

Vegan Dogs & Cats? Of Course!

For ethical vegans, it makes little sense to sacrifice hundreds of equally-sentient creatures to keep one companion animal alive. But every so often, I'll come across a comment stream of well-meaning vegans vigorously defending the perceived need to feed non-vegan foods to their companion animals.

Dogs are naturally omnivorous and via domestication have had thousands of years to acclimate to human foods of all types. So there's generally less objection to feeding them vegan food. But cats are classified as "obligate carnivores," which erroneously implies they *must* eat meat.



Some feel it's cruel to feed a cat plants instead of his/her *natural* diet. The truth is, a cat's "natural" diet consists of small birds, rodents, insects, and reptiles, not the hormone and disease-laden dairy, beef, chicken, fish, and lamb scraps found in many commercial cat foods.

Furthermore, only a percentage of most commercially-available meat-based pet food consists of actual animal products, with the balance being made up of plants.

Another common objection is that cats require taurine, an amino acid found in meat but not in plants, other than sea algae. Defenders claim that the synthetic taurine used in vegan cat food is not as effective as the real thing. But in truth, the natural taurine in meat is *destroyed* during processing, so manufacturers replace it with *synthetic* taurine! Shouldn't that settle the debate?

If that's not enough, in early 2021, a peer-reviewed BMC Veterinary Research study concluded that vegan cats live just as long or longer than non-vegan cats and are less likely to suffer a range of adverse health consequences, including gastrointestinal and hepatic disease.

<https://bmcvetres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12917-021-02754-8>

Most dogs take readily to and thrive on a vegan diet. Cats can be more finicky. The trick is to slowly mix the new vegan food with the old animal food, gradually increasing the percentage until it's 100% vegan. Trying different vegan products and added flavorings (e.g., nutritional yeast) can help stimulate the appetites of fussy eaters.



When shopping for vegan dog/cat food, make sure the can or package says it is "formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog/Cat Food Nutrient Profiles for [all or particular] Life Stage/s."

* AAFCO = Association of American Feed Control Officials

Some national brands include a vegan-product line (e.g., Natural Balance), but if you prefer to support businesses that don't also profit from animal-product lines, here are just a few of the many and growing all-vegan pet food companies:

- * **Evolution:** <https://petfoodshop.com> (wet or dry for dogs and cats)
- * **V-Dog:** <https://v-dog.com> (kibble for dogs)
- * **VegePet:** <https://compassioncircle.com> (supplements to add to homemade food)

Finally, if you face resistance from friends, family, or strangers, are looking for food and feeding tips, and want to ensure you feed your pet a healthy, life-enhancing diet, join a support group!

Vegan Dog Nutrition: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/398407553536988>

Vegan Cats: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/126322004672>