

# Full Disclosure

*We've upped the ante for this year's dry dog food review.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**T**ransparency. That's what the pet food recalls of early 2007 taught us to value in a pet food company. In the aftermath of that event, we received hundreds of accounts from concerned owners who were understandably scared and unnecessarily frustrated when they tried to get information about their pets' food. Some companies "got it," and responded immediately with up-to-the-minute updates with pertinent information about their products on their websites and recorded messages on their toll-free phone lines. In our view, the best ones were the companies that stated immediately where their foods were made, where their ingredients came from, and what they were doing to ensure their products were safe.

But many other companies stonewalled, insisting that their products were safe but refusing to offer any corroborating evidence! Even faced with grievously sick cats or dogs, many owners could not get any useful information from the pet food companies whose products they used.

This may be business as usual for large, conglomerate pet food makers; goodness knows it's certainly true of most processed *human* food makers. But when a dog owner pays in the area of \$2 a pound (or more) for what is marketed as the healthiest dog food on earth, it stings to learn that its maker won't so much as return a phoned or e-mailed inquiry about its ingredients – especially when a dog or cat is fighting for its life in a veterinary hospital.

The weeks following the initial recall brought new disclosures about foreign-sourced ingredients, and some disparities

between the ingredients listed on food labels and what the products actually contained. That's when I decided that WDJ's 2008 dog food reviews would include only those products that met our usual selection criteria (see page 5) *and* met at least a minimum standard of transparency.

## **Manufacturing info: What it can tell you**

I've found that one fairly reliable indicator of a pet food company's willingness to disclose information about their products to consumers is whether or not they will discuss their manufacturing location – although this is a recent phenomenon.

In 1997, my first year of reviewing dog food, *none* of the pet food company executives I interviewed would discuss their manufacturing location; historically, this was status quo for the industry. "That's proprietary information," they'd say, even if all of their competitors knew exactly where their products were made. Several developments in the past decade have changed this.

First was the establishment and growth of a "super premium" sector of the pet food market. Twenty years ago, most dog foods were pretty similar; all contained meat by-products and tons of grain. Trends toward "peak nutrition," evolutionary diets, and holistic medicine trickled down into the world of companion animals, and a few, small, innovative companies started making products that contained more and higher-quality animal products. The success of these products, both in sales and

actual performance in the dogs who ate them, led to rapid growth of this specialized niche of the pet food market.

As it grew in market share, the "super premium" sector became increasingly competitive. Companies have been going to greater lengths to find and utilize better and/or more novel ingredients to use (and feature in their advertising).

They've also sought out other unique and beneficial features to incorporate into their formulation, manufacture, packaging, and even corporate behavior to help their products stand out. Initially, the decision of some to disclose information about ingredient sourcing, product manufacturing, quality assurance (QA) processes, and other bits of previously secret processes was probably as much an effort to gain a marketing edge as it was a tool to increase consumer confidence.

Whatever a company's motivation for disclosing detailed information about its products, the consumer wins. I've long appreciated companies that have educated personnel readily available and willing to communicate with consumers about their products. It's even better when the company has a veterinarian available who can discuss the company's products and a consumer's dog's digestion or other health problems in detail.

Of course, it's easy for company reps to mislead consumers who inquire about things they really don't know much about. During the 2007 recalls, it was only when frightened pet owners sought information from pet food makers, and shared this information with each other, that a



**Knowing which manufacturing plant where food originated is just the beginning of what consumers should be able to learn about their dog's food – especially a high-priced product that's marketed as a "super-premium" food.**

number of companies were caught being disingenuous. This is another reason why I decided to make company transparency a new criterion for WDJ's food reviews, and also publish the results. Who would release false information where all your competitors are sure to read about it?

### Why you need to know more than just the food's maker

I've just told you why the disclosure of a food's manufacturer should be part of a pet owner's selection process. Here are some reasons why this information should *never* be used as a *sole* selection criterion.

Large pet food manufacturers may make dozens (if not hundreds) of different products, formulated for a wide range of price points and using ingredients from a wide span of quality. And if a plant makes products for other companies, even the QA processes used during manufacture for different clients may be very different. *The name of the maker alone is simply not enough to guarantee quality or confirm a lack thereof.*

Known variously as "private label manufacturers," "contract manufacturers," or "co-packers," production facilities make foods for other companies – and make them according to their clients' specifications. Co-packers generally specialize in the manufacture of a certain type of product (extruded, baked, canned), and may actually manufacture many competing brands within a category.

The most discriminating clients specify *everything* in their contracts, requiring their co-packer to use only specific ingredient sources and perform extraordinary quality-assurance procedures, and paying for independent, third-party audits of the manufacturing process. (Of course, all of this results in higher costs for clients and consumers.)

Companies that sell lower-quality, low-cost products generally have much less stringent contracts with their co-packers. Often, they allow the manufacturer to source ingredients, since the co-packer can usually purchase ingredients at a lower price, given that they often buy in quantities large enough to use in several clients' products. Clients with low-cost products usually specify only that the product contain the ingredients it is supposed to and that the finished product meets the specified nutrient levels spelled out in the product's "guaranteed analysis" – and it's up to the co-packer to accomplish

this for an agreed-upon price. As we saw in the 2007 contaminated gluten recalls, this type of arrangement may set the stage for disaster, as the co-packer tries to find the least-expensive source of ingredients that meet the client's specs.

This is how different products that I would characterize as the highest and the lowest quality may come from the same manufacturing plant. This also explains why some very good products made at the Menu Foods (one of North America's largest co-packers of canned pet foods) were completely untouched by the recalls, and so many low-cost "store brands" made there were recalled.

Unfortunately, many underinformed, alarmist (or simply alarmed) pet owners conclude that if a problem occurs at a plant, every product that originates at that plant (from then on) is unsafe. Early in the 2007 recalls, when the affected foods were thought to originate only at Menu Foods, many pet owners got the idea that *all* foods made at Menu must be unsafe. (And the hysteria went further; some concluded that

if a company had one food made at Menu, that all the other company's foods, made elsewhere, must also be contaminated.)

This sort of reactionary conclusion has made many pet food company executives far *less* forthcoming about their products' origins. Many companies stonewalled consumers in the face of the recall, and have since returned to a policy of nondisclosure, to prevent being unfairly associated with the recalls.

I have sympathy for companies that disclose all sorts of details about their products yet decline to state their manufacturer to preserve a genuinely exclusive relationship with a small co-packer.

This feeling is tempered, however, by real distaste for the companies that hide behind the "proprietary information" excuse for refusing to disclose practically anything about their ingredient sourcing or quality, manufacturing, QA, product testing, etc., even as they allege their products to be of the "finest quality." In my opinion, that's competing in the high-end sector of the pet food market on false pretenses.

### Makers of Past "WDJ-Approved" Foods That Won't Disclose Origin of Manufacture

<b>Addiction Foods NZ Ltd</b> , Bay of Plenty, NZ (65) 6227-8813; addictionfoods.com	Won't disclose makers of extruded foods. States that foods are made in New Zealand and Australia, close to sources of their unique proteins (kangaroo, brushtail), but won't be more specific. "Our partnerships are a source of our competitive advantage."
<b>Azmira Holistic Animal Care</b> , Tucson, AZ (800) 497-5665; azmira.com	Won't disclose maker since food is made in small facility; does not want to lose advantage of exclusive relationship with co-packer. Will disclose much else about ingredients and QA in dialogue with consumers.
<b>The Blue Buffalo Company</b> , Wilton, CT (800) 919-2833; bluebuff.com	No response to our inquiry.
<b>Cloud Star Corporation</b> , San Luis Obispo, CA (800) 361-9079; cloudstar.com	Does not disclose manufacturing info; will disclose some other information to consumers.
<b>Newman's Own Organics</b> , Aptos, CA (800) 865-2866; newmansownorganics.com	Does not disclose manufacturing location. Company will disclose much other information about ingredients and QA to consumers.
<b>Owen &amp; Mandeville Pet Products</b> , Oxford, CT (888) 881-7703; ompetproducts.com	No response; couldn't get through to numbers or get a response to e-mail. Still in business?
<b>Petguard</b> , Green Cove Springs, FL (877) 738-4827; petguard.com	No response to our inquiry.
<b>Royal Canin USA, Inc.</b> , St. Charles, MO (800) 592-6687 (US); (800) 527-2673 (Can) royalcanin.us	No response to our inquiry.
<b>Solid Gold Health Products</b> , El Cajon, CA (800) 364-4863; solidgoldhealth.com	No response to our inquiry.
<b>Timberwolf Organics, Inc.</b> , Winderwe, FL (407) 877-8779; timberwolforganics.com	No response to our inquiry.
<b>(Evolve) Triumph Pet Industries Inc.</b> , Warwick, NY; (800) 331-5144; evolvepet.com	No response to our inquiry.

## What you should ask

So, while I value the willingness of a company to tell you where its products are made, this should be only the *start* of the information-sharing between consumers and a top-shelf pet food company.

By the way, companies that have their own manufacturing plants should not get a pass on these questions; distant clients may scrutinize a co-packer more thoroughly than a company owner! All companies, whether they own their plants or hire contract manufacturers, should be equally forthcoming about their manufacturing arrangements and the following:

■ **Product formulation** (Who developed the formula, and what are his/her credentials? Can a consumer examine a list of all the product's nutrient levels?)

■ **Ingredients** (Do they source all their own ingredients? Can they provide full traceability on each ingredient used in their products? Are any of their products

imported? Which ones and from where?)

■ **QA processes** (Does the plant have an on-site lab, and what can it test for? Is an outside lab used to confirm these findings and independent tests? How often are samples pulled for testing? How often do your own employees visit your co-packer? Do your plants follow a hazard analysis and critical control point [HACCP] food safety program? Do you use third-party auditors to monitor your co-packers – or even your own facility?)

■ **Available support** (If I feed my dog your food and he gets sick, what support will you be able to provide for me?)

## Our usual business

On the following pages are products that meet not only our long-standing criteria for food selection (see sidebar, below) but also our new standard of transparency. We've listed the makers of all our "approved" products. A few foods that were previously

on our lists did not meet our new standard; these are noted in the chart on page 4.

We've included more information about the products appearing on our "approved foods" list than ever. We've noted which contact information is available on the packaging: Phone, mail, website? We appreciate easy-to-read (not coded) "best by" dates on packaging; we like it even more when the manufacturing date is also provided, so consumers can determine the food's precise degree of freshness. Our charts note which foods include this feature.

