

Pet Foods

Revised 2018

Storage Conditions

Cool, Dry Place

	Temperature	Duration
Wet- canned and pouch	75°F (23.9°C)	18 months
	40°F (4.4°C)	2 years
Semi-moist	75°F (23.9°C)	12 months
	40°F (4.4°C)	18 months
Dry	75°F (23.9°C)	18 months
	40°F (4.4°C)	2 years

There are now an estimated 67 million dogs, 83.9 million cats and many other pets in the United States, which subsist almost exclusively on specially prepared nutritious pet foods. Unlike human food, pet foods have been labeled for their nutritive value for many years. This is important because most commercial pet foods are intended to be the sole diet of the pet. Contrary to the advertising, pets will thrive on practically all properly formulated foods and prefer not necessarily the all-meat, or specially flavored foods, but, like humans, prefer the food to which they are accustomed. Variety in texture and flavor is not essential in the food for a pet.

Although there are more similarities than differences in the nutrient requirements of dogs and humans, on a pound for pound basis dogs require more food. Thus, an active, grown, middle-sized dog weighing 20-30 pounds requires half as many calories as an active human adult. The dog's protein requirements are fully equal to those of a human 8 times his weight, and while some of the vitamins, such as vitamin C, are not required, others like Niacin, the B vitamins and minerals are required at higher levels.

For many years pet foods were available only in the wet, specifically canned and pouch, and dry forms, but semi-moist dog foods made their appearance in the early 70's. These foods retain their moist-like appearance by replacement of part of the water with a viscous substance like propylene glycol, although not allowed in cat food, which reduces water activity to the point where there is little or no bacterial growth so that the food does not need to be heat processed or sterilized. Mold activity may be arrested by the addition of mold inhibitors, such as sorbates or propionates. Thus, from the standpoint of spoilage

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by microorganisms, pet foods, whether canned, pouched, dry, or semi-moist, do not require refrigeration as long as the integrity of the container remains undamaged.

Nutrient losses, however, do occur in the same manner as in the ingredients from which the pet foods are produced. Furthermore, sensory quality is a major consideration, but those values may not be the same as for human food, while nutrition quality is even more important than in human food, because so many pets subsist entirely on the one pet food they are fed. Thus, to maintain nutrient quality of pet foods, whether they are canned, semi-moist, or dry, they should be stored at ambient temperatures but not extreme temperatures. All pet foods are usually packaged adequately so that relative humidity is not a factor.

Pet food ingredients are frequently by-products or trimmings accumulated during processing of primary products. Such materials should be collected and handled under safe and sanitary conditions, as if they were intended for human consumption. Animal products particularly should be handled and stored at 40°F (4.4°C) or lower, and if stored for more than just a few days, they should be frozen until used.

Storage with Human Food

Finished pet food can be handled the same way and stored in the same warehouse as human food. However, there are US federal regulations covering the handling of inedible meat. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a Sanitation Directive, effective January 25, 2000, to replace Regulation 3142, Warehouse Handling and Storage of Inedible Meat. The new directive states that meat for pet food must be separated by time and space from food for human consumption. For example, inedible meat must be handled to avoid cross contamination and separated by sufficient space to avoid contamination. These regulations apply to all federally inspected establishments, but some regulations may be waived by the federal inspector in certain circumstances. From the Good Manufacturing Practices and public relations standpoint, it would be wise to adhere to these regulations in a non-federally inspected establishment, such as a warehouse, for sanitary and health reasons.

All meat to be used for pet food must be denatured, that is, treated with charcoal or USDA approved dyes to prevent it from getting into the human food chain. Of course, if the pet food is giving off any odors, consider the risk of odor transfer to other products in the warehouse.

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