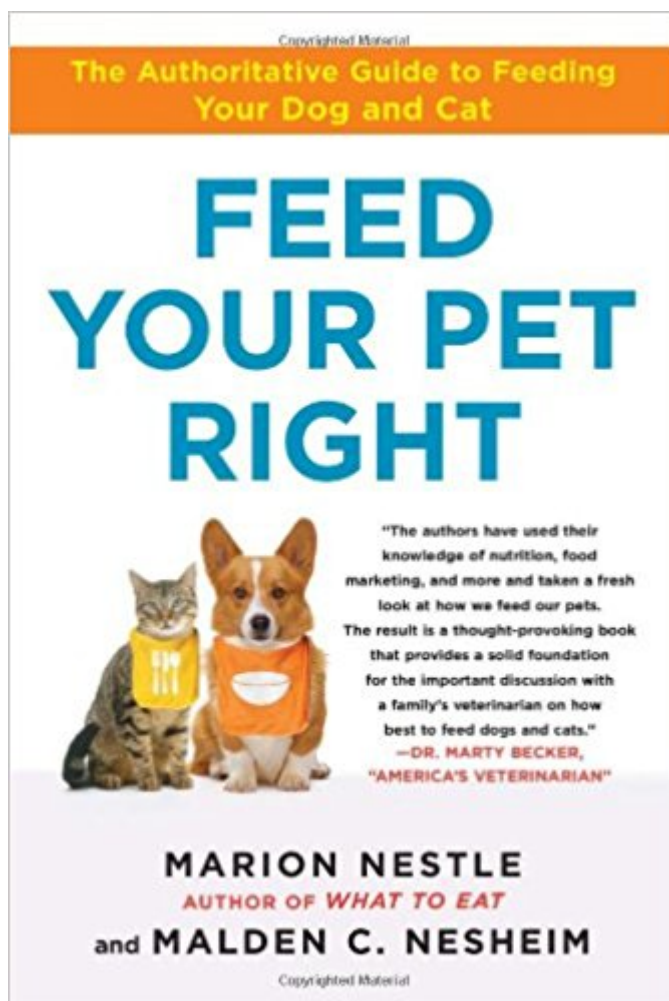


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Feed Your Pet Right: The Authoritative Guide To Feeding Your Dog And Cat



Synopsis

Human nutrition expert and author of the critically acclaimed *What to Eat*, Marion Nestle, Ph.D., M.P.H., has joined forces with Malden C. Nesheim, Ph.D., a Cornell animal nutrition expert, to write *Feed Your Pet Right*, the first complete, research-based guide to selecting the best, most healthful foods for your cat or dog. A comprehensive and objective look at the science behind pet food, it tells a fascinating story while evaluating the range of products available and examining the booming pet food industry and its marketing practices. Drs. Nestle and Nesheim also present the results of their unique research into this sometimes secretive industry. Through conversations with pet food manufacturers and firsthand observations, they reveal how some companies have refused to answer questions or permit visits. The authors also analyze food products, basic ingredients, sources of ingredients, and the optimal ways to feed companion animals. In this engaging narrative, they explain how ethical considerations affect pet food research and product development, how pet foods are regulated, and how companies influence veterinary training and advice. They conclude with specific recommendations for pet owners, the pet food industry, and regulators. A road map to the most nutritious diets for cats and dogs, *Feed Your Pet Right* is sure to be a reference classic to which all pet owners will turn for years to come.

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Customer Reviews

Marion Nestle is a human nutritionist, who endorses fresh, whole foods for people and criticizes processed junk foods. Her advice to people is to eat less and to eat a wide variety of minimally