We've also discussed the benefits of an expanded "guaranteed analysis" (GA) on a product label. Federal and state laws require only four nutrient levels (minimum levels of protein and fat, maximum levels of fiber and moisture) to be present, but anything that appears in the GA is subject to testing by state feed control officials; failures are subject to disciplinary action. We've noted which "extra" nutrients are included on our approved products' GA.

## WDJ's Dry Dog Food Selection Criteria

Our selection techniques are not secret or beyond any dog owner's abilities. We didn't conduct laboratory testing, or feeding trials, or even taste tests! To generate the list of top-quality foods that appears on the following pages, we simply examined the ingredients listed on the product labels.

■ **We look for foods that contain a lot of high-quality animal proteins.** We'd love manufacturers to disclose the percentage of meat, poultry, or fish in their food, but they rarely do, so we look for foods that appear to have lots of animal protein. Ingredients are listed by weight, so ideally a food will have one or two animal proteins in the first few ingredients.

Understand that whole meat (chicken, beef, lamb, etc.) contains a lot of water weight. If a food list starts out with chicken (rather than chicken meal), and there is no other animal protein listed until 5th or 6th on the list, the food does not actually contain a lot of animal protein. But if it starts out with chicken, and chicken meal (or another named animal meal, such as lamb meal) is number two or three on the list, chances are the product contains an admirable amount of animal protein. Animal proteins tend to be more palatable and bioavailable than plant proteins and offer a wider array of essential and nonessential amino acids.

■ **We reject any food containing meat by-products or poultry by-products.** It's just about impossible to ascertain the quality of by-products used by a food manufacturer. We've spoken to representatives who swore they used only the finest sources of by-products, but when asked, they all say that! The fact is, there is a much wider range of quality in the by-products available for pet food manufacturing than there is for whole meats. Whole meats are expensive, and because

they are expensive, dog food makers insist on their quality to an extent that is unreasonable when buying bargain-basement by-products. So we advise that you just avoid foods that contain by-products.

■ **We reject foods containing fat or protein not identified by species.** "Animal fat" is a euphemism for a low-quality, low-priced mix of fats of uncertain origin. "Meat meal" could be practically anything.

■ **We look for whole grains and vegetables.** That said, some grains and vegetables have valuable constituents that accomplish specific tasks in a dog food formula. We don't get too excited about one vegetable fragment and one grain by-product on the ingredients panel. Our tolerance diminishes in direct proportion to the number of fragments and by-products contained in a food and the prominence on a label; the more there are, and/or the higher they appear on the ingredients list, the lower-quality the food.

■ **We eliminate all foods with artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives** listed on their ingredients panels. A healthy product full of top-quality ingredients shouldn't need non-nutritive additives to make it look or taste better. And plenty of good natural preservatives (such as rosemary extract and vitamins E and C) can be used instead.

■ **We eliminate all foods with added sweeteners.** Dogs, like people, enjoy sweet foods. Like people, they can develop a taste for these nutritionally empty calories.

■ **We look for products containing organic ingredients.**

For the first time, we offered the food companies whose products we included on our “approved dry foods” list to submit a short statement about their products. We invited them to reference the sourcing of their ingredients, the testing and oversight they provide – whatever they wanted, as long as the statement was 150 words or less. That seemed excessively short to them, and just about right to us, until we received 31 statements (and not all of them kept under the limit!). We had to edit and trim them to make them all fit, and even so, these next six pages are looking pretty grey; there wasn’t *any* way we could use the photos we took of each package!

Please note that we did not fact-check or seek to verify the information provided by the companies for these statements; if you have questions, please do contact the companies and quiz them for more detail. By participating in this year’s review, each company has demonstrated an above-average willingness to provide corporate transparency.

Keep in mind, as ever, that the foods on our list are not the only good foods on the market! The list is offered as a starting place and for its value as a comparison to products you may find in your area. Use our list of selection criteria, below, to evaluate the brand of dog food you buy.

Also note that we have presented the foods on our list in alphabetic order by company. **We do not “rank order” foods** or say which ones are “best,” because what’s “best” for every dog is different.

The proof is in the pudding. If your dog does not *thrive* on the food, with a glossy coat, itch-free skin, bright eyes, clear ears, and a happy, alert demeanor, it doesn’t matter whether we like it or not – switch! If your dog’s health or attitude sours under the influence of a certain food, *stop feeding it*, note the ingredients, and find another food that contains different ingredients. Keep notes! Sometimes it takes years to find products that really suit your dog. 🐾

## WDJ’S 2008 APPROVED DRY DOG FOODS

<b>Artemis Pet Foods</b> North Hollywood, CA (800) 282-5876 artemiscompany.com		<b>Fresh Mix</b> is made by Diamond Pet Products, Lathrop, CA. <b>Natural 6 Mix</b> is made by Eagle Pack Pet Prod. in Mishawaka, IN.	
<b>Fresh Mix Adult</b> contains: Chicken, turkey, chicken meal, turkey meal, brown rice, pearled barley, lamb meal, oatmeal . . .			
<b>GA:</b> 23% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.		<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; caloric info; address, website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vitamin E, biotin, Omega 6, Omega 3, DHA.	
<b>Company statement:</b> Artemis is dedicated to providing not only healthy pet food but also promoting a whole-life approach to caring for animals. We believe that achieving a balance of all parts /all aspects of an animal’s life enables them to thrive. Because a healthy life style begins with nutrition, we created a food that balances all the necessary macro- and micro-nutrients, resulting in a food that is greater than the sum of its parts. Our products were developed with the idea that prevention is the best cure. We believe real winners must do more than put slogans on their package. A holistic approach is not just a trend for Artemis, it’s a way of life and the only way to encompass the full spectrum of pet nutrition and well being. Thus a holistic approach to manufacturing pet food gives us a foundation we can be proud of.			

<b>Beowulf Natural Foods</b> Syracuse, NY (800) 219-2558 beowulfs.com		<b>Back to Basics</b> dry dog foods are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.	
<b>Back to Basics Chicken</b> contains: Chicken meal, ground corn, chicken fat, oatmeal, brown rice, dried tomato pomace, dried whole eggs, fish meal (herring) . . .			
<b>GA:</b> 23% protein; 19% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.		<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; caloric info; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6/3 ratio, ash, calcium, phos., magnesium, fat to fatty acid ratio.	
<b>Company statement:</b> For the past 12 years <b>Back to Basics</b> has maintained that the quality of pet food is determined by the quality of its ingredients. That’s why we use only ingredients from USA, human-quality sources – the same ingredients you buy at the store. Our proteins are USDA-certified; our vegetables come from local farmers. Quality improves everything; Back to Basics is one formula for all life stages, 94% digestible and highly palatable. Improvements in energy and condition can be seen almost immediately. Attention to detail and quality sets Back to Basics above the rest. Manufactured at Chenango Valley Pet Foods, one hour from our headquarters in Syracuse, NY. Every run is fully tested; quality control measures are of the highest standard.			

<b>Bench &amp; Field Pet Foods</b> Mishawaka, IN (800) 525-4802 benchandfield.com		<b>Bench &amp; Field</b> dry dog foods are produced by Eagle Pack Pet Products in Mishawaka, IN.	
<b>Original Formula for Active Adult Dogs</b> contains: Pork meal, ground yellow corn, ground brown rice, chicken meal, oatmeal, chicken fat, dried beet pulp, anchovy and sardine meal . . .			
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.		<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; caloric info; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phos.; Vitamins A, D3, E; Omega 6, 3.	
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Bench &amp; Field Holistic Natural</b> Canine Formula is the perfect blend of holistic, natural ingredients, sourced from domestic human grade suppliers. Our chicken sourcing is from USDA-approved processors, and are antibiotic-free with no added hormones. This food includes a bounty of healthful ingredients including carrots (rich in vitamin A); peas (high in vitamin C, thiamine, and fiber); apples, blueberries, and cranberries (wholesome and healthy nutrient sources). Whole grains, human grade egg product, and alfalfa all play a health role. Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids (from flaxseed, menhaden fish oil, purified chicken fat, and fish meal). This is the right choice for any dog, at any life stage, and can be found at Trader Joe’s stores.			

<b>Breeder’s Choice Pet Foods</b> Irwindale, CA (800) 255-4286 breeders-choice.com		<b>Breeder’s Choice</b> foods are made at Breeder’s Choice’s plant in Irwindale, CA.	
<b>Pinnacle Holistic Chicken and Oats</b> contains: Chicken meal, chicken, whole oat flour, tomato pomace, fresh potato, chicken fat, organic quinoa, dehydrated mixed vegetables . . .			
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 15% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture.		<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; caloric info; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3.	
<b>Company statement:</b> Breeder’s Choice has manufactured high quality pet foods you can trust for more than 60 years; we’re so sure of it we offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee. Our <b>AvoDerm Natural Oven-Baked</b> is made with California avocados so your pet can have a healthy coat and skin on the outside and be healthy on the inside. <b>Oven-Baked AvoDerm</b> is made like you make your food, in the oven. This takes a little longer, but we feel the oven baking keeps our healthful ingredients intact while enhancing the taste. We offer <b>Pinnacle</b> for those who favor a holistic approach to good pet health. We focus on complete, sound nutrition, absent allergens or poor ingredients. <b>Health Food For Dogs</b> is a premium food with an all-natural formula containing Omega 6 & 3 fatty acids and three protein sources: chicken, lamb, and fish.			

<b>Burns Pet Nutrition</b> Valparaiso, IN (877) 983-9651 bpn4u.com	<b>Burns</b> dry dog food is produced by Eagle Pack Pet Products in Mishawaka, IN.
<b>Brown Rice and Chicken</b> contains: Whole brown rice, chicken meal, peas, oats, chicken fat, sunflower oil, seaweed, vitamins, minerals.	
<b>GA:</b> 18.5% protein; 7.5% fat; 2.2% fiber; 7% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vitamin A, copper.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Burns Pet Health</b> continues to build its reputation the old fashioned way, one healthy pet at a time. Without resorting to flashy ads, marketing hype, or manipulation of ingredients, Burns is steadfast in its commitment, started almost 10 years ago, of providing the finest foodstuffs available to strengthen and maintain a pet's immune system. After painstaking research Burns avoids additives, preservatives, and fillers. Burns understands that like its human companion pets "are what they eat," that poor quality and inappropriate quantities of ingredients take a toll on the well-being of all living creatures. Burns continues to grow relying entirely upon ingredients from the USA and using health results as its only benchmark of success.	

