How to Read a Pet Food Label

Guaranteed Analysis • AAFCO Statement • First 5 Ingredients & Dry-Matter Math

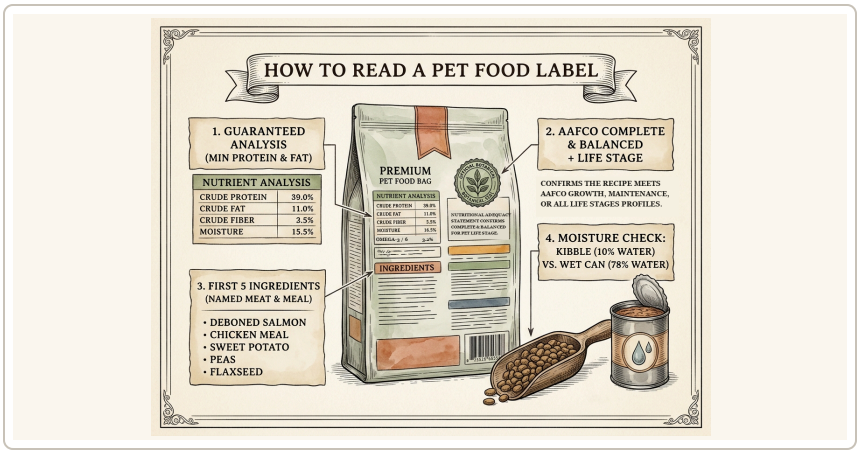
The Quick Version: You don't need a nutrition degree to pick a great dog or cat food — just flip the bag or can over and check **three boxes on the back**: the **Guaranteed Analysis** (protein, fat, fiber, moisture), the **AAFCO Adequacy Statement** (complete meal vs. topper, plus life stage), and the **First 5 Ingredients by weight**. And remember: at all six of our stores, your phone number tracks your **Frequent Buyer Program** (buy 10–12 bags of most brands and the next bag of the same size is free!).



APPLIES TO	CHECK #1	CHECK #2	CHECK #3	FREQUENT BUYER
Dogs & Cats (All Ages)	**AAFCO Complete & Balanced**	**Life Stage (Growth vs. Adult)**	**First 5 Ingredients**	**Buy 10–12 Bags → Next Free!**

1. The 3 Label Boxes That Tell You the Whole Story

NEVER GO BY THE FRONT PICTURE ALONE — FLIP THE BAG OVER AND CHECK THESE 3 SPOTS TOGETHER!



1. Guaranteed Analysis
Min Crude Protein %, Min Fat %, Max Fiber %, Max Moisture % — **As-Fed %**

2. AAFCO Adequacy Line
'Complete & Balanced' (Meal) vs. 'Intermittent/Supplemental' (Topper) — **Meal vs. Topper**

3. AAFCO Life Stage
Growth (Puppies/Kittens), Maintenance (Adult), or All Life Stages — **Match Stage**

4. First 5 Ingredients
Listed by weight before cooking; check for named meat & named meal — **Heaviest First**

5. Classic vs. New Box
2023 'Pet Nutrition Facts' box adds calories per cup & dietary fiber — **Both Formats**

2. Two Ways That Work — Pick What Fits Your Home

SHORT & SWEET: BOTH OPTIONS WORK GREAT

Named Meat vs. Named Meal: The Water Argument

Ingredients are weighed **before cooking**, which is why understanding fresh meat vs. meal matters:

NAMED FRESH MEAT ('CHICKEN', 'DEBONED SALMON', 'BEEF')
Fresh meat still carries its natural water when weighed before cooking, so it weighs heavily at the top of the ingredient list and provides clean, whole-muscle protein.

NAMED MEAT MEAL ('CHICKEN MEAL', 'LAMB MEAL', 'SALMON MEAL')
Under AAFCO definitions, a named meal is cooked down with water and fat removed, then ground — so a named meal in slot #2 or #3 contributes concentrated protein once water is gone!

What Product Names Legally Mean (AAFCO's 95%/25%/3% Rules)

AAFCO strictly regulates how an ingredient can be used in the name on the front of a bag or can:

'BEEF DOG FOOD' (95%+) VS. 'CHICKEN DINNER / ENTRÉE / FORMULA' (25%+)
'Beef Dog Food' means beef is at least **95%** of the product (not counting added water). **'Dinner', 'Entrée', 'Platter', or 'Formula'** means at least **25%**.

'WITH CHEESE' (3%+) VS. 'CHICKEN FLAVOR' (TRACE FLAVOR ONLY)
'With ___' requires at least **3%** of that ingredient, while **'___ Flavor'** only means a listed ingredient gives the flavor.

How to Compare a Wet Can With a Bag of Kibble (Dry-Matter Basis)

Never compare the raw protein % on a wet can directly with a dry kibble bag — water skews the number!

STEP 1: SUBTRACT MOISTURE % FROM 100 TO FIND 'DRY MATTER'
A kibble at **10% moisture** is **90% dry matter**. A wet can at **78% moisture** is **22% dry matter**.

