Cat Food

**Introduction**

One of the more obvious things about owning a cat is that the cat will be in constant need of food and water. However, there are a few topics worth discussing related to feeding your new friend, such as choosing the right cat food, cat treats, and maybe even problems with getting your cat to eat.

**Cat Food**

Providing the appropriate amount of the right type of cat food can support the health and happiness of your cat. A cat’s general health can be elevated and maintained with the correct diet. There are many options when it comes to buying cat food and you need to keep the following things in mind.

Cat Food Choices

At the most basic level, there is a decision to be made about whether to feed your cat dry cat food (usually comes in a bag) or canned (wet) cat food. There are pros and cons related to both types of food. Dry cat food is generally less expensive, more convenient, and can help with dental health. Although perfectly acceptable as a source of food, cats tend to need more animal-based proteins than is found in dry cat food. Another downside to dry cat food is that it does not provide any source of water that cats would usually get from their hunted prey. With an all dry food diet, cats MUST have an adequate supply of clean water at all times.

Canned cat food can provide the cat with a more balanced diet and also provide them with more of their required water intake. However, canned cat food requires more attention than dry food because the food requires refrigeration after being out of the can for a day or so. With a canned cat food diet, the owner will need to also consider the cat’s dental health and provide the cat with harder cat treats to prevent plaque buildup.

A diet that consists of both wet and dry cat food is extremely healthy for an indoor cat. Indoor/outdoor cats or completely outdoor cats can be just as healthy off of a heavier dry food diet because they can hunt for prey while outdoors. In either case, it is important to remember to keep their health, nutrition, dental health, and hydration in mind when deciding what to feed your cat. It is also important to remember to consult your veterinarian when deciding on cat food.

Food for Kittens

Kittens require a different type of cat food that will support their growth and development. They need extra protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals to get the right start in life.  The extra protein is needed for growth and development of strong muscles and supporting tissue.  Minerals, of course, are also needed to aid in the development of strong teeth and bones.

If you are adopting a kitten, always remember to ask about the kitten’s diet before heading home. If you have to switch the kitten’s diet, it is important to remember that you must gradually change their diet to prevent them from having an upset stomach.

Special Foods

There are various attributes and conditions of cats that should also be considered when deciding on their diet. For example, similar to kittens, senior cats require a different diet that is well balanced and contained less protein. They generally need a diet that can easily be absorbed by an aging system. Cats with urinary problems, excessive hairballs, weight issues, and food allergies will also require special care when it comes to their diet. Again, consulting with your veterinarian is an important part of keeping your cat healthy and happy.

Another option related to dry cat food is that some brands provide dental health varieties that promote a cat’s dental health. Although these food options may assist in keep up your cat’s dental health, they are not an alternative to regular veterinarian cleanings and brushings.

Cat Treats

Cat treats are commonly given to cats as well. The most important thing to remember with cat treats is that they should not be provided in excess to your cat. A cat’s diet should mostly come from high-quality, nutritionally complete cat food.

**Dos and Don’ts**

Here are a few helpful reminders when thinking about feeding your cat…

Dos

* Keep the cat’s health, nutrition, dental health, and hydration in mind
* Choose the cat food that is most appropriate for your cat’s age and health
* Provide cats with an adequate supply of clean water
* Consult your veterinarian

Don’ts

* Do not place the cat food and water near the litter box
* Do not give your cat an excessive number of cat treats
* Do not quickly change a cat’s diet

**Additional Resources**

* <http://pets.webmd.com/cats/guide/diet-nutrition>
* <http://www.cathealth.com/FeedNutrit.htm>