



Choosing a healthy pet food

By Ness Bird – Nutrition Adviser and RVN CertCFVHNut ©

Arden Grange has an excellent reputation for quality and service, gained from over twenty years of production, but with so many brands available, selecting pet food can still be a difficult task.

The deciding factor should be whether your chosen food suits your pet's digestion, palate and appetite. It is also beneficial to select a diet that suits your pet's life stage and lifestyle to help ensure that nutrient and energy requirements are appropriate.

With a large range of products, there is sure to be a diet suitable for your pet. All of our recipes are made to a very high standard, and here we have summarised some of the many reasons why our food is such a healthy and wholesome option.

We use named and specific ingredients

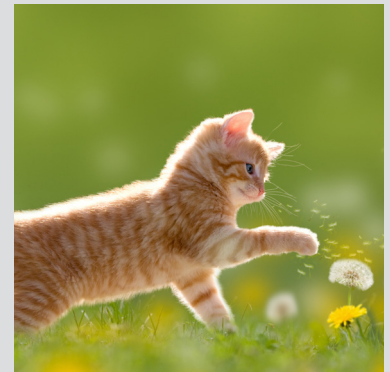
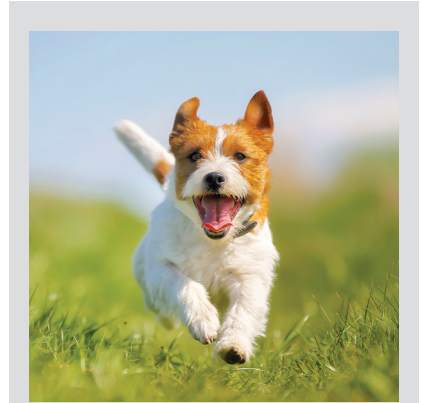
With named ingredients you know exactly what your pet is eating. Chicken meat meal for example is 100% chicken, but poultry meal could be a blend of 50% chicken and 50% turkey. "Derivatives of animal origin" is an even looser category which could be comprised of any type of meats such as beef. If you need to exclude certain ingredients in the event of food allergies or intolerance, it is very sensible to avoid these blends because of their unknown composition. Named ingredients are often better quality and have a higher nutritional value. This is very important because less digestible ingredients are more likely to cause food allergies due to large, antigenic protein molecules remaining in the body as well as contribute to excessive flatulence, and looser or bulkier stools.

Terminology explained

Animal or vegetable fats/oils, cereals and derivatives of animal or vegetable origin could include several or multiple sources. We choose not to include them in our range because they are an unknown entity, inconsistent and of lower nutritional value.

We manufacture to fixed formulae

Fixed formulae means that every batch of food is made from the same ingredients which are included in the recipe at the same level. This is especially important for sensitive animals who may suffer digestive upsets in the event of inconsistency. Foods which are made to variable formulae could include fluctuating levels of the same ingredients, and even completely new ingredients within unspecified meat or cereal blends.





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We exclude four of the most common ingredients responsible for adverse food reactions

We have never included wheat/gluten, beef, soya or dairy products in our range because they are the most likely to invoke food allergies or intolerance. Some sensitive dogs and cats can of course react adversely to other ingredients, but the risk of a problem is lessened if they are very digestible, and their nutrients are easily utilised within the body, like those in the Arden Grange products.

We preserve our products naturally

We do not use synthetic antioxidants such as ethoxyquin, in any of our foods. We include rosemary extract and tocopherols (vitamin E) to keep our dry products fresh.

Digest

We list an ingredient called digest, which you may find described as “broth”, “stock” or “gravy” in some other pet foods. Many commercial super premium extruded pet foods include digest; but not all declare it because it’s been described by some sources as an undesirable ingredient, which appears to be on the basis that they don’t really know what it is. Our digest is simply a natural palatant made primarily from liver, and we do not include it in conjunction with artificial flavours or sweeteners, sugars or salt.

We use both fresh meat and meat meal

Fresh meat is popular because it is less processed, and also very palatable and easy to digest. Fresh meat does lose volume when it is cooked; however the majority of loss is simply moisture which has no calorific value. We use a combination of fresh meat, fish and meal in our dry foods, so that the cats and dogs we feed can enjoy the benefits of both. Nutrient losses through cooking are a viable concern for many owners, but our analytical figures correlate to the end product rather than prior to cooking, so what you see declared on the packaging is a true representation of the nutrient values of the food.

Our fat sources are nutrient-rich as well as providing an efficient source of energy

Our fats and oils are a good source of the essential fatty acids that cats and dogs need, and easily utilised for energy. Our chicken oil is refined to remove larger protein molecules so is not commonly associated with adverse food reactions. We use krill, a fantastic source of omega-3 DHA and EPA fatty acids, and we were one of the first pet food companies in the UK to incorporate it across our range. Although ingredients like olive and sunflower oil are popular people foods, fats from animal sources are widely considered the most nutritionally valuable for cats and dogs. We do not include blended or unspecified fats.

