

'Smart Feeder' – The New Gadget Your Pet Can Live (Very Well) Without

This gadget and smart phone app are bound to be a big hit with pet parents who value convenience and prefer being told exactly what to do by 'experts.' But the real loser most likely will be your pet. Don't fall for this badly misguided and costly campaign.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- There's a new "smart feeder" on the market that can be controlled remotely with an iPhone app. It claims to "help pet owners manage feeding times and portion sizes"
- No matter how smart a feeder is, it can only dispense dry pet food, which is not the type of diet your dog or cat should be eating
- Highly processed kibble is typically loaded with carbs/starches, can contain carcinogenic substances, and starts turning rancid the second the bag is opened
- Dogs and cats thrive on a fresh, meat-based diet, and fresh food is incompatible with automatic feeders
- If your pet needs to lose a few pounds, feed portion-controlled meals and make sure she gets plenty of daily exercise

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There's a new pet gadget called a "smart feeder" that "... can be controlled remotely through the company's mobile iOS app, and help pet owners manage feeding times and portion sizes, according to the company's website."¹

In our consumption-obsessed society, countless products are created each year to solve problems that don't (or shouldn't) exist, and this smart feeder is a good example. The article continues:

"The sensor-laden feeders also help users to find a nutritionally optimal pet food and have it delivered to their doorstep directly from the manufacturers, bypassing a trip to the pet store and markups seen at brick-and-mortar retailers."

If you're wondering how an automatic feeder can possibly help pet guardians choose the best nutrition for their dog or cat, here's the explanation from the article:

"To deliver dietary suggestions and curb pet obesity, the smart feeder's sensors take in data about how often and how much a pet is eating. The Petnet app collects information from pet owners about a dog or cat's age, weight, breed and level of activity as well."

Needless to say, the manufacturer of the device makes money on both sales of the feeder (at \$149 per unit), plus revenue from pet food sales driven by the iPhone app.

This is obviously a win for both the smart feeder company and the pet food manufacturers involved in delivering "dietary suggestions" via the app.

It's also considered a win for dog and cat guardians who are still feeding kibble, prefer to be told when and how much to feed their pet by "experts" via a mobile app, and don't much like running out to buy pet food. A winner for pets, not so much.

Automatic Feeders Require the Use of Highly Processed Dry Pet Food

The first and most obvious problem with this feeder and most automatic feeders on the market is they are designed to feed only kibble.

The popularity of dry pet food has been revitalized with the introduction of grain-free kibble, however, the grain in these formulas has been replaced with biologically inappropriate levels of high-glycemic starches (e.g., potatoes and pea flour).

And with the use of ever more trendy carbohydrates in pet food such as lentils and garbanzo beans (legumes), not only is the carb content increased, but legumes contain lectins that can create GI inflammation and irritation.

Gradually, the bodies of dogs and cats fed processed kibble begin to degenerate as a result of insufficient appropriate nutrition. The changes typically happen slowly and go unnoticed until there is full-blown disease.

Dry Processed Diets Can Also Contain Carcinogens

Not only are processed pet foods biologically inappropriate, they also contain added synthetic vitamins and minerals to meet basic nutritional requirements. This is necessary because the food is heated to very high temperatures, which at best denatures proteins and decreases nutrient value.

At worst, it introduces carcinogens into your pet's body each time you feed him. Two potent cancer-causing substances are created when dry pet food is extruded.

In the extrusion process, batches of dog or cat food ingredients are mixed, sheared and heated under high pressure, forced through a spiral shaped screw and then through the die of the extruder machine. Extrudate is the result — a ribbon-like product that is then knife-cut and dried.

When protein is extruded, carcinogenic heterocyclic amines are created. The byproducts of extruded starches are acrylamides. Both are known to cause cancer in dogs and cats. This is quite disturbing when you consider that:

- Most pets are fed dry food their entire lives, and
- The cancer rate is skyrocketing in companion animals

Feeding dogs and cats inappropriate ingredients for several generations has created significant metabolic and physiologic stress. Convenience pet foods are the root cause of the inflammatory processes and degenerative diseases that plague today's dogs and cats.

A biologically correct diet for your dog or cat is high in moisture, high in protein, moderate in fat, and low in carbohydrates. The vast majority of pet foods on the market today are the opposite — low in moisture content, with low to moderate amounts of poor quality protein and fat, and high in starches or carbs.

Automatic Feeders and Oxidation of Dry Pet Food

Most automatic feeders of this type (with a hopper) hold quite a bit of dry pet food. This particular model holds from 5 to 7 pounds of kibble.²

According to dog food authority Steve Brown, author of "Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet: Healthier Dog Food the ABC Way," and "See Spot Live Longer: How to Help Your Dog Live a Longer and Healthier Life," there's no such thing as a shelf-stable pet food (e.g., all processed pet food) that is "complete and balanced."

This is because some of the dietary fats pets require are very sensitive to heat and time. As soon as a bag of kibble is opened, those fats begin to go rancid. Pouring the kibble from the bag into the hopper of an automatic feeder further accelerates the process as the kibble sits there waiting to be eaten.

Fragile dietary fats (for example, fish or krill oil) should be added fresh, at mealtime, rather than during the production of pet food.

In the final step of the kibble production process, palatability enhancers are sprayed on the food (because few animals would eat the stuff without this enticement).

These sprayed on substances also contain a nutrient mix that consists of metal oxides and sulfates that promote the oxidation of fats.

As Steve explains it, essentially there's a chemical reaction happening inside every opened bag of dry pet food, whether the kibble is still in the bag or in an automatic feeder. And that reaction is amplified if the food is stored for a long time, or is in a hot environment, or sits open.

There is also the significant potential for opportunistic bacteria to contaminate dry pet food, and mycotoxins as well.

Species-Appropriate Nutrition for Dogs and Cats Isn't Compatible with Automatic Feeders

Your dog or cat should be fed a whole, fresh, meat-based diet, preferably organic, and free of genetically modified (GM) ingredients. The vast majority of pet guardians who feed raw food offer their animals two meals a day, morning and evening, which fits nicely into most family schedules. A few feed only once a day, while others offer several small meals throughout the day.

Whatever schedule they choose, the goal is to provide the freshest food to their dog or cat, with fresh oils and other supplements added as necessary. This is the kind of nutrition dogs and cats thrive on, and it can't be dispensed by any automatic feeder.

In fact, it's unlikely there will ever be an automatic feeder, even a "smart" one, which can provide your pet with fresh, nutritious meals on a pre-programmed schedule. If your pet needs to lose a few pounds (or a few ounces, in the case of some kitties and small dogs), which is another problem the smart feeder claims to solve, the simple solution is to:

- Feed portion-controlled meals (and factor in treats) based on the number of daily calories your pet should consume at her ideal weight
- Make sure she gets plenty of daily exercise, including the kind that gets her heart thumping for 20 minutes at a stretch

Sources and References

¹ [WSJ, October 26, 2015 \(Archived\)](#).

² [Petnet](#)
