™* to add to his recipes. These recipes are probably the healthiest way to feed cats a vegan diet at this time.

Dogs and cats who are eating only cooked or processed food also benefit from the addition of digestive enzymes to their food. These are obtainable through animal supply catalogues and health food shops. Any raw vegetables in a dog's diet should be grated or put through a food processor to enhance digestibility.

Companies That Sell Vegetarian and Vegan Dog and Cat Food

- [Ami](#)
Vegan food for cats and dogs and dog chew "bones"
+39 049 780 17 12
- [Benevo Foods](#)
Vegetarian kibble for dogs and cats
sales@benevofoods.com
- [Happidog](#)
Vegetarian flakes and kibble dog food
0800 018 2955
- [Harbingers of a New Age](#)
Vegecat™, *Vegekit™*, *VegeDog™*, *Vegepup™* and digestive enzymes available through the [Vegan Society](#)

01424 427393

- VeggiePets.com
Online store that sells vegetarian and vegan food for cats and dogs, including all brands listed above
02392 471 699
- Yarrah Organic Petfood B.V.
Vegetarian kibble, chunks, biscuits and chew "bones" for dogs
00800 34443888

If you decide to prepare your own vegetarian dog or cat food, we recommend that you read *Vegetarian Cats & Dogs* to ensure that you understand the nutritional needs of dogs and cats. Do not rely on this factsheet for complete information. The book has several recipes and helpful hints. If your library or bookstore doesn't have it, you can order it from Harbingers of a New Age.

Making the Adjustment

To help with the adjustment to a vegetarian or vegan diet, start by mixing the vegetarian food in with what you usually serve. Gradually change the proportion until there is no meat left. If your efforts meet with resistance, tempt your animal friends by adding soya milk, nutritional yeast flakes (available at health food shops), olive oil, tomato sauce (most dogs love spaghetti!), catnip (for cats), powdered kelp, or baby food that doesn't contain onions or garlic or by serving it warm. Many cats like nutritional yeast flakes and pieces of melon, and most love mashed chickpeas and veggie burgers. If your companion animals are addicted to supermarket pet food, it may take a while for them to adapt.

After switching dogs or cats to a vegetarian diet, monitor them closely to make sure that their new diet agrees with them, especially if they are still puppies or kittens. Watch for chronic gastrointestinal and skin problems, and note any new health problems. Most dogs' and cats' health improves on a vegetarian diet, but occasionally an animal may not thrive, so use common sense if this occurs.

References

¹ "27-Year-Old Vegan Collie Could Be World's Oldest Living Dog", Ananova, 29 Aug. 2002.

² Steve Mitchell, "FDA May Recall Pet Food Due to Mad Cow", United Press International, 24 Dec. 2003.

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