

## **Whose responsibility is it to make sure pet food is safe and healthy?**

There are three different organizations that split some responsibility for pet food: the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM), the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), and the Pet Food Institute (PFI).

### **FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine (FDA/CVM)**

The Center for Veterinary Medicine is the branch of the FDA that deals with all things animal. The FDA/CVM describes its mission as a “consumer protection organization that fosters public and animal health by approving safe and effective products for animals.” They are responsible for the evaluation, approval and /or surveillance of animal drugs, food additives, feed ingredients, and animal devices. They don’t have any regulatory control over the source of pet food ingredients, which means that pet food companies can include animal “by-products” (like feather and fur, brains, and other bits that have no nutritional value without fearing interference from the CVM. The CVM doesn’t regularly test pet food to make sure it’s safe and healthy; the government’s only pet food authority is really no authority at all.

### **Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)**

CVM relies on AAFCO. AAFCO is an organization, not a government agency. They are made up of government representatives, pet food companies, the Pet Food Institute and rendering industries, AAFCO has no regulatory authority, but state governments rely on them to set model standards which the states can adopt. AAFCO also defines food ingredients; they’re the ones who decide what counts as “by-products” in your pet food, AAFCO’s definitions are considered standard, but they’re not enforced. Unlike CVM, AAFCO does run some tests on pet food. They analyze new foods to make sure they contain the ration of protein, fat, fiber and minerals that they state on the label. Like CVM, though, AAFCO doesn’t regulate where the protein, fat, or fiber comes from, or if it’s digestible and safe, as long as it’s there. They also do feed trials, where new pet foods are fed to animals to make sure they keep the animal healthy-feed trials are only done for foods labeled as “complete and balanced”. The trials include 8 animals minimum, 25 percent of them can be removed from the test, and the remaining animals can lose up to 15 % of their starting body weight.

### **Pet Food Institute (PFI)**

Started in 1958 the Pet Food Institute is “the voice of U.S. pet food manufacturers.” They represent the interests of 98% of all pet food manufacturers to the public and the media, and lobby Congress on the Industry’s behalf. They, along with pet food manufacturers, play a major role in setting AAFCO’s standards. They exist to protect the pet food industry, not pets.

### **State Standards**

States are the only ones who have any real control over pet food standards, and since they base their standards on AAFCO’s recommendations, the standards are minimal to say the least. The amount of regular testing done on pet food varies from state

to state, but state standards are written in such a way that tests are likely to miss major pet food problems, like the presence of toxic amounts of melamine.

### So, who's protecting pets?

There are almost no pet food regulations, and the regulations that do exist are hardly enforced. Several case studies of toxic chemicals in commercial pet foods illustrate the problems inherent in this lack of regulation. It is relatively easy for a manufacturer to include a chemical ingredient in pet food. Any food additive that has been cleared by the FDA under the extensive "Generally Recognized as Safe" (GRAS) category is permitted.

When it comes to the presence of dubious food additives, chemical pollutants or untested pet owners are still largely on their own. What we really need are strong government standards for pet food that address everything from raw ingredients to pet food preservatives, and a transparent labeling system to allow pet owners to choose what they feel is best for their pets without guessing!

References: 1. [www.petsfortheenvironment.org](http://www.petsfortheenvironment.org) 2. [www.ewg.org/node/26240](http://www.ewg.org/node/26240)

McNally's Dog Center 740.522.1424 [www.mcnallysdogcenter.com](http://www.mcnallysdogcenter.com)

## Give Your Dog Food A Grade!

Start with a grade of 100:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ For every listing of "by-product," subtract 10pts
2. \_\_\_\_\_ For every non-specific animal source (meat, poultry, meat meal, animal fat) reference, subtract 10pts
3. \_\_\_\_\_ If bone meal appears in the top six ingredients, subtract 10pts. If bone meal appears after the top six ingredients, subtract 5pts.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ If the food contains BHA, BHT or ethoxyquin, subtract 10pts.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ For every flour, bran, gluten, grits, or the meal of any grain, subtract 5pts. Subtract an additional 2pts for each gluten
6. \_\_\_\_\_ If the same grain ingredient is used 2 or more times in the first five ingredients (ground brown rice, rice bran, brewer's rice, rice flour are all the same grain), Subtract 3pts each time it is used after the first time.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ If the food contains any kind of animal digest subtract 5pts
8. \_\_\_\_\_ If the food contains any artificial colorants, peanut hulls, or powered cellulose, subtract 3pts each.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ If the food contains ground corn or whole grain corn, subtract 4pts each
10. \_\_\_\_\_ If the food contains any animal fat other than fish oil or chicken fat, subtract 1pt. If the fat source is beef tallow or an unspecified animal fat, subtract 2 more pts.

11. \_\_\_\_\_If lamb is the only animal protein source (unless your dog is allergic to other protein sources),subtract 2pts
12. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains soy or soybeans, subtract 2pts
13. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains wheat, subtract 2pts
14. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains beef, subtract 1pts

EXTRA CREDIT: Earn back points for extras that are good for your, dog!

1. \_\_\_\_\_If any of the meat sources are organic add 3pts
2. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains probiotics (natural enzymes for digestion), add 4pts.
3. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains fruit, add 4pts.
4. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains vegetables (not corn or other grains), add 3pts.
5. \_\_\_\_\_If the animal sources are hormone-free and antibiotic-free, add 2pts
6. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains barley, oats or oatmeal, or quinoa, add 2pts each
7. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains flaxseed oil (not just the seeds) or salmon oil, add 2pts
8. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains alfalfa, kelp seaweed, spinach or spirulina, add 2pts
9. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains sunflower oil, add 1pt
10. \_\_\_\_\_For every specific animal protein or egg source after the first one (within the first 8 ingredients), add 1pt (i.e. chicken, chicken meal, lamb, turkey meal, fish meal would earn 3pts.
11. \_\_\_\_\_If the food contains glucosamine and chondroitin, add 1pt
12. \_\_\_\_\_Add one point if any of the following ingredients are included: Taurine, Chicory root, Garlic Yucca, Cinnamon, Cottage cheese, Cloves

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_

**Results Over 100:**

Solid Gold Hund-n-Flocken Adult Dog: 106  
 Taste of the Wild Fowl: 120  
 Diamond Naturals Lamb Meal & Rice: 105  
 Chicken Soup Adult Dog: 108  
 Wellness Super 5 Mix: 109  
 Innova Adult Dry Dog: 114

**Results Under 100:**

Bill-Jac Select: 66  
 Purina Beneful: 42  
 Purina Dog Chow:37  
 Iams Lamb Meal & Rice: 86  
 Iams Eukanuba Adult: 86  
 Science Diet Adult:59