processed foods. Her advice to pet owners is much less healthy and helpful. For this book, Nestle teamed up with Malden Nesheim, a veterinary nutritionist by training. He seems to have lead Nestle woefully astray. They endorse starchy kibbles and canned mush as pet food - the commercial pet foods that cause rampant periodontal disease, stress pets' immune systems, and leave them victims of myriad chronic diseases. It is puzzling that an advocate of fresh whole foods for people would not make similar, species-appropriate recommendations for their pets. The vast misinformation in this book is based on a false assumption: That dogs, like humans, are omnivores. No references are provided to support this erroneous belief, because there aren't any. All the scholarship of the last 10 years shows that dogs are carnivores. To back up their false assumption, they assert that dogs' intestinal track is long, like human omnivores. This is factually incorrect. Both dogs' and cats' small intestines are 2.5 times as long as their bodies. Human small intestines are 10 times as long as their height. Long intestines digest vegetables and cereals slowly and well. Carnivores' short and highly acidic intestinal tracks digest meats and bones fast and pass remaining matter out as poop - great piles of malodorous poop from grain-fed dogs and cats. The authors assert that dogs "descended" recently (in evolutionary time) from wolves. They fail to acknowledge that dogs are currently classified as a sub-species of wolf. Dogs are wolves, not a separate species. They fail to cite the last decade of genetic research that demonstrates the wolf-identity of domestic dogs. Despite the many human-designed changes in dogs' sizes and shapes, their digestive and immune systems are species wolf. As we all know, wolves are carnivores, whose natural diet consists of whole prey. Dogs'/wolves' natural diet is whole prey, as demonstrated repeatedly in studies of feral dogs. Domestic canines, that are abandoned and live in wild packs all over the world, prey on small animals. Feral dogs never graze in fields of corn or eat vegetables or garbage, unless no animal prey is available. Dogs and wolves evolved to eat raw meats and bones, not grains and vegetables. Wolves/dogs do not cook their meat and meaty bones. Cooking alters the nutritional value of foods and causes bones to splinter. Raw bones do not splinter. Dogs and wolves evolved to eat whole prey -- or its convenient form, raw-meaty-bones. In times of famine, wolves and dogs can subsist briefly on carbohydrates, a convenient fact the authors use to endorse cooked grains and vegetable diets for domestic carnivores. Most pet owners do not aim to feed their beloved pets a starvation diet. If pet owners were told the truth about carnivorous pets, many would choose to feed their pets raw meats and meaty bones. The authors' false assumption about the very nature of dogs renders their dietary advice misleading at best. Cats do not fare much better than dogs in this book. Although the authors realize that cats are carnivores that in the wild feed entirely on whole prey, they accept the pet-food industry line that cats can be fed on grains and

artificial nutrients. That carnivorous cats can subsist on a totally inappropriate diet of cooked grains and vegetables is a view endorsed by veterinarians, whose livelihood depends materially on pet-food sales. Cats fed high-carbohydrate diets often develop urinary tract stones, irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, and other chronic disorders from stressed digestive and immune systems. One interesting chapter is an attack on corruption in veterinary training, nutritional research, and practice. Global pet-food companies, notably Mars, Nestle-Purina, Proctor & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, and Del Monte, fund and control small animal nutrition in the veterinary profession. By supporting student training, providing employees to teach nutrition courses, funding "nutrition research", and contributing substantial income to practicing vets, these giant food companies buy veterinary endorsement of their junk foods that do irreparable harm to pets' health. Nestle and Nesheim call for reform of the veterinary profession and establishment of independent teaching, research, and practice. Unlike medicine, there seems to be little concern among veterinary schools or professional associations about undue commercial influence on their profession. Whereas revelations of drug-company influence on medical education, research, and practice provoked some reforms in medicine, little unrest is evidenced among vets, who know how dependent they are on pet-food company largesse. Although the authors conclude that home-cooked and raw diets can be safe and nutritionally appropriate, they do not favor species-appropriate diets over commercial junk foods. Neither dogs nor cats can safely eat cooked starches daily year in and year out. The authors express faith in AAFCO's brief feeding trials on a few animals to endorse feeding a monotonous, commercial diet for pets' lifetimes. Six months of feeding a concocted diet to 8 animals, 2 of which may die during the feeding trial, support an AAFCO recommendation of "complete and balanced" food for pets' lifetimes. How illogical and unscientific is that? In a few chapters, Nestle's familiar theme of diet variety is voiced. Variety of foods assures people's nutritional needs are met. Variety of meats and meaty bones, and occasional leftovers, also assures that pets' nutritional needs are met. I agree that variety of foods is both healthy and pleasant for both people and pets, with one major caveat: Dogs and cats are not omnivores. They do not need a variety of grains and vegetables in their diet, as humans do. Two other Nestle themes are safety and the interconnectedness of human and animal food supplies. On these topics, Nestle is an expert with valuable and disturbing information. Her earlier book on pet food safety reviewed the massive 2007 pet food recall for deliberate melamine adulteration. The same contaminated wheat gluten was fed to farmed fish and poultry intended for US human consumption and put into baby formula in China, with disastrous results. She points to frequent recalls of both human and pet foods for dangerous contamination and the FDA's inability to prevent or respond effectively to safety issues in the food

supply. Most of the later book deals with pet diets, however. This is a deeply disappointing book. I admire Marion Nestle's approach to human food. She was badly misled about the diet carnivorous pets need to thrive. One wonders if the authors are otherwise motivated to keep the peace with food-industry giants, the same global companies that make pet foods from human food wastes? Both authors are professors of nutrition at universities. Their careers are based on food. Global food production, processing, and distribution are controlled by the same companies that make pet foods. Getting on the wrong side of Mars and Nestle (the company) by rejecting their junk pet foods is probably not a wise career move. Truth is another matter.

