



Homemade Pet Foods

MEDICAL FAQs

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INTRODUCTION

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This FAQ was originally generated in response to the 2007 wheat gluten-related pet food recall. Pet owners and veterinarians were desperate to find alternatives to commercial pet foods until the crisis is over. A generic recipe is given at the end of this FAQ, but we request that you read the FAQ before using it, as it cannot be properly individualized for your clients or their pets. **These recipes should be used no longer than 2 months without switching back to commercial foods or consulting a veterinary clinical nutritionist for a more appropriate set of recipes.**

The contents of this FAQ apply to most questions about home-made therapeutic and maintenance diets.

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CLINICAL USE INFORMATION

[Why can't you give me a generic recipe for all dogs and cats?](#)

[But pet foods are not individually formulated! How are they different?](#)

[As professional colleagues, we provide detailed advice to each other on using powerful drugs and other regimens with potential risk. What's so different about a recipe?](#)

[How can we trust pet foods during this time of uncertainty?](#)

[Where can I send my client for homemade recipes that are individualized to the patient?](#)

[Can you give me any short term generic recipes?](#)

[Discuss this FAQ](#)

Why can't you give me a generic recipe for all dogs and cats?

- Published recipes for dogs and cats have been found to be almost uniformly unbalanced, which can lead to nutrient deficiencies or excesses.
- Energy or nutrient requirements are not linear, therefore, a generic recipe which states "this amount is adequate to feed a 20 lb dog daily" is not sufficient for long term use. In addition, any individual pet's energy or caloric requirements can vary 50% in either direction from the calculated requirement.
- There are no human daily supplements that can be made complete and balanced for homemade recipes - additions of calcium, potassium, Vitamin B-12, taurine and other nutrients usually need to be made. If human supplements for vitamins, minerals, and choline are used, splitting the capsules into proper proportions is potentially risky, and can be easily lead to administration of toxic amounts when very small animals such as Yorkshire Terriers are considered. Supplements for dogs and cats are available (www.balanceIt.com), but recipes formulated on that site should be the starting point

rather than a long-term solution.

- Home-cooked foods are more expensive, inconvenient, require a major time investment by owners, require the purchase of new equipment (kitchen scales that weigh in grams, blender or food processor, pill crusher, etc). This tests the commitment of most pet owners.
- Although pet owners can pick and choose flavors off the shelf that are well accepted by their pets, we can't provide the number of recipes needed to cater to all pets' tastes/needs or owners' ability to find ingredients easily. Owners may make substitutions of major ingredients (protein/carbohydrate), depending on market availability, market prices, or refusal by the pet. Substitutions or deletions of major ingredients will unbalance a balanced ration.

But pet foods are not individually formulated! How are they different?

- Pet food manufacturers usually give detailed information on how much to feed based on body size. If you want to try this with a homemade formula of known energy density, the formula is:
Resting Energy Requirement = $70(\text{BW in kg})^{0.75}$
However, maintenance energy varies widely between individuals at the same body weight. Growing and reproducing animals may need up to triple or quadruple that amount. You can also use the VIN [MER Calculator](#) to help estimate energy requirements.
- Pet food manufacturers can formulate in large batches that make handling of potentially toxic ingredients more precise.
- Pet food manufactures routinely run quality control procedures to minimize variability.
- Pet food manufacturers, for the most part, also know how digestible their product is.

As professional colleagues, we provide detailed advice to each other on using powerful drugs and other regimens with potential risk. What's so different about a recipe?

- Veterinarians tend to trust food companies to provide complete and balanced nutrition, and that's appropriate. Generic homemade 'balanced' recipes do not deserve the same trust, because clients tend to forget about or discontinue (or substitute based on what is available or on sale) ingredients and supplements over time.
- A generic homemade recipe may or may not be appropriate for an individual with unique genetic requirements, and close monitoring of the diet's appropriateness is essential. This may include monitoring weight changes, fecal quality and consistency, food acceptance/refusal, activity levels, water consumption, CBC and serum biochemical changes, and UA changes. Most veterinarians are not in the habit of diet monitoring to the extent that they do drug monitoring.
- Drugs are used mostly as a short-term fix to an immediate problem. Diets last a lifetime. Errors in formulation may take months or years to show up, not hours or days as seen with drug problems.

