



Buddies Q & A
By Debbie Wood

What's AAFCO mean?

Near any commercial pet food's nutrition list, the letters AAFCO appear with words like "recommendations" or "analysis".

The Association of American Feed Control Officials decided that our pets require a minimum nutrient level in commercial food. No doubt this was started, like most associations, to protect the consumer. The nutrient levels have not changed since 1995. If the standards are met by a commercial pet food manufacturer, that manufacturer can label its pet food as "Complete and Balanced".

An analysis is made on the food for various levels of nutrients. There is no analysis on whether the nutrient that is recognized is soluble. For example the minimum 22% protein may include protein from vegetable matter that cannot be digested by canines. Or the protein may include completely indigestible protein from feathers and hooves and hair.

Your pet cannot use these proteins. 22% of nothing is still nothing.

The manufacturer must also submit its food for feeding trials.

The trials consist of as few as 8 animals; only 6 have to complete the trial, (read; live). For 26 weeks only the sample food and water is given. To pass the AAFCO trial, pets need lose not more than 15% of their body weight and pass only four blood tests that were not even measured before the trial. The animals are visually checked before and after by a veterinarian. If there are no obvious signs of malnutrition after the six month trial, the food is considered balanced and complete.

My only happiness with these studies is that not many animals have to suffer through them. I am not convinced that AAFCO is keeping up with the needs of their consumers, our pets. The first three paragraphs on the AAFCO Dog Food Standards web page are worth a giggle. "Overnutrition?" Oh, puleeeze.

Food should be whole and fresh. Adding powder nutrients to a ball of cooked cornmeal does not a diet make.

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Do you have a Q that needs an A? E-mail Debbie at deb@buddiesnaturalpetfood.ca



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As our dogs age, everything about their bodies gets a little slower. They heal slower, move a little slower, and even digest their food a bit slower. Slower digestion shows up as bloating, burping, and undigested food showing up in their poop.

Much of this digestive upset can be from a lack of digestive enzymes. Some of you may have felt the pain of being lactose intolerant. If our bodies do not make enough lactase to digest the lactose in dairy foods, we will experience cramping and dihorria as our bodies try to get rid of the indigestible food.

For every food our pet eats, there is a special enzyme to break it down. Our bodies can make all of the enzymes we need to digest, but it seems that we can only produce so much in our lifetime. Our pets are the same.

Fresh whole foods have the correct enzymes built into them to help us digest them. Mother Nature is amazing, but she can also be delicate. Enzymes are destroyed with cooking and processing. The more processing we submit our food to, the more enzymes our bodies have to use out of a limited supply. A fresh supply of food means less wear and tear on our bodies so that our bodies can use their energy and raw materials for healing and playing.

Fortunately we can easily add enzymes safely to our meals or to get that food digested. An over the counter digestive enzyme that contains "Protease" (the enzyme that breaks down protein) will help get things moving again. Digestive enzymes are available at drug stores and the human variety work just as well as a pet type. You will need to use it for the rest of your aging friend's life, but it will make a big difference to her health.

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“Holistic” is a word that is used to cover a lot of advertising slogans. What the heck does it mean?

Holistic is an old approach under a new word. It is the idea that a symptom is just that: A symptom. A Holistic practitioner wants to know what is causing the symptom. The holistic approach looks at the whole creature, body and mind.

Having a skin rash in holistic terms doesn't mean that a lotion for the rash is needed, but rather the reason for the rash must be explored.

A cortisone cream may clear up the rash, but the holistic eye is curious and wants to know what caused the rash to start with?

The answer is often not quickly found and I understand where the cortisone comes in. The frustration of seeing our beloved pet in distress drives us to try anything. The problem with the cortisone cream example is that it masks the symptom, but the cause is still there. The cause of the rash may also be manifesting in other areas on our pet. Seemingly unrelated symptoms can be connected to one source. Holistic treatment looks to find that source.

My approach always starts with nutrition. Food is the only thing we put into our pets and that fuel must be as clean as the water you put in that bowl. The effects of poor nutrition don't often show up right away. When the symptoms of malnutrition show up, the food is often the last thing to be looked at.

A healthy pet gets a variety of fresh foods that are appropriate for her species. She is not just free of symptoms, she thrives.

The food you provide your pet is one part of the holistic approach. Rest and exercise, mental and physical challenges, love and discipline, socializing and quiet times. The balance of life keeps us all flourishing holistically.

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This question comes from Sandra, a new dog owner.....

“Bailey vomits now and then. Is this normal?”

Vomiting is something that dogs do very well. Dogs have a very expansive oesophagus. It is designed to gulp down huge quantities of food when food is available. This downward efficiency is balanced by the upward vomiting.

Dogs are scavengers by trade. In the old days, they would gulp down all that would fit in their gullets and would regurgitate when they were in a safer place to eat and then reconsume their dinner. We have all seen this behaviour and assumed our little Fluffy needed etiquette guidance. The fact is that Fluffy is a survivor from a long line of survivors. The vomit behaviour has proven to be a great advantage. Mother dogs regurgitate for their young. Submissive dogs will lick at the sides of a leader dog's mouth in a hope for this hot meal.

Dogs have a very efficient gut and can vomit up poison and dangerous bones. A dog will also immediately give back food that she is allergic to or her body knows will cause damage if released into the small intestine. An example is bone shards that are discovered by you on the carpet in a puddle of slime. This is a perfect example of the efficiency of our dog's guts.

Dogs do eat grass when their tummies are upset. The grass acts as a scrubber and helps to clean out the bad stuff when it all comes back up. Eating grass is not a concern, mind you, and usually is part of daily self medication.

Vomiting is most often a normal part of a healthy dog's life and nothing to worry about. If it seems that nothing stays down for more than a day or two, you may want to seek some help.

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