



Feeding Your Cairn Terrier **Understanding Commercial Food Options**

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Have you ever had a Cairn Terrier who is a picky eater? Me neither . . . until I brought Greyson home. He is an only dog without competition for his dog food. After feeding him a puppy food for his first year, I looked for a great adult dog food that would be nutritious, tasty, and entice him to eat.

I met with the North Carolina State Veterinary Hospital Small Animal Nutrition specialists who gave me these important points to keep in mind when selecting food for your pet.

Know Who Makes Your Pet Food

To ensure your dog is eating a balanced and nutritional product, be sure that the company has veterinarians and veterinary nutritionists on staff. Make sure:

- The company researches their products and have conducted feeding trials.
- The company has strict quality control measures, with multiple checkpoints during production to ensure quality is maintained.
- The company owns and runs their manufacturing facilities.

If this information is not readily available on the company's website or food packaging, call and talk to a representative.

Companies that meet the above-mentioned criteria: *Hill's Pet Nutrition, Royal Canin, and Purina Pet Care Company.*

Understand the AAFCO Statement

AAFCO is The Association of American Feed Control Officials: www.aaftco.org The AAFCO statement can be found on the side or back of the food bag or can.

- *What does “Complete and Balanced” mean?* The AAFCO statement speaks to the nutritional adequacy of the pet food, ensuring that your pet’s food contains all nutrients required by your dog in the correct amounts and ratios for his or her life stage.
- *What does “Formulated to meet the nutritional levels” mean?* This phrase means that the diets meet the requirements set by AAFCO (complete and balanced for the specific life stages listed). This phrase is good, but not quite the gold standard, which involves completing a feeding test.
- *What is a feeding test?* The phrase “Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures” means that dogs or cats were fed this diet following specific protocols set by AAFCO and their health was evaluated and monitored to ensure this diet was appropriate. This is the gold standard for pet food products.
- *What does it apply to?* Every AAFCO statement designates a specific life stage the diet was formulated for. The nutrition specialists at NC State recommend that you feed your dog a food specific to his or her life stage, especially since different life stages require different nutrients. Life stages recognized by AAFCO include Gestation/Lactation, Growth (puppy/kitten), Adult Maintenance, and All Life Stages.
- *What does “All Life Stages” mean?* This phrase means that the food meets the minimum requirements set for all the life stages, including Gestation/Lactation, Growth, and Adult Maintenance. However growing kittens and puppies require higher levels of certain ingredients like protein, fat, calcium and phosphorus that may be too high to give to adult pets.
- *Ask your veterinarian about diets specific to your Cairn Terrier life stage* – puppy, mature adults and aging dogs.

Interpret the Ingredient List Correctly

- The ingredient list is helpful if you are trying to avoid a specific ingredient.
- However, it does not provide any information on the nutritional value related to specific foods; it is just a list of ingredients in descending order by weight. The first ingredient listed accounts for the highest percentage of the product’s weight.
- It is particularly important to remember that water is included in this weight. For example, Whole Chicken is about 70% moisture and Chicken Meal is about 10% moisture. This means that Whole Chicken will be listed higher on the ingredient list because of the increased weight from water, even if both ingredients provide the same amount of actual protein.

Know What's In a Name

Did you know that food product names are regulated by AAFCO? The specific words used in a product name directly link to a percentage of ingredient. Check out these examples:

- **BINGO'S CHICKEN DOG FOOD**

This name means that chicken must account for at least 70% of ingredients by weight, with water included, and at least 95% of ingredients by weight when water is excluded.

- **BINGO'S CHICKEN ENTRÉE**

This name means that chicken must account for at least 10% of ingredients by weight of the total product, with water included, and at least 25% of ingredients by weight when water is excluded. Other words in this category include dinner, meal and platter.

- **BINGO'S DOG FOOD WITH CHICKEN**

This name means that chicken must account for at least 3% of the total product

Transitioning Your Cairn to a New Diet

When you are switching your dog to a new food, you should always do so gradually to avoid causing gastrointestinal upset. Changing your dog's diet can upset their stomach. Take the time to gradually switch your pet to a new mature diet over the course of a week. Every couple of days, mix 25% more of the new pet food into your dog's old pet food.

Day 1-2	Mix in 25% new food
Day 3-4	Mix in 50% new food
Day 5-6	Mix in 75% new food
Day 7	100% new food

In Conclusion

Commercial foods provide good options for feeding your Cairn. In future articles, we'll discuss other diet options, including raw diets and the addition of pro- or pre-biotics.

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