

# Northern Oaks

Bird & Animal Hospital

## Nutritional Nuggets

- MYTH: Dogs must eat an all meat diet.

Dogs are omnivores, meaning they need both protein and carbohydrate in their diet. "Meat-first" ingredient diets are not necessarily superior products for this reason.

- MYTH: Never feed pets by-products.

Beef, chicken, or pork liver, which are excellent protein sources for animals, are classified as "by-products" on labels.

- MYTH: Animals require high protein in their diet.

Animals cannot store proteins so excess protein forces the kidneys into excess work to eliminate it. This can shorten the lifespan of the kidneys.

- MYTH: Corn is a filler with no nutritional value.

For pets, cooked corn is a highly digestible source of carbohydrates, proteins, antioxidants, and essential fatty acids. Information indicating otherwise is simply marketing. It is responsible for only 3% of all tested food allergies in dogs and cats. Protein sources are responsible for the remainder of the adverse reactions.

- MYTH: The first ingredient of a food must be meat.

Because meat contains >50% water, even if it is listed as the first ingredient, no dry pet food will contain more meat than grain once it is dried into kibble.

- MYTH: Feeding a raw diet is the best for my pet.

No conclusive research has demonstrated that feeding pets raw food is nutritionally superior to feeding them cooked food. They are susceptible to the same food-borne illnesses as humans and these bacteria and contaminants are eliminated only through cooking.

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- **Organic** is a legally defined term by the USDA. To achieve the USDA seal, every ingredient in the product must be harvested from a completely organic environment as certified by the USDA. If a product says “made with organic” rather than “100% organic”, it is not legally defined as organic and cannot display the USDA organic seal.
- **Natural** is a legally defined term by the USDA. It is a broad term meaning that a food has minimal processing and may only have natural additives and colors. Products in this category may still contain additives such as saline or other natural substances.
- **Holistic** is **NOT** a legally defined term and may be claimed by any manufacturer.
- **Human Grade** is **NOT** a legally defined term and may be claimed by any manufacturer.
- Quality of pet food is **not** measured by individual ingredients listed, but the nutritional value of each ingredient **when blended** with the other ingredients to create a balanced product specific for each pet’s age and condition. This is tested only through AAFCO designated feeding trials.
- A pet food labeled for “all life stages” is usually actually puppy or kitten food and contains excessive levels of some nutrients making it inappropriate for adult and senior pets. There is no actual food appropriate for all life stages.

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## AAFCO Statement

AAFCO feeding trials are the **minimum** standard a pet food should meet. There are two types of AAFCO labels. The first, which is **not** an adequate standard, states the following:

***AAFCO Statement:** "This food has been formulated to meet AAFCO standards."*

Any food bearing this statement has **not** undergone rigorous feeding trials in actual animals to determine the adequacy of the nutritional profile. "AAFCO Formulated" pet foods have no required testing to ensure the ingredients used are bio-available and digestible in the dog or cat.

The only acceptable label claim is the following AAFCO statement:.

***AAFCO Statement:** Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that (Pet Food Name) provides complete and balanced nutrition for maintenance of (puppy/kitten/adult/geriatric dogs/cats)."*

**ONLY** purchase pet food with **AAFCO feeding trial** statements to guarantee the food meets the minimum standard set by pet food regulators. Many expensive small company brand pet foods lack this statement because they do not perform the actual feeding trials. Feeding trials are expensive to perform so they will only be done by companies that can financially back them.