How can we trust pet foods during this time of uncertainty?

- Nutritionists see a high percentage of pets with poor nutrition and problems eating homemade foods (at least 1%-3% or 1-3 pets in 100 fed home made foods) vs those eating commercial diets.
- In people, there are 76 MILLION annual food poisoning cases per year. Fatalities are estimated at 5000/year. Some are hard to detect just like in pet food. Most human food borne disorders are not diagnosed unless a large cluster of disease has been traced to a

single food supplier. Global food supply can often be a contributor. In the past year we have had three major food recalls (spinach, packaged meats, peanut butter) with human deaths reported in each.

- In pets, the ingredients are screened for similar agents as the human food supply. It is easier to pick up a problem in pets than in humans eating random diets BECAUSE they eat primarily commercial foods. If we switch to home cooking for all pets, those pets will be subjected to the number of food borne illnesses that plague the affected 76 million people. We will have no index of suspicion and most cases will go unnoticed. If we consider there have been 16 FDA-confirmed deaths and thousands of complaints in the 150 million US dogs and cats - that represents less than 0.005% or 1 in 100 million. That is less than your chance of having a fatal reaction to the flu vaccine. And, the chance of commercial foods harming pets is 2000-6000 times lower than feeding homemade. There have been 3 major food toxin recalls in the past 5 years. Most were detected before more than 50 animals had died. Thus, it would appear that pet foods are 100 times safer than cooking/preparing foods from human ingredients.

Where can I send my client for homemade recipes that are individualized to the patient?

These services are available for clients:

- Petdiets.com
- BalanceIt.com (owners can generate a recipe that is calculated for easy use with pre made supplements). During the Pet Food Recall, BalanceIT are offering free maintenance diet recipes for clients with the promotional code "VIN". BalanceIT have assured VIN that they will NOT market to anybody using this promotional code.
- University of California Davis
 - telephone consults (530) 752-7892
- University of Tennessee Veterinary Nutrition Service (email utvns@utk.edu)
- Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
- Angell Memorial
 - telephone consults (617) 588-7282
- University of Missouri (email datzc@missouri.edu)
- University of Minnesota (email churc002@umn.edu or phone: (612) 625-9758)

Can you give me any short term generic recipes?

PLEASE NOTE: This recipe should be fed for not more than 2 months. Clinicians are advised to set up a consultation with the client at the end of this period to revisit feeding requirements and to consider either re-instituting commercial food products, or a consultation with a clinical nutritionist.

Standard Pet Formula - adequate for healthy dogs and cats over 6 months of age

1 pound fresh boneless skinless chicken breast
 2 and 2/3 cup cooked white rice
 1 Tablespoon safflower oil
 1/4 tsp Morton's lite salt

1/4 tsp iodinated salt
3 grams of calcium carbonate without vitamin D (regular Tums - check size)
1 Centrum adult multivitamin-mineral supplement (no special senior, ocular, women's or other versions)
1/4 tsp taurine powder (or 500 mg tablet) (taurine is optional for dogs - essential for cats)

Sauté chopped chicken breast in oil until thoroughly cooked. Add rice and salt.

Grind Tums (calcium carbonate), multi vitamin/mineral tab, and taurine supplement together. Add to cooled mixture. Store in refrigerator. Larger batches may be prepared in advance and stored in the freezer.

Nutritional profile

40% protein (Dry matter basis (DMB))
12% fat DMB
6% calcium DMB
4.3% phosphorus
1.4:1.0 calcium:phosphorus

Calories: 1046 kcal per batch or 1.12 kcal/gram

Batch size: 932 grams

To feed, calculate caloric needs and divide into twice daily feeding. One recipe batch should provide adequate intake for a 40-45 pound dog for 1 day.

Adjust intake to maintain ideal body weight

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[\[Top\]](#)

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