

Consultation draft

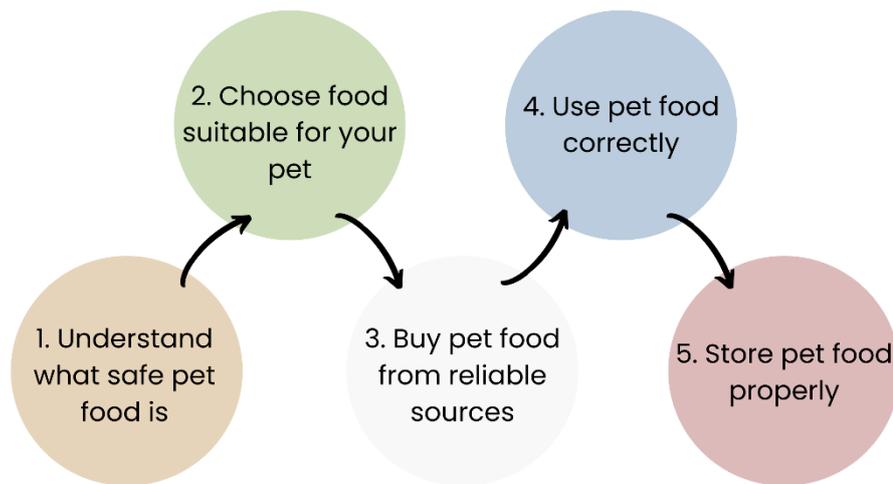
PET FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES PET OWNERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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1. Purpose

- Every pet owner wants their pets to eat happily, safely, and stay healthy. To ensure their well-being, we must carefully choose the right food. This guide offers practical recommendations to help you select, use, and store pet food properly.



2. Safe Pet Food

- In short, safe pet food maintains good and consistent quality. It is usually cooked or heated to a sufficiently high temperature to kill bacteria, thereby preventing food poisoning in pets. If used as the main diet, safe pet food should provide all the nutrients that a pet needs. When choosing a main diet, check the product packaging for terms such as “Complete & Balanced”.
- There are various types of pet foods available on the market. The following table uses cats and dogs as examples to briefly introduce the characteristics of different products, helping you choose the most suitable food for your pet. If you have any questions, please consult your veterinarian for advice.

	Dry Food	Canned food / Wet Food	Fresh Food
Production	Cooked, shaped, and dried; most of these products are made through an extrusion process; the moisture content is typically below 10%.	Heat treated and stored in airtight containers, with moisture content over 70%.	Made from ingredients such as meat, vegetables, and fruits, which are simply cooked.
Characteristics	Easy to store and clean; can be kept for longer periods, and generally provides balanced nutrition.	Easy to store; typically offers sufficient nutrients and higher moisture content, though it is usually more expensive than dry food.	Usually prepared and cooked by pet owners themselves, allowing control over the ingredients. While some commercial products exist, they often contain little or no preservatives; therefore, they require refrigeration and have a shorter shelf life than dry or canned food.
Precautions	Some dry foods, which may be coated with or mixed with raw meat ingredients, are classified as raw pet food. For more information, please refer to Section 8 on raw pet food.	<p>Opened canned food spoils easily and should not be left at room temperature for long periods.</p> <p>Canned food used as a main diet must meet nutritional standards to ensure a balanced diet. Complementary or treat-type canned food should be offered only as a treat, not as a primary meal. Otherwise, it may lead to nutritional imbalance and health issues.</p> <p>If a product contains raw meat, it is classified as raw pet food. For more information, please refer to Section 8 on raw pet food.</p>	<p>It is often difficult for pet owners to precisely control nutrient ratios, especially for micronutrients such as vitamins. In addition, if commercial fresh food products used are nutritionally unbalanced, using them as a primary diet over the long term may affect your pet's health.</p> <p>If you wish to use fresh food as your pet's main diet, please consult your veterinarian for relevant information, or seek a board-certified veterinary nutritionist to help design a food recipe that meets the standard.</p> <p>If a product contains raw meat, it is classified as raw pet food. For more information, please refer to Section 8 on raw pet food.</p>

3. How to Choose Pet Food

- Select reputable, well-established, and certified pet food brands. Such brands usually have professional teams that design and produce the pet food product, with a proven track record of safety and quality.
- Priority may be given to manufacturers that can provide the following information:
 - a. Reliable contact details
 - b. Products are formulated by professional team, which may include veterinarians, animal nutritionists, food safety specialists or experts
 - c. Evidence of scientific research on their products
 - d. Products that have passed feeding trials by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)
 - e. Manufacturing plant with professional certifications to ensure quality and safety during production, such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, ISO 22000, or ISO 9001
- Choose food that corresponds to your pet's life stage as indicated on the label, such as growth (puppy/kitten), adult, or senior. Long-term feeding of a formula not suitable for your pet's stage (e.g., feeding adult dogs puppy food) may lead to an imbalanced or excessive nutrient intake.
- When selecting a main diet for cats and dogs, it is recommended to choose products that meet nutritional standards established by recognized international bodies such as the AAFCO or the European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF), or relevant authorities in the country of origin, for example, the 《寵物飼料管理辦法》 issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China and relevant national standards. These formulations are nutritionally adequate for long-term daily feeding. If you have any questions about choosing or feeding pet food, please consult your veterinarian.

