



# Consumer Confusion on Pet Food Labels and How We Can Fix It

Jim Barritt  
NGFA PFI Joint Conference  
September 30, 2015





# Pet Food Labeling

– Consumer Discussion Groups –  
Conducted June 2013

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS



# PET FOOD LABELING SUMMARY



**NO ONE** reads the back of pet food labels

...they are  
confusing and  
overwhelming



If they do, they are only looking at...

**2-3** first ingredients

**%** of protein & possibly fat



servicing sizes  
(with new brands)



Improve the back labeling by :

- ✓ Simplifying language
- ✓ Streamlining information
- ✓ Connecting related pieces



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# INGREDIENTS

## Ingredients

(Current)

### INGREDIENTS:

CHICKEN, CHICKEN BY-PRODUCT MEAL (SOURCE OF GLUCOSAMINE AND CHONDROITIN SULFATE), BREWERS RICE, GROUND BARLEY, GROUND SORGHUM, PORK MEAT & BONE MEAL, ANIMAL FAT (PRESERVED WITH MIXED TOCOPHEROLS), PEAS, EGG PRODUCT, NATURAL FLAVOR, OATS, SALT, DRIED APPLES, DRIED CRANBERRIES, DRIED CARROTS, POTASSIUM CHLORIDE, INULIN (A PREBIOTIC), CHOLINE CHLORIDE, MIXED TOCOPHEROLS (A PRESERVATIVE), MINERALS (ZINC SULFATE, FERROUS SULFATE, ZINC OXIDE, COPPER SULFATE, MANGANESE OXIDE, SODIUM SELENITE, CALCIUM IODATE, COBALT CARBONATE, VITAMINS (VITAMIN E SUPPLEMENT, VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENT, BIOTIN, D-CALCIUM PANTOTHENATE, VITAMIN B-12 SUPPLEMENT, THAIMIN MONONITRATE, PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE, MENDIONE SODIUM BISULFITE COMPLEX (SOURCE OF VITAMIN K ACTIVITY), RIBOFLAVIN SUPPLEMENT, FOLIC ACID, NIACIN, VITAMIN D3 SUPPLEMENT).

The current ingredients list is avoided because it:

**Is too long** – too many ingredients

**Looks cluttered** – everything seems to run together

**Has too many unfamiliar terms** – confusing/not understood

Even “label readers” only look at the ingredients list:

For “real” **meat/protein among the first few items** listed

When there is an **allergy**, or

When a **vet recommends** avoiding a particular ingredient

An alternative ingredient list should be more manageable and understandable:

- ✓ **Categorize** ingredients
- ✓ **Clarify** what ingredients are included
- ✓ **State the benefits** of key ingredients
- ✓ **Be connected to other areas** of the package label, such as feeding guidelines and/or guaranteed analysis

### INGREDIENTS:

CHICKEN, CHICKEN BY PRODUCT MEAL, BREWERS RICE, GROUND BARLEY, GROUND SORGHUM, MEAT & BONE MEAL (PORK OR BEEF), ANIMAL FAT

**CONTAINS LESS THAN 3% OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:**  
OATS, DRIED APPLES, DRIED CRANBERRIES, DRIED CARROTS, DRIED PEAS, NATURAL FLAVOR, SALT, INULIN, BHA/BHT

**VITAMINS** (VITAMIN E SUPPLEMENT, VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENT, BIOTIN, D-CALCIUM PANTOTHENATE, VITAMIN B-12 SUPPLEMENT, THAIMIN MONONITRATE, PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE, MENDIONE SODIUM BISULFITE COMPLEX (SOURCE OF VITAMIN K ACTIVITY), RIBOFLAVIN SUPPLEMENT, FOLIC ACID, NIACIN, VITAMIN D3 SUPPLEMENT)

**MINERALS** (ZINC SULFATE, FERROUS SULFATE, ZINC OXIDE, COPPER SULFATE, MANGANESE OXIDE, SODIUM SELENITE, CALCIUM IODATE, COBALT CARBONATE)



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# GUARANTEED ANALYSIS

Pet owners do not understand how to read the current guaranteed analysis.

