



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

food are the other ingredients that make up the formula. Most important of these are items that provide good anti-oxidant levels and vitamins, and these come mostly from a combination of fruits and vegetables – Blueberries and other Berries, Broccoli, Beetroot, and any other of the green vegetable varieties. A good food will also have vitamins added – Vitamin C and E are the most important. These will support the pet's immune capacity and overall general health.

Egg forms an important binder and good health enhancer – and in any Senior or All Life Stages Formula – Glucosamine and Chondroitin should also be present. Where possible adding Omega 3 and 6 will add further benefits – Flaxseed Oils and Fish Oils will provide these.

### LOCAL OR OVERSEAS MADE

Until quite recently, almost all pet foods considered Premium were made overseas in USA or Europe. More recently Australia has been catching up. The main issue with imported foods is Australia's tough import regulations on products containing meat. Cooking at much higher than optimum temperatures to meet DAFF demands, burns a lot of nutritional value out of imported foods, which of course still show those values on the bag as what they are when sold in their local market - before such extra heat treatment is applied. Long overseas trips often in hot containers, does nothing to help further. Reason why many of the market leaders when evaluated here – do not rate that highly in the quality stakes (see notes above on the local independent local ratings service [www.petfoodreviews.com.au](http://www.petfoodreviews.com.au))

Australia now makes some of the best quality pet foods in the world, not only because of the before mentioned factors, but because of the freshness of using local produce and the speed in which it is brought to the market as well. There are a number of high quality local brands available now, several of the best of these being Ivory Coat, and XP3020. These have already been finding good overseas markets for their product. Ziwi Peak from New Zealand also a very good food, and is doing well internationally.

Sadly, the large volume of local made pet food sales are still done in the supermarkets. These locally made foods are cheap and made mostly by the overseas pet food giants. They are just the opposite of those other local brands mentioned above – and quality of ingredients is not at all a factor with most of these. Split ingredients, heavy use of wheat and corn, and the inclusion of animal by-products are all great for profits (even at low prices) – but certainly not for good animal health.

### OTHER FACTORS

Age categories and kibble size is another area of debate. Of course many makers love to have more shelf space, and nothing does this better than having a Puppy, Small Breed, Medium Breed, Large Breed, Senior and some even go as far as to add further groups like Indoor Cat (don't almost all cats live indoors?).

The facts are that most of these foods will be the same or similar – although the Senior diet can create a windfall for the maker where less fat is required and often a reduction in some other energy activators, often at no price difference. A great food is a great food, and the really great foods will be excellent for all the

life stages of any pet. These "lifestage" foods are just an excuse to take up your precious shelf space and tie-up your money in stock. Kibble size is another factor, and many consumers get themselves convinced that the size of the dog should dictate the size of the kibble - this should not be the case. Dogs of all sizes from puppy to fully grown are far better consuming a small, smooth kibble size. The facts are that large kibble is often with rough edges and as most large dogs seldom chew, but swallow their food whole – large kibble can scratch, irritate and sometimes damage the mouth and oesophagus. Most importantly also is the smaller the kibble, the more powerful is the flavour and the dog's ability to digest quickly. Once again varying sizes of kibble becomes a marketing ploy, and a concern more of owners - rather than what is in the best interests of their pet. The facts are that in the case of most good quality dog food brands – you could feed their puppy size kibble through all life stages for great results, just varying the size of the portions to suit the size of the animal, its activity status - and its life stage at the time.

### VETERINARY CHOICES

Unfortunately, some of the largest selling premium pet foods on our market, are a long way from being the best quality – although their pricing often would not indicate this fact. Of course, many pet owners will tend to be guided by what is recommended by their local veterinarian, when it comes to pet food choices. Most Vets will always recommend the several larger companies brands that include medical diets in their offering – which are exclusive to the Vet channel. Understandable, bearing this in mind.

Unfortunately, this does not always point the pet owner to the foods that are in their animal's best interests. This is because 95% of the time the food sold under these brands are the regular diet's (non-medical) - as it is in pet stores as well. A check on the above mentioned independent pet food reviews web site, shows that all three of these major vet brands are rated at the very bottom of the list in regards to quality – in fact only just above the supermarket brands. While there are some vet's well aware of this and will sell better quality food to many customer's, most will sell what they see as in their own best interest – not doing the pets involved any favours at all.

### OVERVIEW

While it is obvious that most hungry pets will eat anything put in front of them – many pet owners may well see in their minds no reason to spend 3 times as much on a bag of food at premium price levels, than in the supermarket.

As a quality Retailer you have the responsibility to educate your customers of the benefit of feeding their pets a high quality food. The health benefits with fewer trips to the Vet, the longer life for their precious companion and the vitality their pet will show throughout its life are just some of the benefits the owner will see. This makes the premium food actually great value for money. YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT and so it is with your pet.

A happy and healthy animal is what we should all be looking for – and getting the word out about how important a quality premium pet food is to all animals, is in the best interests of the owner, the animal - and of course to our independent pet trade at the cash register. ■