



Dry Cat Food – The Silent Killer

By Jennifer Miller, *Whiskers Cat Hotel – Katznjamr Bengals*

I used to be a strong dry food advocate for many years – until I started noticing the connection between common health issues and the diets my cats were eating. These health issues completely disappeared when the cats were taken off dry and fed appropriately with canned or raw.

**No type, brand or variety of dry food is healthy for your cat.
PERIOD.**

Why is Dry Food So Bad for My Cat?

- 1. It Causes Dental Issues.** Dry food sits on a cat's teeth and gums – causing tartar buildup.

Kibble does not scrape down onto the lower parts of the teeth or near the gums, which is where dental problems start. **In fact, kibble can contribute to dental problems when the shattered bits lodge between the teeth, promoting bacterial growth.** Just like with your diet, carbohydrate food debris breaks down into sugar, which dental bacteria feeds upon.

- 2. Dry food is the #1 cause of Obesity in cats.**

Pets tend to eat less wet food than dry food. The wet foods satisfy more, so they stop eating faster than when they eat dry foods.

Cats do not need carbohydrates in their diet; they aren't a natural part of a cat's diet, and most of those calories are quickly converted to fat.

- 3. Dry Cat Food frequently contributes or *causes* the top five health issues in cats:**

- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
- Recurring Gastritis/Vomiting (common sign of IBD)
- Chronic Renal Failure
- Diarrhea
- Diabetes

Dry Food ALSO frequently leads to the following health issues:

- Vomiting
- High Blood Pressure
- Skin and Coat Problems
- Kidney Disease
- Liver Failure
- Pancreatitis
- Arthritis
- Heart Disease
- Asthma
- Skin Allergies
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease



4. Excessive Shedding: Cats on a dry food diet have the chronic problem of shedding!

5. Kidney and Bladder Stones: These conditions are exacerbated, if not outright caused, by dry food. Cats cannot drink enough water to stay hydrated on a dry food diet.

Cats get a condition called “Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disorder” (commonly referred to as FLUTD).

It comes in at least three distinct varieties:

Cystitis – This term means “inflammation of the bladder.” The majority of LUTD cases (about 2/3) fall into the category of “idiopathic cystitis” (bladder inflammation of unknown cause). It is rare for bacteria to be involved—most are “sterile” inflammations.

Crystalluria – This is a condition where mineral crystals form in the bladder. Male cats who block usually have crystals that are held together in a matrix with mucus from the irritated bladder.

Urolithiasis – About 20% of LUTD cases involve bladder stones. They form most easily when the urine is very concentrated, which maximizes the chances of the components—which are all normally in urine—banging and sticking together into crystals or stones.

The best way to prevent all bladder problems is to keep lots of fluid flowing through the urinary system to flush these problem particles out. **The dehydrating quality of dry food produces highly concentrated urine that is much more likely to form crystals and stones.** Wet food is needed to keep the urinary tract healthy; and it’s essential in any cat with a history of bladder disease.

6. Allergies & Asthma: Huge numbers of white blood cells live in groups (“Peyer’s Patches”) along the intestinal lining. The gut is one of the primary routes of entry into the body for invading organisms.

The high-heat processing that dry food undergoes during manufacturing denature proteins, meaning that it distorts their shape. Shape is also how the immune system identifies proteins that belong in the body versus foreign proteins. Viruses, bacteria, fungi, and other invaders are all identified by the proteins found on their surfaces. When an immune cell identifies a foreign protein, a whole cascade of signaling for reinforcements and production of antibodies is set into motion. Antibodies then scour the bloodstream looking for invaders matching their shape; when they find one, they latch on and signal for support. Inflammation is one of the primary responses.

When an abnormal protein is picked up by an immune cell and antibodies are produced, then every time that protein appears, antibodies flock to it and stimulate inflammation. More bad proteins = more inflammation.