**Guaranteed analysis:** seems too scientific, but it isn't clear "who guaranteed it"

**Maximum/minimum:** confusing/not intuitive

**Percentages and Kg notations:** What do these mean – amount in a serving, a cup, amount required per day for the pet? And how much of these ingredients do pets actually need?

**Crude:** strong negative connotation

**Non-required (\*'d) ingredients:** makes pet owners question why these ingredients are present

Pet owners would prefer a format they are familiar with, such as a "Nutrition Facts" label.

## Nutrition Facts

NUTRITION FACTS	
Amount per serving	
CALORIES	374 per cup
PROTEIN	26.5%
FAT	15.5%
DIETARY FIBER	4.2%
MOISTURE	10.5%
LINOLEIC ACID	1.9%
CALCIUM	1.3%
PHOSPHORUS	0.9%
ZINC	220 mg/kg
VITAMIN A	15,400 IU/kg
VITAMIN E	130 IU/kg
GLUCOSAMINE	570 mg/kg*
CHONDROITIN SULFATE	685 mg/kg*
OMEGA 6 FATTY ACIDS	2.3%*
OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS	0.15%*

\*Not recognized as an essential nutrient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles.

**Table format:** Black & white table is familiar and stands out

**Nutrition Facts:** Clearer and more straightforward than "guaranteed analysis"

**Amount per serving:** Provides a reference point for the values shown

**Caloric values:** Nice to know, similar to human food labels, but many are unsure what it means for their pets

## Guaranteed Analysis

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS	
Crude Protein, minimum	26.0%
Crude Fat, minimum	15.0%
Crude Fiber, maximum	4.0%
Moisture, maximum	12.0%
Linoleic acid, minimum	1.8%
Calcium, minimum	1.2%
Phosphorus, minimum	0.8%
Zinc, minimum	200 mg/kg
Vitamin A, minimum	15,000 IU/kg
Vitamin E, minimum	120 IU/kg
Glucosamine, minimum	550 mg/kg*
Chondroitin Sulfate, min	650 mg/kg*
Omega 6 Fatty Acids, min	2.3%*
Omega 3 Fatty Acids, min	0.15%*

\*Not recognized as an essential nutrient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles

Pet owners want simplicity, clarity, and familiarity. And they want to know how much of each ingredient is required daily.



## NUTRITIONAL STATEMENT

The current nutritional statement is overlooked because it is long and difficult to read (small font).

Nature's Blend Complete Nutrition Chicken & Rice Recipe Dog Food is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles for adult maintenance.

“**Formulated to meet**” signifies that the food is on par with some established standards

**BUT**

**AAFCO** is completely unknown

A badge or seal will better communicate the nutritional statement/standards.



**Benefits:**

Easier to read

Will **stand out** on package

**Opportunities for improvement:**

**FDA endorsement** - generates mixed reaction

“**Complete and Balanced**” – unclear/not understood

**Nutrition Profiles** – unclear/not understood

**!** An endorsement is a plus, and FDA approval is more familiar and preferred over AAFCO. But FDA still may not be the optimal endorsement. Many are mistrustful of the agency generally, and/or are uncertain of its role in pet food.

# DAILY FEEDING GUIDE

The feeding guide is underutilized. Owners determine how much to feed based on:



Feeding freely



Trial & Error



The minimally required information is inadequate and misleading



Recommended Total Daily Feeding for Adult Dogs  
Feed 1 Cup per 10lbs of Body Weight per Day



Requires owners to "do the math"



Potential to cause over-feeding  
(100-lb dog → 10 cups)

A chart is far superior to the minimally required feeding information



Recommended Total Daily Feeding for Adult Dogs

WEIGHT OF ADULT DOG	CUPS PER DAY
10 lbs	3/4 - 1 1/4
25 lbs	1 1/4 - 2 1/2
50 lbs	2 1/2 - 3 1/2
75 lbs	3 1/2 - 4 1/2
100 lbs	4 1/2 - 5 1/2



