



Making Quality Pet Food

Leading with Technical Expertise - White Paper

Jarrod Kersey & Leah Lambrakis, Department of Technical Services

What is *quality* pet food?

Quality pet food is food that both nourishes and delights the pet. The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) Nutrient Profiles define minimum requirements for complete and balanced dog and cat foods for growth and reproduction (gestation/lactation), as well as for adult maintenance. A complete and balanced product would be considered a minimum bar for nourishing the pets we love. Nourishing begins with knowledge of the pet.

The nutritional needs of dogs and cats are different, but those needs don't just vary by species. They are also dependent upon the lifestyle and life stage of the animal. For instance, an overweight cat may benefit from fewer calories, but they still need all the essential nutrients in their diet. A working dog may require more calories and protein to support their physiological needs than a lap dog! And puppies and kittens are clearly growing and have different needs than a mature animal. Thus, quality starts with a nutritionist who understands the needs of the animal and how those needs change throughout a pet's life.

How is *quality* pet food designed?

This is typically where the dichotomy of nourish versus delight comes into play. It's where the nutritionist's requirements can challenge the design of the food scientist. When you look across the branded and private label pet food offerings, there are many different formats of products (kibble, wet food, refrigerated to raw). How the brand chooses to design the food defines its identity. Grain-free, natural, science diets, holistic, freshness, sustainable or value-based are all different ways to develop pet foods that can both properly nourish and delight the pet. The challenge of the food scientist is navigating the nutritional and brand elements to create a formula the pet enjoys.

How is *quality* pet food formulated?

For a nutritionist to formulate a quality pet food, they must have good analytical information on the nutrients in the raw materials, including digestibility, which is the absorption of nutrients into the body. Animal nutritionists understand ingredients are composed of macronutrients (fat, fiber, protein, moisture and ash) and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, amino acids and fatty acids). When balancing a pet's diet, a nutritionist uses the ingredients' analytical information to make sure the animal receives all the essential nutrients needed to support a pet's lifestyle and life stage. Importantly, a nutritionist balances a diet so the right nutrient to energy ratio is achieved.

How is *quality* pet food produced?

All pet food formats (dry, wet, refrigerated, etc.) require a controlled process to make quality pet food. The process begins with incoming ingredient checks to ensure nutritional and food safety requirements are met.



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Process checks are also in place to measure ingredient freshness, batching, mix times, cook times, and temperatures in the process. These parameters serve as process control points to make sure pet food is produced as designed.

How is *quality* pet food measured?

Colors, textures, specific inclusions, size, shape, and aroma are all aesthetic qualities that are measured. Finished product nutrients are measured to make sure the food appropriately nourishes the pet.

What is the most important part of producing *quality* pet food?

People. People's passion for pets is what drives quality pet food. From the love of their own furry friends to the joy of nourishing and delighting peoples' pets, people making pet food do it because they are driven by a purpose. Pets make our lives better.

Our Commitment – Leading with Technical Expertise – Jarrold and Leah are here to provide guidance and insights – do not hesitate to connect with us at Simmons Pet Food, pfccomments@simfoods.com. We would love to hear from you and be part of your pet's nutrition solution!

Simmons Pet Food consistently earns the highest BRCGS ratings. BRC's global standards set the benchmark for best-practice manufacturing, helping to provide reassurance that products and services are high quality, legal and safe. As a rigorous third-party accreditation, companies must execute exceptional, ethical and safe practices to earn a high BRC certification. <https://www.brcgs.com/our-standards/food-safety/>.