<b>By Nature</b> , a division of Blue Seal Feeds, Inc. Londonderry, NH (800) 367-2730 bynaturepetfoods.com	<b>By Nature BrightLife</b> dry dog food is made at Blue Seal's plant in Arcade, NY; <b>By Nature Organic</b> dry dog food is made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods, in Sherburne, NY.
<b>BrightLife</b> contains: Chicken meal, lamb meal, grnd. barley, grnd. rice, whole grain oats, chicken fat, dehydrated alfalfa meal, grnd. flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 28% protein; 18% fat; 5% fiber; 11% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; web. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vitamin E; zinc; copper; taurine; manganese.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>By Nature</b> pet foods are formulated using the latest developments in pet nutrition. Our pet food facilities follow strict procedures to ensure our products meet our customers expectations. We demand the same from manufacturers that assist us with production. Strict requirements have been developed for suppliers that provide ingredients for our products. Ingredients must pass numerous standards upon arrival at our manufacturing facilities and must meet all specifications before they are chosen for production purposes. This series of standards and tests include but are not limited to checks for nutrient quality and contamination screening.	

<b>Canidae Corp.</b> San Luis Obispo, CA (800) 398-1600 canidae.com	<b>Canidae</b> dry dog foods are produced at Western Pet Food Company/Canidae Division in Hamlin, TX.
<b>All Life Stages</b> contains: Chicken meal, turkey meal, brown rice, white rice, lamb meal, chicken fat, herring meal, flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 14.5% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Caloric info; best by date, date of manufacture; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3; calcium; phos.; vitamin E; zinc; iron; ascorbic acid; lactobacillus acidophilus; cellulase.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Canidae</b> Pet Foods are produced at Western Pet Food Company/Canidae Division on new, state-of-the-art, automated equipment used solely for the production of our dry formulas. Incoming ingredients are guaranteed to our specs. Along with in-house testing, we send out all ingredients, including vitamin premixes, to an independent lab that tests for up to 250 toxins including melamine, cyanuric acid, and acetaminophen, prior to inclusion. Finished foods are tested by outside laboratories at various times. We retain samples of all finished products to assure definitive factual data, randomly pulled and spot-tested. Our extensive sourcing and internal QC procedures ensure our products meet our standards for safety and quality.	

<b>Canine Caviar Pet Foods</b> Costa Mesa, CA (800) 392-7898 caninecaviar.com	<b>Canine Caviar</b> dry dog foods are manufactured by Pied Piper Pet Food in Hamlin, TX.
<b>Chicken and Pearl Millet</b> contains: Dehydrated chicken, ground pearl millet, whole ground brown rice, chicken fat, chicken, whitefish, sun-cured alfalfa, whole ground flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 38% protein; 20% fat; 4.4% fiber; 8% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Caloric info; best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phosphorus; Omega 6, 3; beta-carotene; L-carnitine; taurine.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Canine Caviar</b> is a raw meat diet available in a kibble form. We use dehydrated meats in most of our diets, providing all of the digestibility and benefits of a raw meat diet without the cost or handling of frozen diets. Additionally, we require batch records from every production run, and pull, test, and keep five samples to ensure the safety and integrity of our products. We are a family-owned and -operated company. Our employees are dedicated to making the best product possible. We offer personal service to everyone including the consumer; all e-mails are answered personally with careful consideration. We do not send automatic responses, ever.	

<b>Castor &amp; Pollux Pet Works</b> Clackamas, OR (800) 875-7518 castorpolluxpet.com	<b>Castor &amp; Pollux</b> foods are made by CJ Foods in Bern, KS.
<b>Organix Adult</b> contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic peas, organic barley, organic brown rice, organic oats, chicken fat, salmon meal...	
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 13% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phos.; Omega 6, 3; glucosamine; chondroitin.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Natural Ultramix</b> is high in animal protein, with chicken, turkey, and chicken meal as top ingredients, and contains real dried fruits & veggies. <b>Organix</b> was one of the first certified organic pet foods, and held to the same standards as organic food for humans. First ingredient is certified organic free-range Rosie chicken. Organix does not contain corn, wheat, glutens, by-products, artificial flavors, colors, preservatives or sweeteners. To ensure product safety, a Castor & Pollux senior executive attends production runs, inspects facilities, and pulls and retains samples from production for analysis. ALL finished product is tested for melamine, cyanuric acid, salmonella, and toxins. This is in addition to inbound ingredient testing.	

<b>Della Natura Commodities</b> Bayside, NY (866) 936-2393 dellanaturapet.com	<b>Wenaewe</b> is made in Uruguay by Erro S.A.
<b>Adult</b> contains: Organic beef, organic brown rice, organic canola seed, organic flaxseed meal, organic sunflower seed, organic buckwheat, organic barley, organic millet . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 20% protein; 12% fat; 5% fiber; 10.5% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; date of manufacture; address, phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vitamin E, biotin, Omega 6, Omega 3, DHA.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Wenaewe</b> is a complete certified organic diet with the highest inclusion of certified organic ingredients. Its main ingredient is free-range, grass-fed organic fresh beef. Wenaewe is made with human-grade, whole, raw, organic ingredients: brown rice, carrots, beets, broccoli, crude oils, and herbs. Organic ingredients have also higher levels desirable fatty acids. Higher levels of antioxidants and nutrients properly nurture and enhance the functioning of every vital system in the pet's body. Wenaewe was formulated by veterinarians and animal nutritionists and has no by-products of any kind. Wenaewe is made in Uruguay by Erro S.A. We don't outsource any of the production. We also control all the ingredients that go into the formula.	

<b>Diamond Pet Products</b> Meta, MO (800) 658-0624 chickensoupforthepetloverssoul.com; premiumedgepetfood.com	<b>Diamond's</b> domestic product lines are made at each of their three facilities: Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC. The latter also services exports to 85 countries.
<b>Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul Adult</b> contains: Chicken, turkey, chicken meal, ocean fish meal, cracked pearl barley, whole grain brown rice, oatmeal, millet . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; caloric info; address, phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> (Chicken Soup food) Sodium; zinc; selenium; vitamin E; Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> Ten formulas, each made with four fresh meats, set <b>Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul</b> apart. Chicken, turkey, duck, and salmon are blended to offer great taste and optimal protein nutrition. Fruits and vegetables provide natural sources of antioxidants. Prebiotics and probiotics support a healthy digestive system, critical to overall good health. All puppy formulas contain DHA, a critical nutrient for the proper development of the brain and vision. Formulas for older pets, large breed puppies and dogs, and overweight dogs ensure that every pet will have its unique needs met. Chicken Soup foods are made by Diamond Pet Foods in its own facilities, as are its <b>Premium Edge</b> brand pet foods, with fresh meats included in all formulas.	

<b>Drs. Foster &amp; Smith</b> Rhineland, WI (800) 826-7206 drsfostersmith.com	<b>Drs. Foster &amp; Smith</b> dry dog foods are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>Chicken and Brown Rice</b> contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, whole barley, rice, rice bran, chicken fat, natural flavor . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Drs. Foster &amp; Smith</b> dry dog foods meet or exceed AAFCO standards, with high quality sources of protein, fatty acids, fiber, carbs, vitamins, and minerals, carefully selected and included in proper proportions for optimal nutrition. Drs. Foster and Smith dry dog foods are formulated by our veterinarians. Highly digestible, hormone- and steroid-free chicken and lamb meat are the main protein sources and are from APHIS-certified facilities. Whole carrots, sweet potatoes, and apples from USDA-certified vendors provide vitamins and antioxidants. Drs. Foster & Smith dog foods do not contain: no wheat gluten, no rice protein concentrate, and no artificial colors or preservatives. We gladly provide a three-page summary description of our quality control procedures to anyone requesting the information.	

<b>Evanger's Dog &amp; Cat Food Co.</b> Wheeling, IL (800) 288-6796 evangersdogfood.com	<b>Evanger's</b> Chicken & Brown Rice is made by Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH. Pheasant and Brown Rice made by Fromm Family Foods in Mequon, WI.
<b>Pheasant and Brown Rice</b> contains: Fresh pheasant, duck meal, brown rice, salmon meal, pearled barley, oatmeal, potato, canola oil. . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10.5% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Evanger's Dog and Cat Food Co.</b> currently has two types of dry food. Evanger's processes much of the raw material for their foods at their plant in Wheeling, Illinois, and then ships to its co-packers for extrusion. Both formulas utilize fresh meat as their primary ingredient. The Chicken and Brown Rice formula is extruded at Ohio Pet Foods and the Pheasant and Brown Rice formula is extruded at Fromm Family Foods. Our dry food formulas are designed to complement Evanger's canned foods, which are manufactured in our own plant for more than 70 years.	

<b>Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance</b> Pacoima, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com	<b>Natural Balance's</b> Organic Formula is made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods, in Sherburne, NY. Its other dry formulas are made by Diamond Pet Foods, in Meta, MO.
<b>Ultra Premium</b> contains: Chicken, brown rice, lamb meal, oatmeal, barley, duck meal, potatoes, carrots . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 23% protein; 13% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> Our formulas, developed by top nutritionists and based on sound scientific principles set our foods apart. Respected veterinarians, breeders, guide dog facilities, and police departments feed <b>Natural Balance</b> . We have built our own testing facility and are the first to post results from every production batch online so consumers can see our food is free of melamine, cyanuric acid, vomitoxin, and aflatoxin. We all love animals, from co-founders Dick Van Patten and Joey Herrick; Frank Koch, Executive VP; and Betsy Martin, Creative Director. Animals are like our kids, an integral part of our families. A pet food is great only if the people at the top have compassion and love for animals, not the usual corporate bottom line.	

