

HOW TO CHOOSE A COMMERCIAL DOG FOOD

Rather than just give you a list of brands, here are some general guidelines to follow when considering a dog food. I am not a canine nutritionist however if you own a dog it is important to research what you are feeding them. Like us, we perform better with the right fuel!

1. Read the list of ingredients.
2. The first named ingredient is the largest, so that is quite important. The first-named ingredient should be a named meat or fish.
3. Avoid anything that contains "meat and animal derivatives". Essentially, this is anything left on an animal carcass once all the good stuff (actual meat and offal) has been removed. You won't know from which animal (can differ from batch to batch) so you won't know which meat you are actually feeding your dog. Nor will you know what parts were used: could be feathers, bone, could even be tumours (sorry but it is possible!), all nicely pulverised and processed and added to the food.
4. Avoid anything that contains "cereals". Aside from the fact that cereals are fillers (cheap ingredients with very little or no nutritional value used to bulk out the food), you won't even know whether it's wheat, maize, oats, rice etc. This could be a problem if your dog reacts to the food as you won't know what was in it.
5. As mentioned above, cereals (grains) in dog food are fillers. They do contain some protein but a dog's system is not able to digest/assimilate the protein as well as it can from meat, fish and eggs, so even if the food appears to have a decent protein level, it may not all be "available" to the dog. This is why it's better to have a named meat or fish as the main ingredient of the food.
6. Even if cereals in the food are named individually, it's still best to buy a food that contains as few as possible (preferably none). Please note that rice is a cereal too. All cereals (including rice) are quite common allergens - potentially causing skin, digestive and other issues. They also tend to make the dog produce more poo! Grain-free food is more expensive, but you tend to need to feed less as it's purer.

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7. Avoid any dog food that contains sugars, artificial colours or artificial preservatives. Look for natural preservatives, which are usually made from Vitamins C or E (e.g. tocopherol, ascorbate).

8. Be aware that a fair number of dogs cannot tolerate chicken well, even though it is in many puppy food and "sensitive" adult dog foods.

9. Read the ingredients.

This is a general fact sheet based around dog food ingredients. As with many owners, it is up to you what you feed your dog dependant on food availability and cost. But if your dog seems itchy, scratchy or sore in certain areas or has irritated skin, sensitive ears, hyper aroused or other behaviours present – never dismiss food as a potential trigger to a problem.

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