

Boycott Food Brands with This Labeling Trick

Check your pet food labels today for this. This stunt lets them load up with cheap unsuitable ingredients, yet still show meat as the first ingredient. They hope you'll be none the wiser. Case in point example included. Don't be duped by this cunning trick.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The processed pet food industry is very focused lately on ways to use beans in dog and cat food
- Beans contain phytates and lectins, in addition to being biologically inappropriate for dogs and cats, who are carnivores (meat eaters)
- Pet food manufacturers like beans because they are much less expensive than animal meat, but can be used to boost the overall protein content of their formulas
- Using a gimmick called ingredient splitting, pet food producers can load up their formulas with biologically inappropriate plant-based ingredients, while still showing meat as the first ingredient
- Instead of feeding your pet food that needs to be extreme-processed to be digestible, opt instead for a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate, fresh food diet

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published October 13, 2017.

I've noticed that the processed pet food industry, in its never-ending pursuit of ingredients with low-cost and high marketing potential, is currently fixated on, of all things, beans. As an example, a white paper written by a pet food ingredient supplier of beans begins by stating:

*"What makes pet food truly contribute to an animal's wellbeing? Healthy ingredients — ingredients whose nutrient profile supports proper digestion and body composition."*¹

That sounds really nice, but we're talking about beans here, which may be healthy ingredients for some humans, but for dogs and cats? Not so much. White papers, for those of you who may not be familiar, are informational marketing pieces and shouldn't be confused with scientific research studies. Wikipedia defines a white paper as "an authoritative report or guide helping readers understand an issue, solve a problem or make a decision."²

Beans Aren't Biologically Appropriate Foods for Carnivores

Pet food producers and their **ingredient suppliers** are aware that many pet owners tend to believe most foods that are healthy for humans are also healthy for dogs and cats. In fact, they use pet parents' lack of knowledge about pet food ingredients to create and market biologically inappropriate diets. For example, one of the marketing approaches being used to promote pet foods containing bean meal is weight loss. From the white paper:

"The nutrient profile in a bean, with its high protein, slowly digested starch and high dietary fiber content, work together to metabolically assist in weight loss and maintain a healthy body composition."

The nutrient profile in beans may benefit some humans and other omnivores and herbivores, but **carnivorous cats and dogs** thrive on animal — not plant — protein, and they don't benefit physiologically from starch or high levels of dietary fiber. But as we know, that pesky little fact certainly hasn't interfered with the pet food industry's insistence on creating diets for carnivores using ingredients nature didn't design them to eat.

Why Pet Food Producers Love Beans and Other Plant Food

Chickpeas, beans, lentils and other plant-based ingredients are a poor substitute for animal protein in the diets of dogs and cats. However, they're much less expensive, which is why processed pet food manufacturers are so preoccupied with finding ways to use them. These low-cost ingredients also provide a way for manufacturers to boost the total percentage of protein in their formulas, fooling pet parents in the process.

Example: If you're in the habit of looking at the **labels on pet food**, and you see a brand marketed as high in protein, and you also see chicken as the first ingredient, it's easy to be convinced the high protein content is coming from the chicken. Unfortunately, that's often not the case.

Big Pet Food's Dirty Little Secret — Ingredient Splitting

Pet food manufacturers are required to list each item on the ingredient label in order of precooked weight. Using a little trick called ingredient splitting, they can artificially raise a meat ingredient to a higher position on the list, while simultaneously dropping an inferior, plant-based ingredient lower on the list.

Below is an example of ingredient splitting from Dog Food Advisor.³ The dog food in question is primarily made of corn and rice, which is quite common in low-quality brands. **Corn and rice** are inexpensive, plant-based ingredients that are in no way, shape or form equivalent to the nutrition provided by animal meat.

Ingredient List Before Splitting

Rank	Ingredient	Content
1	Corn	30%
2	Rice	20%
3	Chicken Meal	18%
4	Etc.	
5	Etc.	
6	Etc.	
7	Etc.	

Ingredient List After Splitting

Rank	Ingredient	Content
1	Chicken Meal	18%
2	Corn Meal	15%
3	Corn Flour	15%
4	Rice gluten	10%
5	Rice bran	10%
6	Etc.	
7	Etc.	

ingredient list after splitting

Looking at the ingredients in this dog food before splitting, it's quite clear corn is the main ingredient at 30%, followed by rice. Chicken meal, which is the only species-appropriate ingredient of the three, comes in third.

However, as you can see from the after splitting example, when the manufacturer gets a little creative, using a couple of different corn and rice products, he can list them separately (split them), and as if by magic, chicken meal pops to the top of the list, which is enough to convince many pet owners the food is meat-based and high quality.

It's important to realize the total protein percentage on most pet food labels does not reveal how much of that protein is from animals, which is the type of protein most appropriate for cats and dogs. A large proportion of the total protein in most processed pet food is sourced from plants, not animals.

Two Problems with Beans — Phytates and Lectins

Because they are high in fiber, folate, iron (when eaten with a source of vitamin C) and complex carbohydrates, and are also low in fat, beans and other pulse crops are considered beneficial for humans by some nutritionists. However, other nutrition experts, including Dr. Mercola, advise keeping legume intake minimal for the same reason they're not recommended for pets — the presence of phytates and lectins that are naturally found in beans.

Phytates are substances that carnivores can't break down because they lack phytase, the enzyme necessary to process phytic acid. Phytates bind minerals (including zinc, iron, calcium and magnesium), leaching them out of your pet's body, and creating nutritional deficiencies.

Lectins are sticky proteins that when consumed in large quantities may contribute to gastrointestinal (GI) disturbances and dysbiosis (leaky gut syndrome).

Extreme Processing Reduces Beans to a Form Pets Can Digest

Interestingly, toward the end of the bean supplier's white paper referenced earlier, the author explains what has to happen to beans to make them digestible for dogs and cats:

"The successful application of any pet food ingredient is dependent on proper formulation and processing. Most plant-based carbohydrates are more properly digested with cooking. The extrusion process in making dry pet food kibbles is a very effective tool in reducing anti-nutritional components.

Beans contain low levels of resistant starches. Extrusion will break down these components, significantly reducing their impact on large intestinal fermentation. Pre-cooked navy bean flour added at 25% (wt/wt) of a diet has shown no deleterious GI tract effects (Forster et al., 2012)."

Translation: beans are biologically inappropriate for dogs and cats, but the extreme processing required to produce kibble makes them more digestible and less non-nutritious. Sadly, processed pet food manufacturers and their ingredient suppliers consider this a good thing.

The best strategy, as always, is to feed a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate, fresh food diet that is naturally digestible and assimilable for your carnivorous cat or dog.

Sources and References

¹ [PetfoodIndustry.com, "Beans - The New Superfood for Nutritional Support and Weight Management"](#)

² [Wikipedia.org: White Paper](#)