<b>Eagle Pack Pet Products, Inc.</b> Mishawaka, IN (800) 255-5959 eaglepack.com	<b>Eagle</b> makes its foods at its own facility in Mishawaka, IN.
<b>Chicken Meal and Rice</b> variety contains: Chicken meal; ground brown rice; ground white rice; oatmeal; chicken fat; pork meal; dried beet pulp; anchovy meal . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> Our company makes <b>Eagle Pack Holistic Select</b> in our own plants in Indiana. Quality control is maintained through ingredient and finished food testing. Said our QC manager, "We test ingredients knowing I am going to be feeding them to my own cats." Based on our quality control programs none of our foods were involved in any recall. Foods tested negative for melamine, cyanuric acid, and acetaminophen. We pride ourselves on ingredient quality. Our formulas are meat-meal based. Antibiotic-free chicken meal, with no added hormones, is 60-70% protein rich. Some claim "real chicken," which is only 15% protein (and 70% water). Lamb meal is from range-fed sheep. Added supplements like probiotics, digestive enzymes, antioxidants contribute to longer lives. Detailed info is on our website.	

<b>Fromm Family Foods</b> Mequon, WI (800) 325-6331 frommfamily.com	<b>Fromm's</b> dry dog food is made at Fromm's own plant in Mequon, WI.
<b>Gold Nutritionals Adult:</b> Duck, chicken meal, chicken, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, Menhaden fish meal, chicken fat, lamb . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 16% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3; four strains of probiotics.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Fromm</b> believes that dogs are more than just pets; they are important family members who play a significant role in our lives. We feel a responsibility to make sure that family pets receive proper nutrition to promote good health and longevity. For over a century, we've dedicated ourselves to exceeding that responsibility through a tradition of quiet innovation. In 1949, we launched the concept of premium pet foods to the public. Fromm is still a family-owned business, selling our pet food one bag at a time. Each recipe is made with fresh meat, offering a different primary source of meat, poultry, or fish to minimize possible allergic reactions and offer variety.	

<b>Healthy Pet Foods, Inc.</b> West Chester, PA (800) 821-4640 healthypetfoodsinc.com	<b>Healthy Pet Foods</b> are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>Showbound Naturals Chicken and Brown Rice</b> contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, whole oats, chicken fat, fish meal, flaxseed oil . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Ash.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Healthy Pet Foods</b> is deeply committed to the advancement of the nutritional health and well-being of dogs and cats. Lick Your Chops, introduced more than 20 years ago, is one of the original lines of natural pet food. Our products are free of by-products, wheat, corn, soy, artificial flavors, colors, and chemical preservatives. Quality chicken and lamb, as well as brown rice and other choice ingredients, promote maximum digestion and nutrient bioavailability. Chenango Valley Pet Foods uses preventative quality systems with continuous improvements to upgrade and maintain quality programs current with industry standards and food safety requirements. Following the 2007 recalls, Chenango bolstered this process from the procurement of raw materials to production and shipping of products.	

<b>Life4K9 Pet Food Corp.</b> Dawsonville, GA (770) 399-3100 life4k9.com	<b>Life4K9</b> has been made by Mountain Country Foods in Okeene, OK. Life4K9 says it will own and operate its own plant in Dalonega, GA, in 2008.
<b>Chicken and Barley</b> contains: Chicken, ground barley, ground oats, whitefish meal, olive oil, dicalcium phosphate, calcium carbonate, tomatoes . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 21% protein; 9% fat; 2.5% fiber; 11% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; web. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>LIFE4K9</b> offers a complete line of oven-baked products that are cooked with US-sourced ingredients, all human-grade ingredients, and all-natural. LIFE4K9 was started out of a kitchen after years of not getting results from extruded brands. LIFE4K9 conquers allergies and stomach issues by not adding grease after it's cooked. The consumer demands real results. It's not just about targeting bad ingredients but it's about a balance of real food and how you cook it. Our kibble is baked at 350 for about 35 minutes. Our dogs are no longer ill and have broken the ongoing cycle of allergies and stomach issues. Effective January 2008 LIFE4K9 will own its own bakery and will not private label. We're in business for our dogs and to offer the consumer real food and real results—after all, our dogs are our LIFE.	

<b>Merrick Pet Care</b> Amarillo, TX (800) 664-7387 merrickpetcare.com	<b>Merrick</b> foods are made by Merrick Pet Care, Inc., in Hereford, TX.
<b>Grammy's Pot Pie</b> contains: Organic chicken, oatmeal, barley, chicken meal, whole brown rice, canola oil, flaxseed, freeze-dried potatoes . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 23% protein; 16% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Caloric info.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Merrick</b> is a family-owned company that makes its pet foods and treats in its U.S. facilities. The philosophy behind our line is simplicity and quality. Simple in that a foundational recipe blend is paired with a unique protein source to make up six different entrees, making for an easier rotation for your dog's diet among various proteins without having to switch brands. Quality in that we use human-grade ingredients like organic chicken to an Idaho classic in Rainbow Trout. We pair these protein sources with fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers. It's a simple diet without the nonsense. We call it "comfort for the soul."	

<b>KLN Enterprises</b> Perham, MN (800) 525-9155 nutrisourcedogfood.com	<b>Natural Planet Organics</b> and <b>NutriSource</b> foods manufactured by Tuffy's Pet Foods/KLN Enterprises, in Perham, MN.
<b>Natural Planet Organics</b> contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, natural flavors, dicalcium phosphate, organic flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 23% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; web. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Selenium; vitamins A, E; Omega 6, 3; glucosamine; chondroitin; ascorbic acid; taurine.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Natural Planet Organics</b> is based on an uncompromising core of organic nutrition, from our organic, free-range chicken to organic vegetables, and certified organic by Oregon Tilth. Our minerals are proteinated to allow better absorption and utilization. We have included prebiotics and probiotics, natural antioxidants, glucosamine, chondroitin, and an excellent Omega 6:3 fatty acid ratio. <b>NutriSource</b> is made with real chicken as the first ingredient; no by-products. It's highly digestible for maximum nutrient absorption; you can feed as much as two-thirds less than other brands, resulting in less waste production. Made by a family-owned company with more than 40 years of experience in preparing superior dog foods.	

<b>Lincoln Biotech</b> East Bend, NC (800) 253-8128 www.lincolnbiootech.com	<b>Zinpro</b> is made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>Zinpro</b> contains: Menhaden fishmeal, brown rice, oatmeal, ground barley, herring meal, oat flour, rice flour, canola oil . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 6, 3, 9; zinc.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Zinpro</b> contains essential organic minerals, along with Omega fatty acids 3, 6, and 9, necessary for proper nutrition. When a dog does not absorb enough zinc, skin and coat may suffer. Skin lesions, poor growth, anorexia, conjunctivitis, keratitis, testicular atrophy, and a lack of proper coat color and luster can be attributed to zinc deficiency. It is not that the dog food is zinc-deficient; it is that the source of minerals like zinc does not get absorbed. Zinpro is absorbed 100 to 300% more efficiently than inorganic zinc compounds. Overfeeding is not harmful; it is not a drug, no side effects, and no toxicity. Zinc also stimulates the immune system, is involved in protein synthesis that affects antibody formation, cell differentiation, and enzyme formation and function. Result usually occurs in 4-6 weeks.	

<b>Natura Pet Products</b> Santa Clara, CA (800) 532-7261 naturapet.com	<b>Karma, California Natural, and Innova</b> are made in Natura's own plant in Fremont, NE.
<b>Karma</b> contains: Organic free-range chicken, organic rice protein, organic kamut, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, organic whole wheat, organic sunflower seed meal . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 20% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> You can trust Natura to produce safe and healthful products; back up our products and claims with humane, non-invasive nutritional science; subject all Natura products to the most rigorous quality testing protocols in the industry; know and validate the origin of ALL ingredients used in our products; constantly innovate and invest in R&D to make sure that <b>Innova, California Natural, and Karma</b> reflect the latest in natural nutritional technology advancements; and to continue to lead in natural, holistic nutrition for companion animals. Natura Pet Products is a small, family-owned business with the mission (since 1992) of making the healthiest pet foods in the world.	

<b>Nature's Variety</b> Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com	<b>Prairie</b> is manufactured by Pied Piper Mills in Hamlin, TX.
<b>Beef Meal &amp; Barley</b> contains: Beef meal, barley, brown rice, oatmeal, chicken fat, grnd. flaxseed, montmorillonite clay, nat. chicken flavor ...	
<b>GA:</b> 26% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; web. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Caloric info.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Nature's Variety</b> is a small, independent pet food company in America's heartland, committed to providing superior nutrition for your companion animals. In order to make our proprietary and innovative diets, we partner with high-quality manufacturers that share our passion for safety and ingredient integrity. Dr. Laura Duclos leads our Quality Assurance team in developing and enforcing our quality control standards – including ingredient specifications, sourcing certifications, testing, and product safety. On-site inspections and continuous monitoring insure our products meet our rigorous Nature's Variety standards. We are proud to offer a variety of nutritious choices for dogs and cats; see our website to learn more about us.	

<b>Old Mother Hubbard</b> Chelmsford, MA (800) 225-0904 oldmotherhubbard.com	<b>Wellness</b> dry dog food is produced in three plants: Hagen Pet Foods, Waverly, NY; CJ Foods in Bern, KS; and American Nutrition, Inc., in Ogden, UT.
<b>Super 5 Mix Chicken</b> contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, oatmeal, ground barley, ground brown rice, tomato pomace, rye flour, canola oil . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vitamin E; Omega 6, 3; beta-carotene; lycopene; taurine.
<b>Company statement:</b> We are "passionately picky" and do whatever it takes to create the healthiest foods for your pets. Unlike most others, we employ our <u>own</u> quality assurance team and do not rely solely on external consultants. Our product development and quality assurance teams include 12 employees, 3 external advisors, and a leading human food auditing firm. We constantly raise the bar in holistic natural nutrition through careful research and in-house development of all formulations. We are known for detailed sourcing and nutritional analysis of specialized ingredients, and active management of manufacturing. All our manufacturing follows HACCP food safety programs, with stringent quality criteria taken from human food production, and protocols such as cleaning equipment between every product run. Our manufacturing partners say we are THE hardest to please – this is because, like you, we won't compromise on your pet's health.	

<b>Petcurean Pet Nutrition</b> Chilliwack, British Columbia (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com	<b>Go! Natural</b> is made by Elmira Pet Products in Elmira, Ontario.
<b>Chicken, Fruit and Vegetables</b> contains: Chicken meal, chicken, whole brown rice, whole white rice, oatmeal, sunflower oil, chicken fat, salmon meal . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Vit. E; Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> Developed by qualified nutritionists, <b>GO! Natural</b> foods are solution-based. Our Chicken Fruit and Vegetable Diet has the best performance, compare the calories! All of our grains, cereals, fruits, and vegetables are sourced in North America except potatoes, which are purchased from Canada and Holland. Independent auditing by NSF-Cook & Thurber and the American Institute of Baking, both organizations used for human food audits. Ingredients are tested prior to receiving for quality assurances including but not limited to nutritional integrity, aflatoxins, microtoxins, and moisture levels.	