The gut doesn't take kindly to this reaction, and will start rejecting the food one way or another: vomiting, diarrhea, or both. Cats seem to be especially good at vomiting, and indeed, **vomiting is the primary symptom of food allergies, as well as full-blown inflammatory bowel disease.**

7. **Dehydration** - Obviously, dry food is dry. This is a very big problem for cats, whose ancestors are desert-dwelling wild cats. As a result, cats have a low thirst drive, and don't drink water until they are about 3% dehydrated—a dehydration level so serious that most veterinarians would consider giving intravenous fluids.

Dehydration causes or contributes to many serious health issues, including:

- Urinary Crystals and Stones
- Bladder Infections
- Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disorder (FLUTD)
- Constipation
- Kidney Disease

With very few exceptions, only cats with underlying disease will drink a lot of water.

Often the disease involves their lower urinary tract, especially if they are suffering from chronic, moderate dehydration thanks to a primarily dry food diet.

It's easy to imagine the growing stress on those vital organs when your kitty's body is operating on half the amount of water it requires to function normally – day in and day out, for months, years, or a lifetime.

**"FELINE DIABETES IS NOT THE NATURAL FATE OF
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PET CATS.**

**IT IS, RATHER, A HUMAN-CREATED DISEASE THAT IS REACHING
EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS BECAUSE OF THE HIGHLY ARTIFICIAL FOODS
THAT WE HAVE BEEN FEEDING OUR FELINE COMPANIONS
FOR THE PAST FEW DECADES.**

**WITHOUT THE CONSTANT FEEDING OF HIGHLY PROCESSED, HIGH
CARBOHYDRATE DRY FOODS, BETTER SUITED TO CATTLE THAN CATS,
ADULT-ONSET FELINE DIABETES WOULD BE A RARE DISEASE,
IF IT OCCURED AT ALL."**

-- ELIZABETH HODGKINS DVM, JD

Myths About Dry Food

By Jennifer Miller, *Whiskers Cat Hotel – Katznjamr Bengals*

1. High protein diets are hard on your pet's kidneys, especially as they age. **WRONG!**

The truth is that **high plant protein diets** are hard on your pet's organs.

High animal protein diets aren't only healthy for your aging pets, they are essential.

Poor quality, mass produced pet foods are packed with protein from soy and corn. Unfortunately, your dog and cat are unable to properly digest and assimilate these sources of protein. It lets the food manufacturer boost the protein content of the food without actually offering your pet any substantial protein they can use.



High plant protein diets can put added strain on your pets because their bodies aren't designed to process those ingredients. As they try to assimilate protein from these sources, their organs need to start working overtime.

2. The better foods are the most expensive foods. **ABSOLUTELY NOT!**

A survey of dry cat food for sale at a popular internet pet site found a huge variation in the price and quality. As expected, generic and grocery-store type dry cat foods were less than \$2.00 per pound, while “organic” and many “grain-free” foods were more in the \$3.00/lb. range. **But the most expensive foods were not grain free, organic, or natural; but rather were those most massively (and expensively) advertised.** Science Diet’s Feline Indoor Maintenance rang up at an astonishing \$3.96 per pound, despite containing not one single shred of real meat (mainly poultry by-product meal, rice, and corn). And Hill’s Prescription Diets— their “hypoallergenic” z/d formula is over \$6.00/lb.

3. Ash Content is an important guideline in choosing your cat's food. **NOT SO.**

Concern about ash content in pet foods came about as veterinarians and cat guardians were looking for the cause of Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD - formerly known as FUS). In the 70's & 80's,

veterinarians thought ash was a factor in causing crystals in urine. There are, however, a variety of causes and ash is no longer considered a factor in causing FLUTD.

The main problem was the formulation of commercial pet foods: most pet foods were creating a more alkaline urine (higher pH) which leads to an increase in struvite crystals. **Most dry kibble diets are formulated with a high vegetable and grain content which creates a more alkaline urine. An all meat diet such as a cat would eat in nature creates a more acidic urine.**

A high MEAT protein diet is the best way to maintain a low urinary pH naturally.

