



## Alternative Veterinary Services, LLC

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### Commercial Pet Food

Commercial pet food – easily the most convenient way to feed and options include dry, wet, frozen, dehydrated, raw, and freeze dried. The Food and Drug Administration regulates dog and cat foods and treats (and other animal foods). All ingredients are supposed to be listed on the packaging from most to least by weight. Certain claims (but not all) on the label such as “reduces urinary pH” must have supportive data. In some cases, the food may be “prescribed” by a veterinarian to treat or manage certain conditions (e.g., Science Diet I/d Liver Care).<sup>1</sup>

What do some of the marketing terms really mean? Products labeled “organic” are regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and must follow the organic requirements for human food. These products will have the “USDA Organic” seal. “Human grade” ingredients have no true definition, but according to the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), the ingredients must be “human edible” and “manufactured, packaged, and held in accordance with federal regulations.” The terms “natural, all natural, or 100% natural” have not been defined by the FDA in relation to pet food. However, according to the AAFCO guidelines, the product must be derived of plant, animal, or mined sources, and may not contain any synthetic ingredients. Thus, they should not contain any added artificial flavor/coloring, preservatives, additives, vitamins or minerals as those are synthetic. The terms “holistic” or “wholesome” have no legal definition or regulation and are simply marketing terms.<sup>2,3</sup>

Wet and dry pet food are based on the manufacturer’s specific recipes, designed to be balanced nutrition for dogs and cats as well as specific needs for different breeds or sizes. The main ingredients are typically animal based products (often times not animal parts found at the grocery store) as well as other products (e.g., grains, oils, flavorings, water, etc.). For pet food that is served wet or moist, the mixture is put directly into the can (or pouch, etc.), sealed, and then put through the cooking process. For dry pet food, the mixture is formed into a dough and either baked or heated under pressure (extruded) and cut into kibbles. Once cooled, the kibble is spray-coated with vitamins, minerals, and flavorings.<sup>4</sup>

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1. <sup>1</sup> [Pet Food | FDA](#)

2. <sup>2</sup> <https://www.petmd.com/dog/nutrition/pet-food-ingredient-and-label-guide>

3. <sup>3</sup> [Natural Dog Food: Is It Better? | PetMD](#)

4. <sup>4</sup> [9\\_GAPFA\\_Factsheet\\_How\\_pet\\_food\\_is\\_made.pdf](#)