

## Can I feed dog food to my cat?

### Cats and dogs are different!

Dog and cat foods are formulated differently because dogs and cats have different nutritional needs.



Complete and balanced pet foods provide all the nutrients required in the correct ratios for the pet.

Dog foods provide all the nutrients a dog needs to stay healthy but they are not formulated to provide the additional nutrients that cats need in their diet.

Although we often refer to both cats and dogs as carnivores (meat eaters), in fact the dog is a semi-carnivore and the cat is a true carnivore. This means that cats must have certain nutrients in their diet that are only found in meat. Dogs can survive on a meat-free diet.

Cats have specific nutritional needs that dogs do not have. A diet designed for dogs may not provide the same nutrients at sufficient levels for cats.

### Protein

Dietary Protein is required by both dogs and cats for energy, growth and repair. Cats require a higher amount than dogs during both growth and adult maintenance, due to increased enzyme activity. In addition, cats are less able to down-regulate their rate of protein breakdown when presented with a diet low in protein. For this reason, most cat foods tend to contain more protein than dog foods.

Arginine is an amino acid, one of the building blocks that combine together in different combinations to make various proteins. The cat is very sensitive to even a single meal deficient

in arginine, with effects seen internally within 2-5 hours of eating an arginine free meal. In the absence of arginine nitrogen cannot be efficiently broken down through the urea cycle and in serious cases death can result. Dogs are less sensitive to low levels of arginine in their diets and can at least partially use an alternative amino acid, ornithine, to complete the urea cycle.



## Taurine

Taurine is another amino acid that is distributed throughout most body tissues. Taurine is important for healthy functioning of the heart, retina, bile fluid and certain aspects of reproduction.

Cats must eat preformed taurine and since taurine is not found in plant tissues, cats must consume meat to obtain it. Unlike cats, in the absence of dietary taurine, dogs are much more able to manufacture enough to meet their needs.

## Vitamins A and B3 (niacin)

Vitamin A is required at the cellular level by both cats and dogs, and is essential for healthy vision and a healthy skin. Cats lack the enzymes to break down plant-produced carotenoids and must eat preformed Vitamin A that can only be found in food of animal origin. Dogs have enzymes in the lining of the intestine that can break down plant carotenoids and convert these into active Vitamin A.

Niacin is an essential B vitamin required by the cat and dog for skin and coat health, and for healthy metabolism. However, the cat can only obtain niacin by eating the preformed vitamin, and unlike the dog, cannot convert tryptophan, a dietary amino acid, to niacin. Meat and fish are great sources of niacin. The dog obtains niacin in two ways, either by converting tryptophan into niacin or by eating preformed niacin.

## Cats need animal fat

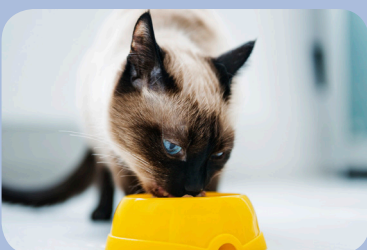
Arachidonic acid is an essential fatty acid that plays a vital role in fat utilisation and energy production. The cat cannot convert sufficient levels of other fatty acids such as linoleic acid to arachidonic acid even when the diet is rich in linoleic acid, because the cat liver does not have the appropriate enzymes.

Dogs can make their own arachidonic acid from other essential fatty acids and therefore in the dog, unlike the cat, arachidonic acid is not considered an essential nutrient.



## What does it all mean?

It is important that the cat is fed cat foods that provide for their particular nutritional needs.



The requirements and often the taste preferences of the dog and cat are different.

This is why pet food manufacturers offer both dog foods and cat foods.

By choosing to feed your cat a nutritionally complete and balanced cat food (and water!), all the nutrition is taken care of and you can be confident that your cat is getting everything it needs in its food for a healthy and active life.