<b>Nutro Products, Inc.</b> City of Industry, CA (800) 833-5330 ultraholistic.com	<b>Nutro Ultra</b> dry dog foods are made at Nutro's company-owned facilities in Victorville, CA, and Lebanon, TN.
<b>Adult</b> contains: Chicken meal, whole brown rice, ground rice, lamb meal, rice bran, soybean oil, sunflower oil, poultry fat . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 26% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Linoleic acid; zinc; iodine; selenium; vitamin E; ascorbic acid; DHA; ALA; L-carnitine; beta-carotene; total bacillus.
<b>Company statement:</b> Nutro Products has manufactured pet foods for more than 80 years. <b>Nutro Ultra</b> holistic dry dog foods are made with natural ingredients including three animal proteins (chicken, lamb, and salmon) and whole grains including whole brown rice and oatmeal. Nutro ensures that high quality ingredients are procured from our suppliers; many of whom Nutro has worked with for over a decade. No proteins, grains, or fats from China are qualified for use in any of our products. All Nutro products are tested by independent labs to confirm that no melamine is detected in Nutro's pet foods. We have incorporated this testing into our rigorous Quality Assurance procedures for all finished products and specific ingredients.	

<b>Perfect Health Diet Products</b> Elmsford, NY (800) 743-1502 phdproducts.com	<b>PHD</b> foods are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>PHD Viand</b> contains: Lamb meal, chicken meal, brown rice, whole corn, Naturox, barley, ground whole oats, chicken liver digest . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 26% protein; 16% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> Fresh batches every three weeks. Each raw material is rigorously tested to meet or exceed our standards – above those of the industry. We use low-ash, low-magnesium, #1 & #2 New Zealand lamb meal and American chicken meals, and many chelated micronutrients. <b>PHD</b> has never been involved in any recalls. Each batch is tested throughout manufacturing to ensure the final product meets or exceeds our propriety specs. PHD has been in operation since 1995. We have a vet tech (more than 25 years experience) available to assist clients if needed, as well as a holistic vet on staff for fee-based consultations. Our products can be fed alone, but if you believe that raw meats are essential to greater health, either of our diets (in less quantity) partnered with raw meats reaches another level. Your choice!	

<b>Peton Distributors</b> Langhorne, PA (800) 738-8258 performatrinultra.com	<b>Performatrin Ultra</b> foods are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>Salmon and Olive Oil</b> contains: Salmon, salmon meal, oatmeal, brown rice, pearled barley, chicken meal, whole rice, herring meal . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 28% protein; 8% fat; 6% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Caloric info; best by date; address; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phos.; vitamin E; Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Performatrin Ultra</b> dog foods embrace a holistic approach to pet nutrition, emphasizing fresh, whole ingredients. These products are differentiated by a high ratio of meat (the first two ingredients); rigorous processes to ensure high quality, balanced ingredients; and innovative formulas. Peton Distributors works closely with manufacturer Chenango Valley Pet Foods to select only high quality meats and the freshest produce for these products. Chenango receives its raw ingredients from approved suppliers, selecting North American, where feasible. It tests these ingredients upon receipt and throughout production and has the storage capabilities to safely preserve freshness – maintaining maximum nutrients.	

<b>Precise Pet Products</b> Nacogdoches, TX (888) 477-3247 Precisepet.com	<b>Precise Plus</b> foods are made on production lines dedicated to Precise products by Texas Farm Products in Nacogdoches, TX.
<b>Adult</b> contains: Chicken meal, ground brown rice, chicken, ground whole barley, chicken fat, beet pulp, ground oats, flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 26% protein; 16% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; date of manufacture; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phos.; Omega 6, 3; glucosamine; chondroitin sulfate.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>Precise Plus</b> offers healthy, all-natural products made with fresh wholesome ingredients without the use of corn, wheat, soy, dairy, or grain sorghum, in an AIB-certified factory in Nacogdoches, Texas. Precise Plus is our natural holistic offering with a few additional ingredients, including probiotics for added health benefits. Laboratory analysis is conducted on ingredients before use and on the finished product to meet rigorous standards, ensure safety, and deliver the highest quality products possible. Precise never uses animal by-products or artificial preservatives. Only the highest quality protein sources from real chicken and real lamb in the form of chicken meal and lamb meal are used. Natural vitamins C & E are used as preservatives along with Ester C, a human grade vitamin. Precise Plus Formulas deliver excellent nutrition, palatability, and digestibility.	

<b>Taplow Feeds</b> North Vancouver, BC (800) 658-1166 firstmate.com	<b>FirstMate</b> dry dog food is made at Taplow's own plant outside of Vancouver, British Columbia.
<b>Ultra Premium Naturally Holistic</b> contains: Whole chicken, chicken meal, whole ground brown rice, pearled barley, organic spelt, whole steamed potatoes, herring meal, chicken fat . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 12% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Ash; calcium; phosphorus; calcium/phosphorus ratio.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>FirstMate</b> Potato & Fish Original has been in the market since 1997, and is one of the original grain-free products. The fish that is used in all our products comes from herring, sardines or anchovies. The FirstMate Potato & Fish Original (All Life Stages) has been expanded to include a Puppy food, a Large Breed and a Senior. The Chicken Fat used is rendered protein free and therefore not a possible source of allergies. Our new Potato and Chicken with Blueberries diet also contains only one source of animal protein, traditional chicken meal. This blueberry product contains a minimum of 5% whole blueberries. Blueberries are one of the best sources of antioxidants, compounds that help neutralize free radicals.	

<b>Wysong Corporation</b> Midland, MI (800) 748-0188; wysong.net	<b>Wysong</b> manufactures its dry foods at its own plant in Lake Mills, WI.
<b>Anergen</b> contains: Lamb, ground brown rice, ground oat groats, ground flaxseed, dried yeast, dl-methionine, taurine, lecithin . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 24% protein; 12% fat; 4.5% fiber; 12% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> Founded and still led by Dr. Wysong, <b>Wysong</b> has hundreds of veterinary clinical consultants. For 30 years, tens of thousands of animals through multiple generations attest to the dramatic benefits of our products. We research, develop, and manufacture our own products. We do not market with fads (such as "no corn," "no soy," "human grade," etc.) that distract people from the essentials of optimal feeding: variety (no one food is "100% complete"), appropriate supplementation, archetypal genetic appropriateness, and rawness. Wysong products are meat- and organ-based, enhanced with nutraceuticals, natural micronutrients, enzymes, pro- and prebiotics, and protected with antioxidants, processing, and barrier packaging.	

<b>SmartPak</b> Plymouth, MA (800) 326-0282 smartpak.com	<b>LiveSmart</b> foods are made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
<b>Lamb and Brown Rice</b> contains: Lamb, lamb meal, brown rice, barley, oats, beet pulp, canola oil, whole ground flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 21.5% protein; 11.4% fat; 3.3% fiber; 9% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Caloric info; best by date; address; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Calcium; phos.; vitamin E; Omega 6, 3.
<b>Company statement:</b> <b>LiveSmart</b> dog food represents a breakthrough in quality and freshness. In producing LiveSmart, we start with the kind of ingredients you use in cooking for your own family: human-grade meats such as chicken and lamb, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, tasty herbs. We use all-natural flavors and preservatives; no artificial sweeteners or chemicals. We produce small batches that go straight to your dog's bowl in a fraction of the time most brands spend in the distribution channel. And, LiveSmart dog food is only available in SmartPaks, pre-measured portions of dog food packaged for individual meal-feeding. Best of all, LiveSmart dog food is automatically shipped right to your door every month. No running out of dog food or struggling to find a store that sells super premium dog food in your area. Also, we test every batch of food that goes in SmartPaks to ensure no melamine is detected.	

<b>VeRUS Pet Foods, Inc.</b> Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetfoods.com	<b>VeRUS's</b> foods are made by Texas Farm Products, Nacogdoches, TX, and Eagle Pack Pet Foods, Inc., Mishawaka, IN.
<b>Life Advantage</b> contains: Chicken meal, ground oats, ground brown rice, rice bran, chicken fat, dried beet pulp, suncured alfalfa, flaxseed . . .	
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 12% moisture.	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website. <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> None.
<b>Company statement:</b> Henry, Mike, Gus, Phillip, Francis, Butter, Little, Pinky, Bobby, Bill, and Willie. These are my dogs and cats. I don't just make the food, I feed it. I'm Russell Armstrong, owner of <b>VeRUS</b> Pet Foods, not a corporate bigwig, just someone who loves his dogs and cats like you. There are thousands of foods, but my pets are the only ones I have, so I made VeRUS! Not a ton of marketing, flash, or glitter, just a great food for your pets. I prepare my foods with hormone- and antibiotic-free chicken, lamb, and Omega-3-packed fish; nutrient-dense whole grain oats and brown rice; and organic nutrient sources like kelp, flaxseed, chicory, and alfalfa. Combine with natural antioxidants, chelated minerals, and first-rate manufacturing and you have the best!	



After we were done, it took two trips to bring all the products submitted for our review to the Northwest SPCA in Oroville, California, for donation. Our thanks to the companies that submitted more than necessary for this purpose.

# More Approved Dry Foods

*Products we missed, were late, or were somehow incomplete!*

This is absolutely not an excuse, but do us a favor and look at the incredible accumulation of minute facts about dog foods that appeared in the February issue and in this one; it may have been inevitable that we made a few small mistakes. We apologize for any inconvenience we have caused through the following errors and/or oversights:

■ The section on **Wellness** should have mentioned both Wellness and Wellness Simple Food Solutions; both lines of food are on our “approved dry dog food” list. We also listed Wellness’s physical and website addresses incorrectly; the company is in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, and the website is [wellnesspetfood.com](http://wellnesspetfood.com).

■ **Solid Gold** sent us their materials too late for us to include their products in our “approved dry dog foods” list in the February issue; their product information appears here now.

■ Due to an editing error, we failed to include the information sent to us by **Pet Chef Express** in the same “approved foods” list; their product information is also included here now.