Our carbohydrate sources supply nutrients as well as promote controlled energy levels

Carbohydrate in cat and dog food is quite a controversial subject, with some review sites describing it as indigestible. We know this is not the case with properly cooked carbohydrate-rich ingredients, and there is scientific evidence to support this. Carefully selected carbohydrate sources at a moderate volume can help promote stable blood sugar and sustained energy release throughout the day. Carbohydrate-rich ingredients can also provide other useful nutrients including a range of vitamins and minerals. We are aware that what may be ideal for one pet may not be for another, and for this reason we do have some lower carbohydrate options for dogs, including our Adult Prestige rich in fresh chicken dry food and Partners canned food. Our feline recipes are all lower carbohydrate due to their obligate carnivorous status.



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We have a range of products with different ingredients to suit different animals' needs, including grain-free foods

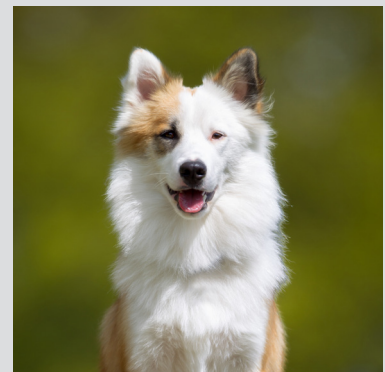
Grain-free foods are very popular. However, it is important to be aware that a cereal-free diet is not always the solution for cats and dogs with food allergies or intolerances, because they can also sometimes react adversely to ingredients used instead of grains; or to a meat or fish source in their food. Our feline range is exclusively grain-free, and selected canine diets and treats are grain-free too. Although many of our canine products include whole grains, every single recipe excludes gluten, which remains the most common culprit responsible for adverse food reactions in cats and dogs.

Our fibre sources are not fillers

Dogs and cats need insoluble fibre to ensure the optimal transit time of food within the intestine, dilute the colonic contents and bind toxins. They also need soluble fibre which, when fermented in the colon, produces energy for the friendly gut flora. It also delays gastric emptying so there is more time for absorption and improves peristalsis (the muscular waves that move the food along the digestive tract). The beet pulp in our dog food is a good source of both, and contrary to popular belief; it's not a common dietary allergen because it doesn't contain a high amount of protein, and it doesn't turn dogs' coats red as it is a pale coloured root vegetable and not purple like beetroot. We use pea fibre in our cat food, which is also a good source of insoluble fibre which may help hairball transit. All of the Arden Grange recipes include the prebiotics FOS and MOS, which are examples of functional fibre sources. They are especially useful in that they encourage the growth of the friendly gut bacteria. Less beneficial fibre sources include peanut and cereal hulls. These are not as versatile since they only supply insoluble fibre.

We include vitamins and minerals that are easily absorbed and utilised

Like any other ingredient, vitamins and minerals can vary in quality, and in how well the body can absorb them. Arden Grange prefers to derive these nutrients naturally where possible, and we use stable forms that are easily utilised within the body. To replace losses incurred during cooking, we include additional vitamins and minerals to ensure that all levels are correct. Vitamin E has powerful antioxidant properties and may help provide protection against the harmful effect of free radicals. Chelated, organic forms of certain minerals are included in the Arden Grange recipes due to their high bioavailability (absorption from the gut) and their efficient transfer to target tissues. These are also a component of antioxidant enzymes. There is no menadione (vitamin K3) in any of our products because cats and dogs can produce sufficient quantities of vitamin K in their bodies. We do not use sulphate and oxide based mineral supplements in our food because they are not as well absorbed by the body.





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We include a variety of natural supplements to provide extra nutritional support

- Omega-3 DHA and EPA fatty acids which have anti-inflammatory properties.
- Prebiotics FOS & MOS which help the friendly gut flora to replicate, whilst limiting the growth of pathogenic bacteria.
- Glucosamine that provides building blocks to synthesise new joint cartilage.
- Chondroitin that blocks destructive enzymes that break down cartilage in the joint.
- MSM which has anti-inflammatory properties.
- Cranberries which have anti-oxidant properties and promote a healthy urinary tract.
- Yucca extract which reduces faecal odour.
- Nucleotides that allow optimum levels of nutrients to be absorbed by the body, and facilitate faster cell replication in response to an outside challenge such as infectious organisms.

As a responsible and ethical company, Arden Grange fully appreciates the caution that must be taken when discussing the potential benefits of nutritional supplements. It is against the law to make medical claims. Whilst our ingredients are safe and natural, and may be beneficial to some of the cats and dogs fed on Arden Grange, we must highlight that their inclusion is not a substitute for veterinary intervention in the case of a sick animal.