STEP 2: DIVIDE PROTEIN % BY DRY MATTER % (× 100)
A wet can with **10% protein** and 78% moisture is actually **45% protein on a dry-matter basis** (10 ÷ 22 × 100) — often higher in protein than a 28% protein kibble (31% dry-matter)!

3. Flagship Brands We Carry & How Each Maker Describes Its Line

WE QUOTE AAFCO & THE MAKER'S OWN LABEL — LET'S FLIP THE BAG OVER TOGETHER ON THE FLOOR!

Meat-First & WholePrey Acana, Orijen & Nulo	**Acana** leads with 'fresh or raw meat as our first two ingredients'; **Orijen** builds around 'WholePrey Nutrition'; **Nulo** focuses on 'High Animal-Based Protein to support lean muscles.'
Gut-Focused & Family-Owned NutriSource, Fromm & Farmina N&D	**NutriSource** includes its 'Good 4 Life' gut-support system; **Fromm** is a 5th-generation Wisconsin family maker (since 1904); **Farmina N&D** ('Natural & Delicious') highlights a 'Low Glycemic Index' and natural antioxidants.
Simple, Traceable & Unique Proteins FirstMate, PureVita, Zignature, Taste of the Wild & Open Farm	**FirstMate** ('The Best Nutrition is Simple'), **PureVita** ('Limited ingredients, single-source proteins'), **Zignature** ('formulated without grain or chicken'), and **Open Farm** ('100% traceable').

How to Store Kibble & Wet Food So It Stays Fresh:

Keep Original Kibble Bag
Store kibble inside its original barrier bag (squeeze air out, clip shut, & drop the whole bag into your bin!)

Why Keep the Bag?
Pouring loose kibble into plastic tubs oxidizes fats — plus the bag has the lot code & best-by date

Opened Wet Cans
Cover opened cans/trays immediately and refrigerate; follow the maker's fridge day limit

Vet & Rx Rule
We carry OTC vet-formulated foods, never prescription diets (for Rx or diagnosed conditions, follow your vet!)

When to Call Your Vet First: Choosing an everyday food, life-stage switch, or portion check is something we help with right here! Always see your veterinarian first if your pet has **signs of illness** (vomiting, blood, not eating, open sores, trouble breathing), a **diagnosed condition or prescription diet**, or takes **medications that could interact**.

4. Tips, Tricks & Big No-Nos from Our Pet Nutrition Team

REAL-WORLD HABITS THAT KEEP THEM THRIVING

Formulated vs. Feeding-Trial Tested
Look at the AAFCO sentence: 'formulated to meet' means built to AAFCO nutrient profiles; 'animal feeding tests substantiate' means fed in AAFCO trials.

Check 'Complete' vs. 'Supplemental'
If a can or pouch says 'intended for intermittent or supplemental feeding only,' it's a delicious topper or mixer — not a standalone daily diet!

Frequent Buyer Program at All 6 Stores
Just give your phone number at the register — no punch cards to lose! Buy 10 to 12 bags of most food brands and your next bag of the same size is free.

Special Requests Welcome
Don't see the exact recipe or bag size your pet eats on our shelf today? Ask at the counter — we log special requests in our Command Center with zero deposit and call you when it's in!

5. Grab-and-Go Setup Checklist

ASK US ON THE FLOOR — WE'LL HELP YOU MATCH EVERYTHING!

WHAT TO BRING OR CHECK IN STORE

- [ ] Your Pet's Current Food Brand & Recipe Name (or Photo of the Bag)
- [ ] Your Pet's Age, Current Weight & Activity Level
- [ ] List of Any Current Treats, Chews & Table Scraps
- [ ] Any Proteins Your Pet Is Avoiding

LABEL CHECK ON YOUR NEW BAG

- [ ] AAFCO 'Complete and Balanced' Statement Verified
- [ ] Correct Life Stage Verified (Growth, Adult Maintenance, or All Life Stages)
- [ ] First 5 Ingredients & Primary Named Protein Checked
- [ ] Maker's Transition & Daily Feeding Chart Located on Back of Bag

HOME STORAGE & BOWL GEAR

- [ ] Heavy-Duty Bag Clip + Airtight Bin (Keep Food Inside Original Bag!)
- [ ] Standard 8 oz Measuring Cup or Digital Kitchen Gram Scale
- [ ] Stainless Steel or Ceramic Food & Water Bowls (Washed Daily)

A Quick Note from Our Team — Keep Learning & Ask Us Anytime!

The quick version: there's more than one right way to feed a healthy, thriving dog or cat! Flip the bag over with our crew anytime — we're happy to check the Guaranteed Analysis, AAFCO life-stage statement, and first five ingredients with you for **every single meal** — use these two pages as your

MY PET'S FOOD NOTES

Pet Name & Age: _____

Current Brand & Protein: _____