Weight ranges are preferred over specific weights



Activity level is an improvement (for dogs), but **ideal weight** may not be necessary



Step-by-step instructions are unnecessary



Wet food instructions may be better placed online

# MANUFACTURING STATEMENT

## Consumers want to know

Who makes their pet food



Where their pet food is made



## Companies should use “manufactured by” instead of “distributed by” on packaging

Manufactured by Nature's Balance Petfood Food LLC.,  
Averagetown, WA, 23456

Most consumers understand that “manufactured by” means the food is **made by the identified company** but not necessarily at that specific location

Distributed by Nature's Balance Petfood Food LLC.,  
Averagetown, WA, 23456

“Distributed by” is **misunderstood** and **suggests no** responsibility for food quality

**BUT:** Companies that can claim to be both manufacturers and distributors should do so  
**AND:** Identify the location where the food is made, if possible



# MARKET INTELLIGENCE OR IGNORANCE?



## The Market – What You Need to Know

### The impact of food labels is waning

Less than half of US consumers “usually read” the information on product labels, and the percentage of consumers who indicate doing so has declined over the past several years. What’s more, the influence of food labels declines with age, with younger grocery shoppers less likely than older shoppers to say labels factor into their purchase decision.



# 2008 Health & Diet Survey



**U.S. Food and Drug Administration**  
Protecting and Promoting *Your* Health

**K6. Now think about the first time you purchase a pet food product. When you look at pet food labels for the first time, either in the store or at home, how often, if at all, do you use the labels in the following ways? Would you say you often, sometimes, rarely or never use the pet food label (n=1,049)**

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER	DK/NS	RF
to figure out how much of the pet food you should feed your {dog/dogs/cat/cats/dog and cat/dogs and cat/dog and cats/dogs and cats} at a single serving?	30%	15%	17%	38%	*	*
to see how high or low the pet food is in things like calories, protein, fat, etc.?	31%	18%	16%	35%	*	0%
to determine if a product meets your pets' nutritional needs?	37%	26%	10%	26%	1%	0%
to compare different pet food items with each other?	38%	18%	12%	31%	*	0%
to see if something said in advertising or on the package is actually true?	22%	22%	16%	39%	1%	0%
to see if there is an ingredient that your pet should avoid?	35%	14%	11%	39%	1%	0%

# PFI FDA AA LABELING TASK FORCE

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## Nutrition Facts

About 8 Cups Per Container

1 cup (8oz Measuring Cup) = 90g

**Intended Use: Daily Feeding of Adult Dogs 1-7 years  
or Daily feeding of Puppies <1 year**

Dog Weight (lb)	Daily Calorie Needs (Adult)	Cups Per Day	Daily Calorie Needs (Puppy)	Cups Per Day
10	300	1	600	2
20	500	1 1/2	1,000	3
30	670	2	1,340	4
40	840	2 1/2	1,680	5
50	990	3	1,980	6

Your dog's daily requirement may need to be adjusted based on body condition, age, activity level or other factors.

**Calculated Calories Per Cup 310**

Nutrients	Guaranteed Amount	Amount of Nutrient Per Cup
<b>Protein</b>	23%	20.7g
<b>Fat</b>	14%	12.6g
<b>Max Fat</b>	16%	13.7g
<b>Fiber</b>	4%	3.6g
<b>Moisture</b>	8%	7.2g
<b>Calcium</b>	1.2%	1.08g
<b>Magnesium</b>	0.9%	0.81g
<b>Vitamin E</b>	440 IU/kg	18 IU
<b>Riboflavin</b>	550 mg/kg	22.5 mg
<b>L-Carnitine*</b>	40 mg/kg	3.6 mg
<b>Omega-6 Fatty Acids</b>	2.14%	1.92g
<b>Omega-3 Fatty Acids</b>	0.14%	0.12g

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# PFI FDA AA LABELING TASK FORCE





# THANK YOU!