Whether you've got two legs or four, nutrition professor Dr. Marion Nestle is a stickler for good science who sifts through studies, fads and theories and diligently analyzes labels to get to the truth about what constitutes an optimum diet, as New York Times' health columnist Jane Brody recently noted in her review entitled "The Truth About Cat And Dog Food." If you truly want to understand your dog or cat's nutritional needs, read this engaging, painstakingly researched book with the same open-minded, inquisitive spirit in which Dr. Nestle and co-author Malden Nesheim evaluated all the commercial pet foods on the market, along with the DIY, made-from-scratch alternatives. Sure to please populists and ruffle some feathers on the fringe, *Feed Your Pet Right* refuses to prescribe a dogmatic, one-kibble-suits-all formula. Nestle and Nesheim, who holds master's and doctoral degrees in animal nutrition and is professor emeritus of nutritional sciences at Cornell University, teamed up to delve into the origins of the commercial pet food industry (worth roughly \$20 billion annually), how it's evolved, and where it stands today. Nestle and Nesheim assess studies, marketing hype, and anecdotal evidence; scrutinize pet food production firsthand; and explore the disturbingly cozy relationship between pet food manufacturers and veterinarians. You may be surprised to learn that from a purely nutritional perspective there's not much difference between the premium pet food brands that command top dollar and the cheap stuff on the shelves at big box chains. My own smug expectations were thwarted; I was counting on this book to give me the ammunition I needed to prove to my friend who feeds her precious purebred a cheap brand of dog chow that she was doing her Cavalier King Charles a royal disservice. Nestle, who never hesitates to take on the big food companies over practices and products that she finds dubious, was surprised herself. "We expected to be appalled by the contents of commercial foods," Nestle and Nesheim admit. And, as they note, some truly unappetizing ingredients once found their way into the four-legged food chain, including road kill, euthanized pets, and wild horses. More recently, we had the melamine scandal, as documented in *Pet Food Politics*, Nestle's previous book. But though

Nestle and Nesheim acknowledge that today's low-budget chow compares pretty favorably with the pricier boutique brands, they also observe that there are many other factors to consider that have less to do with nutrition than with the desire to purchase products that reflect our own preferences. As the authors note: "We prefer our own foods to be natural and organic; free of pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones; and fairly, humanely, sustainably, and locally grown and raised. And we are willing to pay more for our food to support those values. You too may be willing to pay more for pet food to accommodate your own value system, personal dietary preferences, or lifestyle." Nestle and Nesheim also note that commercial pet food provides a valuable ecological benefit, since the pet food industry relies primarily on the by-products of our own consumption of animal products that would otherwise go to waste. But what if your own values compel you to choose a vegetarian diet for your pets as well as yourself? That's OK, according to the authors, as long as you ensure that your dog or cat's food includes all the necessary nutrients (which is somewhat trickier for cats than for dogs, but eminently do-able.) Would you rather make your pet's food from scratch so you can control the ingredients and eliminate packaging waste? That's fine, too; there's an entire chapter on how to cook for your dog or cat that eliminates any mystery about how to meet their nutritional needs. Like *What To Eat*, Nestle's indispensable guide to human nutrition, *Feed Your Pet Right* makes it easy to look up whatever aspect of dog or cat nutrition you care to research. It's a thoughtful, honestly written reference guide, complete with useful charts and some satirical cartoons thrown in for levity, that provides all the information you need to choose wisely from a wide range of options.

I have read "What to Eat" and loved it. I was excited to read this book as well. Unfortunately, it did not deliver. I have a degree in Animal Science and agree that by-products are not what a lot of people think. Unfortunately, they are not always handled properly before being turned into dog food. The other thing is they did say that studies have not been done on the bioavailability of some ingredients. So if the company is using feathers to up the crude protein level, it is false because the dogs and cats cannot make use of that protein. I have had dogs for over 20 years. I have fed Ol' Roy when I couldn't afford anything else and those dogs did not do as well as the dogs that have been fed recommended foods from the *Whole Dog Journal*. While they made some correct assumptions, they also fell very short of the mark on others. And, your dog and especially your cat do need more protein than you do. Poultry and hogs are more in line with our protein needs. Having said that, I do not agree with only feeding dogs meat. Dogs in the wild are scavengers and eat more than just meat.

I was surprised after reading this book to come back to and read some of the reviews here. People seem to be hung up on ideological principles of how they *think* dogs/cats should eat, or what *sounds* natural to them based the evolution of dogs. I was very pleased to see that the authors of this book only pay attention to what science can tell us about how different foods are digested by our pets, and how well the nutrition of those foods is absorbed in their bodies. Their findings are based in research, not in opinion.

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