

# Cats and Critters

## Feline Dietary Recommendations

### Special Dietary Needs of a Carnivore

- Carnivores thrive on a variety of animal proteins. In nature, cat's prey includes birds, small mammals, reptiles and insects.
- Evolved as desert animals, cats rely mostly on the **water found in their prey** for proper hydration.
- As strict carnivores, cats have **NO dietary need for carbohydrates**. Their prey consists of 3-5% carbohydrates found in the stomach contents, which is often left uneaten.

### Cat Feeding Guidelines

**Canned Diets:** Cats are strict carnivores and do best on a diet that is **high in protein** (meat) and **low in carbohydrate** (grains and vegetables). Cats also have a low thirst drive and a diet **high in moisture** is ideal. Canned foods most closely mimic what a cat would eat in nature and are high in moisture.

**Dry Foods:** These diets were created for convenience. They can be left out for long periods of time without spoilage. Due to the biscuit making process, these diets are **high in carbohydrate** and **low in moisture**.



### **Kitten Food (up to 6 months old)**

We recommend feeding canned food to your kitten. Their texture preferences are forming at this stage. Feed canned food throughout the day.

### **Adult Food (6 Months and Older)**

After neutering, a pet's energy needs are reduced by at least 25%. Kitten food is no longer appropriate at this stage. Adults should be given a **measured amount** of food at meal times (2-3 times a day). Allowing your cat to 'graze' throughout the day may lead to obesity.

### Variety

In the wild, cats eat a wide variety of prey, not the same protein source at every meal. We recommend alternating between a few different brands. This may prevent your cat from becoming finicky, lessens the chance of an imbalance of nutrients, and may prevent the development of food intolerances.

### Changing Your Cat's Diet

Caution must be taken when transitioning your cat to any new food. Gradually introduce the new food over a period of several weeks. Some cats may experience intestinal upset if changed too quickly.

**DO NOT** let your cat go more than 18 hours without eating. This can lead to a serious liver condition called *hepatic lipidosis*.



### Counting Calories

As of 2011, about **54% of cats were overweight or obese**. Consideration must be given to your cat's daily calorie intake. An average sized cat (10-12 pounds) shouldn't consume more than 200-230 kcal per day. Calorie info is usually available on the label or on the manufacturer's website. Multiple cat households would do best to feed cats separately.

## Choosing a Canned Food

**Canned food is better suited to your cat's unique metabolic needs than dry food.**



### **Meat:**

- \*Beef and fish are common allergens in cats.
- \*Excess protein add unnecessary costs to foods
- \*Meat, meat meal and byproducts provide good quality amino acids

### **Moisture:**

- \* Should be no greater than 78%

### **Carbohydrates:**

- \*potatoes, corn, apples, wheat, peas, soy, rice
- \* Cats have **NO** dietary need for carbohydrates.
- \* Try to choose diets with less than 10% of calories from carbohydrates.

A food developed for “all life stages” is nutritionally complete for growth and reproduction, it can be used as a maintenance food yet may not be the best food for a cat that is overweight or obese and needs to lose weight.

All pet foods that carry an **AAFCO approved nutritional guarantee** are considered to be complete and balanced for a specific life stage, such as for growth or maintenance.

The feeding guidelines on the food package are only a starting point. If you feed your cat the recommended amount as stated on the package, your cat has a higher chance of becoming overweight or obese.

Grain-free brands usually have increased mineral levels and can be just as high, if not higher in carbohydrates than foods with grains in them. Potatoes actually have more carbohydrates than corn and less protein. **There is no research that a grain-free food is any better nutritionally than foods with grains – unless the pet has a proven grain allergy.**

## Transitioning To Canned Food

Cats fed dry food throughout their lives may have trouble accepting this new texture. **Patience and persistence** is necessary to retrain our finicky felines to eat this more species-appropriate food. It may take several months before your cat is willing to eat an all canned food diet.

- It is important to **establish mealtimes** first (2-3 times per day).
- Cats will be more likely to try something new if they are actually hungry.
- Exercise, in the form of play, may increase appetite before mealtime.
- Try different **flavors and brands** at first. Don't be as concerned with quality yet; it is more important to get them to accept the texture first. Once your cat is eating canned food regularly, then you can change them to a more quality diet.
- Start by adding small bits of canned food on the dry food; just enough to get a taste of it. Then gradually over a week or so, increase the amount of canned food and decrease the amount of dry food in the mix. Eventually phase out the dry food.
- Canned food should **always be served warm or room temperature**.
  - Unused portion should be refrigerated.

**We have an extensive list of cat food calories, carbohydrate percentages and information about feeding cats in multi-cat households. If you would like additional help with feeding or weight loss, please let us know.**

## Calories in Popular Cat Foods

Wet Food	Kcal/oz
Blue Buffalo wilderness chicken	40
Merrick purrfect tuna pate	29
Natural Balance original	33
Wellness CORE chicken	40
Sheba Chicken entrée cuts	25
Trader Joe's chicken/turkey and rice	33
Fancy Feast Chunky Turkey Feast	32
ProPlan chicken, tuna and wild rice	23
Fancy Feast gravy lovers chicken feast	23
Earthborn chicken catcciatori	18
Wellness salmon and trout	41
Meow Mix tender favorites real chicken & liver	21
Halo Spot's Stew wholesome turkey	22
Nature's Variety Instinct duck	40
Purina EN prescription diet	33

Dry Food	Kcal/cup
Blue Buffalo weight control	458
Science Diet Adult Indoor	281
Natural Balance indoor with hairball control	349
Wellness indoor health	465
Purina One Indoor Advantage	398
Purina One Healthy Metabolism	427
Buju and Ziggy Original Medley	338
Blue Buffalo Wilderness chicken	435
EVO turkey/chicken cat/kitten	602
Iams original chicken	368
Purina EN prescription diet	528

### Additional Tips and Tricks

- Add a small amount of cooked chicken/ tuna on top of canned food.
- Offer tastes of meat baby food, to get them used to not crunching their food.
- Sprinkle small amount of Parmesan cheese, freeze dried meat treats, catnip, salmon/ tuna juice or crushed up dry food on top.
- 'Chip and Dip' method: Dip individual pieces of dry food into some canned food, and set them out on a plate.

Once your cat is on a canned food diet it is still important to **pay attention to portions**. Most cats will lose some weight when eating only wet food, but it is still possible for overeaters to become overweight.