Cats eating canned diets have fewer problems with FLUTD than those eating primarily dry kibble diets. This is due both to the higher meat content of canned diets as well as the higher moisture content; increased hydration also prevents crystal formation. A frozen raw food diet is ideal for maintaining a lower urinary pH and providing proper hydration. Focusing on low-ash foods will not solve FLUTD problems, but a healthier diet and proper hydration will.

4. Changing formulas or brands of pet foods is hard on your cat's digestion. WRONG AGAIN!

A healthy cat can eat a different food at each meal without issue as long as they are high-quality foods. Variety provides a wider range of nutrition for your companion. Even though a food may be formulated to meet AAFCO standards, that does not mean it is quality. **Many foods meeting AAFCO standards cannot be tolerated by cats due to the heavy use of grains or grain by-products.**

5. Dry Food Helps Clean My Cats Teeth. NO!

The myth that dry food cleans teeth is one that just won't die. Most cats don't chew their kibble long enough for any of the scraping action that is the theory behind this myth to kick in.

What little they do chew shatters into small pieces. **Dry food actually leaves a carbohydrate residue in the cat's mouth that actually encourages growth of tartar and plaque.**

The shape of the kibble is generally small in size which makes it very difficult for a cat to chew on, so they generally swallow the whole pellet as presented. This has zero polishing effect on the surface of the teeth. Moreover, when in contact with the saliva, the high content of carbohydrates, or polysaccharides, in the pellet is released and adheres on the surface of the teeth causing the first stage in the formation of tartar and periodontal disease: the formation of dental plaque.

A small test with dogs conducted in Australia showed how quickly dry foods can affect the teeth. Four dogs, who were all raw meaty bone eaters, were fed only dry kibble for 17 days. At the end of the experiment, the dogs had developed stinky breath and yellow teeth. Some of them lost weight. All of them had behavioral changes, itchy skin, bad breath and intestinal disorders including larger volume of stools, offensive smell and runniness. Even though this test was with dogs, not cats, the effect is the same for carnivores that evolved to eat a prey-based diet.

How to Choose a Good Canned Food

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- Look for a food that contains little or NO cereals, vegetables or fruits of any kind.
- Some of the most expensive of the “wet” cat foods available today contain large amounts of completely unnecessary plant-derived ingredients like: corn, corn flour, corn grits, corn gluten, rice, rice flour, wheat, wheat gluten, soy protein, potato, sweet potato, carrots, apples, cranberries, blueberries and similar.
- Pet food companies put these ingredients in their canned foods because they are cheap and plentiful, and because they appeal to the pet food buyer’s ideas about what is “good food” for cats.
- Plant based ingredients contribute unacceptable amount of carbohydrates, sugar, and fiber that the cat is not equipped to handle. The use of these ingredients is solely for corporate profitability and marketing considerations!
- Find foods that have a predominance of acceptable meat ingredients, like chicken, turkey, and beef, or even meat-by-products, that your cat likes.
- Meat by-products have been given a “bad rap” by pet food companies that wish to market their vegetable ingredients successfully against meat-based foods. **The fact is that meat-by-products in most canned foods are nothing more or less than the wholesome parts of meat animals that humans do not usually consume.** For example, the clean spleens, lungs and udders of meat-animals would be discarded in most parts of the world if they could not be included in pet foods. They are perfectly acceptable meats for pets.



As I TELL my clients, I would much prefer my cats eat MEAT BY-PRODUCTS than corn, rice, potato or other grain, vegetable and fruit ingredients.

The diet is actually HEALTHIER for a cat if they are eating ALL of the animal, and not just muscle meat.

A Few More Tips

Digestive enzymes will help your companion transition from one type of food to another with ease. They help cats maintain a healthy digestive tract and get the most nutrition from their food.

Essential fatty acids, From fish oil – **never plants** - provide the omega 3 fatty acids missing from most processed cat foods that nourish the skin, coat and digestive tract.

Probiotics are important for cats on medication or those experiencing digestive upsets.

If you have read this far, I thank you – and you are to be commended!

Your feline friend will strongly benefit from the proper diet.

Jennifer Miller



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