



# PREMIUM PET FOODS

## THE MYTHS AND THE MISCONCEPTIONS!

The Premium Pet Food market is booming, hammering the past major suppliers in pet food retail – the supermarkets and other mass merchandisers. Fortunately, most of this business is now going to the independent pet retailer market.

A Packaged Facts survey in the USA in early 2017 showed that 79% of dog owners, and 63% of cat owners enjoy purchasing products that pamper their pets. It also showed that overall 79% were happy to pay a lot more for pet food products that make their pet healthier – and give it a happier and longer life span. In the nutrition area, “natural” remains the pathway to growth in sales, with many consumers believing the natural products rate higher than any other option, especially in pet specialty stores. There are many opinions on what makes a superior pet food – here are some thoughts in a summary of expert opinions from Australia and around the globe.

### GRAIN or GRAIN FREE

Trends come and go in pet foods, right now Grain Free is the flavour of the month.

However, there is absolutely no science to say that a grain free diet is better than a grain diet, and without research to support grain free, retailers need to be cautious with their approach to recommending these diets.

It is common knowledge that some dogs can get an allergic reaction to some grains – the main offenders being wheat, corn and soy. This allergy occurs principally when these grains are used as a protein source, eg corn gluten meal, soy bean meal, vegetable protein isolate etc. Beware of foods that include these ingredients.

However, some grains are actually very beneficial without giving rise to these concerns. Rice or in particular Brown Rice, is a great addition to an otherwise grain free food as advised by the

independent [www.petfoodreviews.com.au](http://www.petfoodreviews.com.au) website which is quoted as saying “Brown Rice is high in Fibre and Nutrients, and will provide your dog with a slow burning source of energy. Brown rice has the other upside of not being a source of any allergies, which is the case with wheat which we find in many other foods, and so makes an excellent addition”.

### MEAT INGREDIENTS

The most important ingredient is of course meat – Chicken Meat being always the safest and best meat to include. Any worthwhile food should have a level of 30% or more in protein and up to 50% in meat meal to achieve this. Fat levels should ideally be around the 20% mark.

**BWARE OF SPLIT INGREDIENTS.** With packaging rules demanding that the first listed product must be the one with the highest percentage in content – here is where a number of leading pet food makers play some tricks with the consumer. Splitting ingredients is an old trick, but one not commonly known about by the consumer. Wherever you see the same product mentioned twice in the ingredients list on a pet food bag – you can safely assume that is the item that has the highest content in that food.

There is NO nutritional benefit for splitting ingredients – it is generally done to allow another ingredient to move up the list and make the consumer think it is the number one ingredient.

For example in the case of one well-known brand we can see Raw Potato and further down Potato Powder- telling the story that there is more potato in that food than meat as a %. Not very honest, but it does happen in quite a lot in some well supported brands. Watch out also for the term chicken by products or meat by products – this can mean heads, feet and internal organs substituting for meat itself.

Real Chicken is another deceptive term – rather than being chicken meal which is 100% ground meat, Real Chicken is 70-80% water. This allows the producer to show Real (or Fresh) Chicken as the number 1 ingredient when in fact it is mostly water.

### OTHER INGREDIENTS

The other most important factor in the making of a great pet