■ We meant to note that a major feature of **SmartPak’s LiveSmart** food is its unique packaging and direct-shipping option. If desired, SmartPak will seal your dog’s food in individually customized daily portion packages; this is for an additional monthly fee of \$6.95 (shipping is free). This way, the food is “just-opened” fresh every day! It also makes it easy to keep your dog on a diet, especially if portion control is a problem with the people who feed the dog in your house.

<b>Solid Gold Health Products for Pets, Inc.</b> El Cajon, CA (800) 364-4863 <a href="http://solidgoldhealth.com">solidgoldhealth.com</a>		<b>Solid Gold’s</b> dry dog foods are made by Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA and Meta, MO
<b>MMillennia Beef and Barley Adult</b> contains: Beef, beef meal, cracked pearled barley, brown rice, millet, rice bran, canola oil, ocean fish meal . . .		
<b>GA:</b> 22% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; website, address <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> DHA	
<b>Company statement:</b> For more than 30 years, <b>Solid Gold</b> has been devoted to developing and producing the healthiest food for your dogs. Using only wholesome, natural ingredients, we have dramatically expanded our dry foods line so that we now have a food perfectly suited for all dogs, from the smallest lap dog to the largest working dog. Our raw ingredients and finished foods undergo rigorous testing at our manufacturing plant and independent laboratories. We are committed to safety and quality for the protection of your pets as well as our own. WDJ-approved foods include MMillennia, Hund-n-Flocken, Holistique Blendz, Just a Wee Bit, and WolfKing.		

<b>Pet Chef Express, Inc.</b> New Westminster, BC (604) 916-2433 <a href="http://petchefexpress.ca">petchefexpress.ca</a>		<b>Pet Chef Express</b> dry dog foods are made by Champion Pet Foods, Ltd. in Morinville, Alberta, Canada
<b>Salmon &amp; Potato</b> contains: Salmon meal, oats, millet, hullless barley, canola oil, salmon oil, carrots, potatoes . . .		
<b>GA:</b> 25% protein; 10% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture	<b>ON THE LABEL:</b> Best by date; address; phone; website <b>EXTRA NUTRIENTS ON GA:</b> Omega 3, 6	
<b>Company statement:</b> Pet Chef Express dry dog foods is committed to making the best pet food in Canada, with all ingredients sourced within Canada and the US. We are different from regular pet foods by both what we include and what we exclude. Our Salmon & Potato blend features wild Pacific salmon meal that accounts for 25% of the recipe, fortified with barley, oats, millet, salmon oil, carrots, potatoes, garlic, flax and eggs to ensure balanced nutrition. We exclude high allergens like wheat and corn, and never use artificial flavours, colors, preservatives, by-products or questionable non-descriptive ingredients like “meat” or “natural flavors.” Please check our website to learn more: <a href="http://www.petchefexpress.ca">www.petchefexpress.ca</a> (note: <b>NOT</b> .com!).		

# Going Against Grain

*Grain-free kibble represents an increasingly popular choice of foods.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Last month's issue contained our annual review of dry dog foods, but with an exception from our usual format: This year, we decided to break out grain-free dry dog foods from the increasingly populated and competitive pack of terrific kibbled products on the market. We did not review them in the February issue, but will discuss grain-free foods at length here.

In 2005, Natura Pet Products was the first pet food company to manufacture and market a grain-free kibble, which was initially called Innova Evo (and is now called simply Evo). The success of the product, in the market and with many of the dogs fed the diet, sparked a proliferation of grain-free foods. We were able to find more than a dozen companies that currently offer one or more grain-free foods that meet our selection criteria.

Grain-free dry foods are still new enough that many dog owners wonder



**There has been an explosion of grain-free dry dog foods in the market. While these products can be highly beneficial for many dogs, be aware that they vary significantly and should be selected to meet each dog's unique nutritional needs.**

## What you can do . . .

- Consider a grain-free diet for any dog you suspect may have an intolerance of or allergy to grains; it's worth a several-month trial!
- Scrutinize the levels of protein, fat, calories, calcium, and phosphorus and select a food that is most appropriate for your dog's age, weight, and energy needs.
- Portion control is particularly important when feeding nutrient-dense foods. Carefully measure the amount of grain-free food you give your dog.



whether grain-free products are healthy for dogs – and how it's even possible to make a dry dog food without grain.

Early pet food manufacturers used grain and grain by-products cast off by the human food manufacturing industry because they were readily available, relatively inexpensive, and functional. The choice wasn't made because dogs needed grain, but because dogs *could* utilize them.

Dogs have no dietary requirement for grains, and are physically not well suited to harvest, chew, and digest them. Biologists who study wild canines argue vociferously about the importance of the grains that are consumed by the dog's prey and are in turn taken in by the dog through consumption of his prey's digestive tract – but most agree that the percentage of grain in the dog's evolutionary diet is tiny.

The fact that the dog will eat grains and can derive benefits from them is less indicative of the suitability of dietary grain

for canines and more of a testament to the dog's long evolutionary history of eating *anything* and benefiting from it.

Plus, laboratory studies have proven that dogs have no dietary requirement for carbohydrates whatsoever; dogs can survive and thrive on diets containing only animal protein and fat.

The last – but not least – impetus for creating grain-free dog foods is the fact that *some* dogs are intolerant of or allergic to cereal grains. For these animals, grain-free foods often produce amazing results, as chronic symptoms of intolerance or allergy go away, and the dogs begin to thrive – perhaps for the first time in their lives.

## Features of grain-free foods

When manufacturing grain-free kibble, whether baked, extruded, or dehydrated, most pet food companies replace grains with other carbohydrate sources; “grain-free” does not mean “carb-free.”

To calculate the percentage of carbohydrates in a food, start with 100, and subtract the percentages of protein, fat, moisture, and ash. The remainder is the carbohydrate content.

The role that carbohydrates play in grain-free dry dog foods varies quite a bit. Some companies have produced foods that are very high in protein and fat, with low levels of carbohydrates. Others have taken a more moderate approach, creating products that are higher in carbohydrates, and with protein and fat levels that more closely resemble the levels found in conventional, grain-filled dry dog foods. A dog owner who is considering a grain-free food has to look at the following to determine which of the products would be most appropriate for her dog:

■ **Amount of protein.** High-protein diets are generally suggested for dogs with high-stress, high-activity lifestyles. Recent studies have suggested that a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet helps fat dogs lose weight more efficiently than higher-carb diets that contain fewer calories. Diets with more moderate levels of high-quality protein are suggested for dogs with kidney disease.

■ **Amount of fat.** Some of these foods contain very high levels of fat. High-fat foods are most appropriate for hard-working dogs, dogs in extremely cold environments, breeding animals, dogs with cancer (who benefit from low-carbohydrate diets), and

“hard keepers” – dogs who are chronically thin. High-fat diets are not appropriate for overweight dogs.

■ **Amount of carbohydrates.** If an owner is trying to feed a moderate protein, low-fat food, the diet will necessarily contain higher levels of carbs. This is a perfectly fine formula for many dogs. Just keep in mind that high-carb diets cause blood sugar fluctuations and insulin resistance – bad for dogs with or prone to diabetes. And dogs with cancer should eat high-fat, low- or no-carb diets (canine cancer cells utilize carbohydrates for growth).

■ **Calcium and phosphorus levels.** Some grain-free diets are very high in these minerals. Generally, the higher the product’s protein – that is, its meat inclusion – the higher its calcium and phosphorus will be. These minerals are among those with AAFCO-recommended maximum levels; high dietary calcium and phosphorus can lower the digestibility of a diet, may create or exacerbate bone abnormalities (especially in puppies and most critically, in large-breed puppies), and potentially inhibit zinc absorption over the long term. We’d recommend avoiding the products with the highest levels of calcium and phosphorus for any puppies.

■ **Ash level.** Ash is essentially what is left over if the food is burned in an incinerator. It is largely comprised of minerals, especially potassium and phosphorus,

with smaller amounts of calcium, iron, magnesium, sodium, and zinc. High ash levels indicate a high mineral content; high phosphorus levels are especially damaging to dogs with kidney disease (but will not harm the kidneys of a healthy dog).

■ **Calories.** Some grain-free diets are very calorie-dense. Large- and giant-breed puppies, in particular, should not be fed high-calorie diets. And portion control is critical when feeding a high-calorie diet to a dog of any age.

## Choices

On the following pages, we’ve highlighted some grain-free dry dog foods that meet our selection criteria for a top-quality food. On pages 16-17, we have identified 12 pet food makers with top-quality grain-free offerings, and we’ve highlighted the ingredients of one food from each company. The foods are presented in alphabetical order of their makers.

On pages 18-19, we delve deeper into the nutrient content of each highlighted food, including the amounts of protein, fat, carbs, calcium, and phosphorus (as well as other nutrients, as you’ll see).

Though each of these products meets our selection criteria, as we have just explained, only you can select the grain-free food that’s appropriate for your dog, using the nutrient values on our charts.

Keep in mind that these foods are not perfect for every dog; some dogs do better on a diet that contains grain!

## WDJ’s Grain-Free Dry Dog Food Selection Criteria

Our selection techniques are not secret or beyond any dog owner’s abilities. We didn’t conduct laboratory testing, feeding trials, or even taste tests! To generate the list of top-quality foods that appears on the following pages, we examined the ingredients listed on the product labels.

■ **We look for foods that contain a lot of high-quality animal proteins.** We’d love manufacturers to disclose the percentage of meat, poultry, or fish in their food, but they rarely do, so we look for foods that appear to have lots of animal protein. Ingredients are listed by weight, so ideally a food will have one or two animal proteins in the first few ingredients.

■ **We reject any food containing meat by-products or poultry by-products.**

■ **We reject foods containing fat or protein not identified by species.** “Animal fat” is a euphemism for a low-quality, low-priced mix of fats of uncertain origin. “Meat meal” could be practically anything.

■ **We look for whole food ingredients.** That said, some fruits, vegetables, legumes, tubers, and other foods have valuable constituents that accomplish specific tasks in a dog food formula. We don’t get too upset about one or two food fragments on the ingredients panel. Our tolerance diminishes in direct proportion to the number of fragments and by-products contained in a food and their position on an ingredients label (the higher an ingredient appears on the ingredients list, the more of it – by weight – there is in the food).

■ **We eliminate all foods with artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives** listed on their ingredients panels. A healthy product full of top-quality ingredients shouldn’t need non-nutritive additives to make it look or taste better. And plenty of good natural preservatives (such as rosemary extract and vitamins E and C) can be used instead.