4. How to Ensure the Pet Food You Buy Is Safe and Reliable

- Buy pet food only from reputable and reliable sources, such as familiar pet shops, official websites, authorized distributors, or veterinary clinics. Avoid buying from unknown or unverified online platforms.
- Only buy pet food that is in good condition. Do not buy products with damaged, dented, torn, punctured, or discoloured packaging.

- Read the packaging information before purchasing. Pay close attention to the pet food label to ensure the product is suitable for your pet, including the species and life stage, as well as the “Use By” or “Best Before” dates.
- Avoid overbuying to prevent the food from deteriorating before it is used up.

5. How to Properly Use and Handle Pet Food

- Read the pet food label carefully, which contains useful information such as ingredients, nutrient composition, net weight, manufacturing date and shelf life, importer or manufacturer’s name and address, and storage or feeding instructions. Follow the feeding recommendations provided on the packaging or as advised by your veterinarian, including feeding quantity, frequency, and method.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling pet food.
- Do not share utensils with your pet. Use designated and clean spoons or measuring cups for serving or measuring pet food. After each use, wash them thoroughly with soap and water, and dry them completely.
- If you need to switch to a new pet food, allow sufficient time for your pet to adjust. A sudden change in food may cause digestive upset such as vomiting or diarrhoea. For example, the following 7-day transition schedule may help:

	Old Food	New Food
Days 1-2	75%	25%
Days 3-4	50%	50%
Days 5-6	25%	75%
Day 7	0%	100%

6. How to Properly Store Pet Food

- Properly storing pet food preserves its nutritional value and makes it easier to track product information if any issues arise. If there are multiple pets in your household, storing food in appropriate places prevents your pets from eating the wrong food or overeating, which could lead to health problems such as vomiting, diarrhoea, or other serious conditions.

- Follow the manufacturer's storage instructions. In general, pet food should be stored in a cool, dry, and well-ventilated place, away from heat and direct sunlight. Excessive temperature or humidity may cause spoilage or nutrient breakdown. Refrigerated products (such as wet food that requires refrigeration) should be kept at 0°C to 4°C, while frozen products should be stored at –18°C or below.
- Keep dry food in its original container or bag, and consume it as soon as possible after opening. If you need to store the dry food in another container, place the entire bag into a sealed container. This makes it easier to access relevant information if any product issues or recalls occur.
- Do not leave opened wet or canned food at room temperature for extended periods. Any leftovers should be handled immediately, such as by refrigerating or discarding them.

7. How to Handle Situations Where Pet Food Shows Abnormalities

- Stop using any pet food that shows signs of spoilage or abnormality, such as unusual odours, discoloration, mold growth, or abnormal texture.
- Keep purchase receipts or proof of transaction. If the product is recalled or a quality issue is found, stop using it and contact the seller for follow-up.

8. Raw Pet Food

- Raw pet food refers to products made primarily from ingredients that are uncooked or not fully cooked (such as raw meat, bones, and organs), and are processed only through methods like freezing or freeze-drying, before being served directly to pets. This type of food emphasizes preserving the original nutrients and natural flavours of the ingredients. However, as the food is not heat-sterilized, please pay special attention to the following points.

8.1 Associated Risks

- Raw meat often contains bacteria, so feeding raw pet food may pose a higher risk of bacterial contamination (such as Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria) to household members. For example, a family member might accidentally ingest these bacteria by touching their mouth after preparing or handling contaminated raw pet food or its utensils. You should also be aware of high-risk individuals in the household who may become seriously ill from foodborne pathogens, such as infants, the elderly, pregnant women, or people with weakened immune systems.

- Raw pet food may also pose a higher risk of bacterial contamination to pets. If you are considering feeding raw pet food to your pet, consult your veterinarian first. They can help you assess the potential risks and determine the most appropriate diet for your pet and household. Unless specifically instructed by a veterinarian, raw meat pet food should be avoided for puppies, kittens, senior pets, pregnant pets, or those with weakened immune systems.
- According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), while avian influenza virus primarily affects poultry and wild birds, transmission to other mammals, including cats, can occur. Cats may become infected by contact with sick birds or contaminated food. Therefore, avoid feeding raw poultry to cats, especially if sourced from areas with avian flu outbreaks.

8.2 Handling Raw Pet Food

- If you choose to feed raw pet food, maintain good hygiene practices when handling it and avoid leaving it at room temperature for extended periods. In hot and humid weather, bacteria can multiply rapidly during transport or storage, potentially affecting your pet's health.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces and tools that come into contact with raw pet food. Wash your hands with soap and water after handling raw food or touching contaminated items (e.g., countertops, refrigerators, kitchen utensils, feeding bowls, cutting boards, and microwave interiors).
- Keep raw food frozen. Do not rinse raw meat, as splashing juices can spread bacteria. Thaw in a sealed container or covered dish, and never refreeze once thawed.
- Store raw pet food separately from human food, using dedicated cutting boards, knives, and preparation areas, and feed it to your pet in a designated area.

8.3 Additional Notes

- If raw pet food is fed as a main diet, ensure that it is nutritionally balanced and complete. If you have any questions, please consult your veterinarian.
- Do not kiss your pet or allow it to lick your face after it has eaten raw food.

- Monitor your pet's health closely. If signs such as vomiting, diarrhoea, or loss of appetite occur after feeding, take your pet to a veterinarian promptly.