■ **We eliminate all foods with added sweeteners.** Dogs, like people, enjoy sweet foods. Like people, they can develop a taste for these nutritionally empty calories.

# WDJ'S 2008 APPROVED GRAIN-FREE DRY DOG FOODS

<b>Artemis Pet Foods</b> North Hollywood, CA (800) 282-5876 artemiscompany.com	Grain-free food is <b>Maximal Dog</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Chicken meal, potatoes, chicken fat, chicken, natural chicken flavor, tomato pomace, choline chloride, dried chicory root, kelp, carrots, peas, apples, tomatoes, blueberries, spinach . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> A high-protein, high-fat, relatively low-ash food with relatively high calcium and phosphorus levels.	

<b>Champion Pet Foods</b> Morinville, Alberta (780) 939-6888 championpetfoods.com	Grain-free foods include a whole line of <b>Orijen</b> foods, including Puppy, Puppy Large Breed, Adult (highlighted here), Orijen 6 Fresh Fish, and Senior varieties
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Deboned chicken, chicken meal, turkey meal, russet potato, lake whitefish, chicken fat, sweet potato, whole eggs, turkey, salmon meal, salmon and anchovy oils, salmon, natural chicken flavour, sunflower oil, sun-cured alfalfa . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High in protein, moderately high in fat. Relatively high calcium and phosphorus, and relatively high ash.	

<b>Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance</b> Pacoima, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com	Grain-free foods include <b>Potato &amp; Duck</b> (highlighted), <b>Sweet Potato &amp; Fish</b> , and <b>Sweet Potato &amp; Venison</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Potatoes, duck meal, duck, canola oil, potato fiber, natural flavor, salmon oil, flaxseed, potassium chloride, choline chloride, taurine, lysine, l-carnitine, yucca schidigera, vitamin E supplement . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> A "limited ingredient" food with conventional levels of protein, fat, and ash, and high carb content (for this category of foods).	

<b>Solid Gold Health Products for Pets, Inc.</b> El Cajon, CA (800) 364-4863 solidgoldhealth.com	Grain-free food is <b>Barking at the Moon</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Salmon meal, beef, potatoes, potato protein, canola oil, tomato pomace, natural flavor, salmon oil, choline chloride, taurine, dried chicory root, parsley flakes, pumpkin meal, almond oil, sesame oil . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High protein and fat. High calcium and phosphorus; calcium is over AAFCO maximum. Moderate ash.	



<b>Petcurean Pet Nutrition</b> Chilliwack, British Columbia (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com	Grain-free foods include three varieties of <b>Now!</b> (Puppy, Senior, and Adult, highlighted here), and <b>Go! Natural Grain-Free</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Deboned turkey, potato flour, peas, apples, whole dried egg, pea fiber, tomatoes, potatoes, flaxseed, canola oil, natural flavors, deboned salmon, deboned duck, sun dried alfalfa, coconut oil . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> Moderate protein and fat. Calcium and phosphorus are moderate; ash is relatively low. All animal proteins in Now! are fresh, not rendered. The Go! Natural Grain-Free food is a high-protein, high-fat food that contains turkey, chicken, duck, and salmon meals.	

<b>Canine Caviar Pet Foods</b> Costa Mesa, CA (800) 392-7898 caninecaviar.com	Grain-free food is <b>Venison &amp; Split Pea Adult Dinner</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Venison meal, split peas, canola oil, dried pumpkin, whole ground flaxseed, sun-cured alfalfa, venison tripe, dried beet pulp, coconut oil, borage oil, primrose oil, sun-cured kelp, sodium chloride, lecithin, whole clove garlic . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> A high-protein, high-fat food. Calcium and phosphorus levels are at AAFCO maximums. Ash is relatively low.	

<b>Diamond Pet Products</b> Meta, MO (800) 658-0624 tasteofthewildpetfood.com	Grain-free foods include three varieties of <b>Taste of the Wild</b> , including "High Prairie" (bison and venison, highlighted here), "Pacific Stream" (fish), and "Wetlands" (quail, duck, and turkey).
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Bison, venison, lamb meal, chicken meal, egg product, sweet potatoes, peas, potatoes, canola oil, roasted bison, roasted venison, natural flavor, tomato pomace, ocean fish meal, choline chloride . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High protein and fat, and high levels of calcium and phosphorus. Moderate carb level and ash content, too. Pacific Stream formula has lower protein and fat levels.	

<b>Natura Pet Products</b> Santa Clara, CA (800) 532-7261 naturapet.com	Grain-free foods include <b>Evo</b> (available in large and small "bites" and highlighted here), <b>Evo Red Meat</b> (available in large and "bites"), and <b>Evo Reduced Fat</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Turkey, chicken, turkey meal, chicken meal, potato, duck, herring meal, chicken fat, natural flavors, eggs, apples, tomatoes, potassium chloride, carrots, vitamins . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High in protein and fat, moderate level of carbohydrates. Calcium and phosphorus are above AAFCO's suggested maximums. Ash is moderately high. "Red Meat" varieties are lower in calcium and phosphorus.	

<b>Nature's Variety</b> Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com	Grain-free foods include three varieties of <b>Instinct</b> (Chicken Meal Formula, Rabbit Meal Formula, and Duck Meal & Turkey Meal Formula, highlighted here)
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Duck meal, turkey meal, salmon meal, canola oil, tapioca, tomato pomace, pumpkin seeds, herring meal, alfalfa meal, montmorillonite clay, natural flavor, potassium chloride, brewers yeast, vitamins, peas . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High in protein and fat. Calcium and phosphorus are high; their ratio is at AAFCO's maximum level. (The Rabbit Formula has lower calcium and phosphorus levels.) Ash is moderately high.	



<b>Taplow Feeds</b> North Vancouver, BC (800) 658-1166 firstmate.com	Grain-free foods include <b>FirstMate Potato &amp; Fish</b> , <b>FirstMate Potato &amp; Fish With Blueberries</b> (highlighted here)
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Potato flakes, chicken meal, chicken fat, whole blueberries, dicalcium phosphate, choline chloride, salt, calcium propionate, vitamin C, yucca plant extract, vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin E, vitamin K, thiamin . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> A very simple limited formula with moderate protein and fat, conventional levels of calcium and phosphorus. Conventional carb level and high ash.	

<b>The Honest Kitchen</b> San Diego, CA (619) 544-0018 thehonestkitchen.com	Grain-free foods include <b>Force</b> (highlighted here) and <b>Embark</b>
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Chicken, organic flaxseed, potatoes, celery, sweet potatoes, apples, alfalfa, organic kelp, honey, zucchini, green beans, cabbage, bananas, papayas, yogurt . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> This is an unconventional food with conventional levels of protein, fat, and a relatively (for this category) high level of carbohydrates. This is not a baked or extruded food, but a dehydrated product, made in a human food manufacturing facility (and we've been there!). Force has moderate levels of calcium and phosphorus, and low ash.	

<b>Wellness/ Old Mother Hubbard</b> Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 wellnesspetfood.com	Grain-free foods include <b>CORE</b> , available in three varieties, including "CORE Original," "CORE Reduced Fat," and "CORE Ocean Formula" (highlighted here)
<b>First 15 ingredients:</b> Whitefish, whitefish meal, salmon meal, menhaden fish meal, potatoes, dried ground potato, canola oil, pea fiber, tomato pomace, natural fish flavor, flaxseed, carrots, sweet potatoes, kale, broccoli . . .	
<b>WDJ's comments:</b> High protein, and moderate amounts of fat, carbs, calcium, phosphorus, and ash.	



## An In-Depth Look at Typical Nutrient Levels in Commercial Dog Foods

On the previous pages and above, we've highlighted grain-free foods from 12 companies. Given a smaller field of foods than we feature in our review of conventional dry dog foods (which appears in each February's issue), and given the fact that these companies have taken such disparate approaches to formulating their grain-free products, we decided that now would be a perfect time to discuss the variations in nutrient levels found in pet foods.

As we discussed in detail in "Take it With a Block of Salt," (February 2007), it comes as a surprise to many dog owners that foods that are labeled as "complete and balanced" can actually contain a wide range of nutrient levels. While they *probably* contain at least a minimum of nutrients your dog needs, various "complete and balanced" foods do not provide equal amounts of essential nutrients!

On the following pages, we've charted the nutrient levels contained in each of the products highlighted on the previous pages. Take a look at how different they are – and let this information guide your selection of a product that's most appropriate for your dog.

### Why these nutrients?

In order to sell its products as "complete and balanced" for dogs, pet food makers have to ensure that the products meet certain requirements. The first way they can accomplish this is to formulate the candidate product so that the nutrients it contains fall within parameters developed by a quasi-governmental industry group, the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO).

AAFCO is not an enforcement or regulatory agency. Rather, it is comprised

of feed control officials from each state, who get together to research, discuss, and develop model feed control policies (which are generally adopted, with some exceptions, by the individual states).

Over the decades, AAFCO members have mined facts and conclusions from nutritional studies conducted by industry and university researchers. Their goal has been the ongoing development and refinement of a set of recommendations: the AAFCO Dog and Cat Food Nutrient Profiles. The profiles include values for each of the nutrients currently understood to be essential for maintaining dogs or cats. For most of the nutrients, only a minimum value is offered; maximum "safe" values are known for only a small number of nutrients (mostly minerals, as well as vitamins A, D, and E).

The AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles include values for the following nutrients:

- **Crude protein**, as well as the **10 amino acids** known to be essential for maintaining canine health. (Many studies suggest that dogs would benefit from the addition of a minimum requirement for taurine, but this is still controversial among nutrition experts. Many dog food makers add taurine to their products anyway.)

- **Crude fat**, as well as **linoleic acid**, an Omega 6 fatty acid.

- **Twelve minerals**, including the two most important ones – calcium and phosphorus – which must be present in a specified range of ratios to each other.

- **Eleven vitamins**. (A case can be made for the need to add minimum levels of vi-

tamin K and biotin to the AAFCO profiles. Again, this is still controversial. Many dog food makers add vitamin K and/or biotin to their products.)

The AAFCO nutrient profiles (and our chart on the following pages) are expressed on what's called a "dry matter" (DM) basis, making it possible to accurately compare foods that contain varying amounts of moisture.

Most pet food labels express their contents on an "as fed" basis, which includes the moisture present in the food. To convert an "as fed" value from the label of a dog food bag, divide the value listed by the percentage of the food that is not moisture. For example, say a label reports that a food contains 28% protein and 10% moisture. Divide 28 by 90 (the percentage of the food that is not moisture) and you get 31 – the percentage of protein in the food on a DM basis.

### Other paths to adequacy

A company can also make a claim of nutritional adequacy for its candidate product based on **feeding trials** of the food that are conducted according to AAFCO protocols. In this case, the label will reference this, not the nutrient levels of the food.

Be aware that foods that have met the "feeding trials" standard may *not* meet all of the AAFCO nutrient profiles, and that foods that met the "nutrient levels" standard were not required to pass a feeding trial.

Try not to think about the third method of achieving a "complete and balanced" status. It won't be hard, because you won't see any mention of it on a product label. Referred to as the "family member" rule, it allows a manufacturer to use the "feeding



**With this sort of food, it pays to read the fine print. Some grain-free foods contain very high levels of protein, fat, or minerals, which could prove problematic for certain dogs.**

trial” claim if the maker can demonstrate that a new product bears a “nutritional similarity” to one of its products that has already passed a feeding trial.

For each of the foods we’ve highlighted as “top grain-free dry dog foods,” we’ve charted the values (right) for each of the nutrients in the AAFCO profiles. We’ve noted at the bottom of the columns which foods met the “complete and balanced” nutritional adequacy requirements via the “nutrient levels” standard, and which met the “feeding trials” standard. You may notice that when you see values that lie outside (or close to the edges of) the AAFCO profiles, you’re almost always looking at a food that met the feeding trials standard.

By the way, we gathered the data for this table from the food makers themselves. Any food company ought to be able to produce this information to interested consumers in a snap, though we were dismayed to discover that some companies seemed to have trouble fulfilling our request. This is troubling, because their foods should be *frequently* tested to make sure their formulas are consistently producing the intended nutrient levels.

In contrast, we *hugely* appreciate and applaud companies like Natura Pet Products (maker of Evo), which keeps the complete typical nutrient analysis for each of its foods published on its website.

### Why switching foods is a good idea

We’ve always found it fascinating that many otherwise knowledgeable dog owners and industry professionals (including veterinarians and long-time breeders) are unaware of the fact that different “complete and balanced” dog foods may display *widely* divergent amounts of the nutrients that are essential for their pets’ health.

Most foods have some nutrient levels that are relatively low and others that may be a bit high. Imagine that a dog is given a lifetime diet that is a bit low in some nutrients and a bit high in others. Over time, fed a diet solely comprised of that food, the dog’s body will become a figurative model of those nutrient levels, for better or worse. This is exactly why humans are told to eat a variety of healthy foods – to prevent this very scenario! Now, why would such a feeding plan make sense for canines, but not humans? It doesn’t!

We consider all of the foods mentioned here to be of very high quality – but we wouldn’t want a dog to eat only one of any of these (or any other) food for the rest of his life! 🐾

NUTRIENT	AAFCO DOG FOOD NUTRIENT PROFILES (RECOMMENDED MINIMUMS, MAXIMUMS, EXPRESSED AS DM)	
PROTEIN	18% MIN	
ARGININE	0.51% MIN	
HISTIDINE	0.18% MIN	
ISOLEUCINE	0.37% MIN	
LEUCINE	0.59% MIN	
LYSINE	0.63% MIN	
METHIONINE-CYSTINE	0.43% MIN	
PHENYLALANINE-TYROSINE	0.73% MIN	
THREONINE	0.48% MIN	
TRYPTOPHAN	0.16% MIN	
VALINE	0.39% MIN	
FAT	5.0% MIN	
LINOLEIC ACID	1.0% MIN	
CALCIUM	0.6% MIN; 2.5% MAX	
PHOSPHORUS	0.5% MIN; 1.6% MAX	
CA:PHOS RATIO	1:1 MIN; 2:1 MAX	
POTASSIUM	0.6% MIN	
SODIUM	0.06% MIN	
CHLORIDE	0.09% MIN	
MAGNESIUM	.04% MIN; 0.3% MAX	
IRON	80 MG/KG MIN; 3,000 MG/KG MAX	
COPPER	7.3 MG/KG MIN; 250 MG/KG MAX	
MANGANESE	5.0 MG/KG MIN	
ZINC	120 MG/KG MIN; 1,000 MG/KG MAX	
IODINE	1.5 MG/KG MIN; 50 MG/KG MAX	
SELENIUM	0.11 MG/KG MIN; 2.0 MG/KG MAX	
VITAMIN A	5,000 IU/KG MIN; 250,000 IU/KG MAX	
VITAMIN D	500 IU/KG MIN; 5,000 IU/KG MAX	
VITAMIN E	50 IU/KG MIN; 1,000 IU/KG MAX	
THIAMINE (B1)	1.0 MG/KG MIN	
RIBOFLAVIN (B2)	2.2 MG/KG MIN	
PANTOTHENIC ACID (B5)	10.0 MG/KG MIN	
NIACIN (B3)	11.4 MG/KG MIN	
PYRIDOXINE (B6)	1.0 MG/KG MIN	
FOLIC ACID	0.18 MG/KG MIN	
CYANOCOBALAMIN (B12)	22.0 MICROGRAMS/KG MIN	
CHOLINE	1.2 GRAMS/KG MIN	
CARBS	(NO AAFCO REQUIREMENT)	
ASH	(NO AAFCO REQUIREMENT)	
FEEDING TRIAL OR NUTRIENT LEVELS?		

	Artemis' Maximal Dog	Canine Cavalier	Champion's Orijen Adult	Diamond's Taste of the Wild, High Prairie	Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance	Natura's Evo	Nature's Variety's Instinct, Duck	Petcarean's Now! Adult	Solid Gold's Barking at the Moon	Taplow's FirstMate Potato, Chicken	The Honest Kitchen's Force	Wellness' CORE Ocean
	47.1	41.3	46.7	36.7	23.3	48.0	38.9	28.8	45.1	25.0	21.9	38.2
	2.70	2.60	3.56	2.11	0.94	3.52	2.64	1.27	2.59	1.60	1.37	2.40
	1.00	0.95	1.22	0.81	0.48	0.94	0.87	0.52	1.00	0.48	0.52	0.84
	1.70	1.34	2.00	1.32	0.71	1.91	1.36	1.17	1.61	0.85	0.80	1.58
	3.30	2.35	2.22	2.57	1.46	3.32	1.60	1.98	3.15	1.59	2.00	2.61
	2.20	1.67	2.00	1.74	0.99	3.18	2.40	1.55	2.13	1.32	1.19	2.73
	1.70	0.83	1.67	1.30	0.96	1.54	1.21	0.75	1.59	0.88	0.77	1.31
	3.10	1.29	1.78	2.42	0.82	3.43	2.43	1.17	2.97	0.96	1.41	2.81
	1.70	2.43	1.96	1.34	0.78	1.94	1.56	1.13	1.65	0.87	1.04	1.56
	0.40	0.26	1.96	0.32	0.22	0.47	0.20	0.31	0.40	0.23	0.21	0.43
	2.10	1.67	2.22	1.66	0.86	2.31	1.77	1.34	2.03	1.10	0.87	1.96
	24.0	21.7	17.8	19.7	11.1	24.7	24.4	17.6	22.3	15.0	14.6	16.5
	3.2	4.6	2.2	2.8	2.1	4.7	3.4	3.0	3.8	2.9	2.1	2.4
	2.0	2.7	2.0	2.3	1.5	3.4	2.5	1.4	2.6	1.0	1.8	2.0
	1.3	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.0	2.0	1.3	0.9	1.7	0.6	1.1	1.4
	1.5:1	1.6:1	1.3:1	1.5:1	1.5:1	1.7:1	1.9:1	1.5:1	1.5:1	1.7:1	1.6:1	1.4:1
	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.9	0.5	2.8	0.9
	0.24	0.41	0.28	0.31	0.23	0.42	0.54	0.43	0.26	0.12	0.28	0.54
	0.44	0.85	0.67	0.49	0.57	0.74	1.27	0.89	0.49	0.22	0.09	0.37
	0.13	0.47	0.10	0.15	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.21	0.13	0.11	0.17
	175	261	267	175	112	262	320	478	175	221	133	310
	16.0	18.1	25.6	16.4	11.3	20.0	30.2	23.9	16.0	14.2	7.7	22.5
	27.0	68.5	28.9	27.3	34.5	23.3	21.7	29.4	27.0	20.9	83.2	26.3
	175	280	250	175	224	251	245	163	175	157	122	250
	2.7	6.0	5.6	2.7	2.1	4.2	20.9	5.4	2.7	1.6	1.5	3.0
	0.44	0.80	0.42	0.44	0.36	1.00	0.83	0.22	0.44	0.41	0.18	0.30
	18,033	25,093	44,444	18,033	14,328	26,968	25,863	15,217	16,393	5,455	72,530	39,779
	874	1,928	2,111	874	1,222	2,629	2,831	1,630	874	545	573	2,036
	328	95	500	328	116	333	173	239	328	60	60	683
	34.0	8.7	72.2	33.9	4.0	5.7	25.2	13.0	34.0	4.3	2.5	3.4
	6.6	10.0	57.8	6.6	5.7	5.7	15.1	10.9	6.6	8.1	4.1	6.9
	20.8	19.5	50.0	20.8	23.5	24.4	32.1	26.1	20.8	17.8	16.0	28.9
	55.0	68.6	261.1	54.6	24.8	44.4	124.8	59.8	55.0	51.8	76.7	48.5
	10.9	4.8	40.0	10.9	2.7	5.7	7.4	8.7	10.9	1.0	8.7	6.0
	1.60	0.62	3.89	1.64	0.34	0.89	1.01	2.7	1.60	0.25	29.45	0.67
	120	201	44	120	33	11	7.4	140	120	94	60	50
	2.6	3.7	4.4	2.6	2.2	4.6	4.2	2.0	2.6	2.9	1.6	2.2
	17.9%	26.1%	24.4%	30.5%	53.9%	16.1%	22.8%	42.1%	19.5%	40.0%	52.8%	29.1%
	8%	7%	7.8%	10%	8.3%	12.2%	13.9.%	8%	11%	16%	5%	9%
	FT	NL	NL	NL	FT	NL	NL	NL	FT	NL	NL	NL