

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS FOR CATS AND DOGS

With a wide range of pet food products on the market, the choice of what to feed is with pet owners, depending on what they view as the best option for their pet and depending on any feeding advice provided by their veterinarian. This variety is intended to ensure there is something to suit all needs and preferences.

If you are thinking about a vegetarian or vegan diet for your cat or dog, the information below provides an overview of factors to consider. If you decide to change your pet's diet, please consult your vet first and introduce any change gradually.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO FORMULATE COMPLETE VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN DIETS FOR DOGS AND FOR CATS?

Appropriately designed vegetarian or vegan diets, formulated and made with the input of qualified professionals, that meet the nutritional and physiological requirements of the species, are a valid part of the product portfolio for today's pet food industry. This will allow pet owners to make informed decisions about how they want to feed their own pets.

In recent years, the pet food industry have rapidly developed their understanding of how to best formulate and manufacture diets, with a variety of ingredients, so that they meet the requirements of different species at different life stages. This has included the continued use of approved feed additives and/or incorporation of novel food ingredients to help meet the nutritional requirements of pets when being fed vegetarian or vegan (plant-based) diets.



ARE HOME-MADE VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS SAFE FOR PETS?

UK Pet Food advise against home-made vegetarian and vegan diets and recipes for dogs and cats as these may cause nutritional deficiencies and imbalances with serious health consequences.

THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING A DIET FOR YOUR CAT OR YOUR DOG

Cats and dogs are two different species, evolved differently, and have their own specific nutritional needs that are also affected by other variables such as breed, level of activity, age, size and sex. Additionally some pets may have their own health conditions and requirements that need to be met under veterinary supervision.

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS FOR DOGS

Dogs are omnivorous carnivores and can potentially adapt to a well-balanced vegetarian or vegan diet, given their individual circumstances. There is a wide range of commercially prepared 'complete' vegetarian, and some vegan, dog foods available on the market.

As always, UK Pet Food advise dog owners to consult their veterinarian before changing their dog's diet and source their choice of product from reputable manufacturers.



MORE ADVICE ON DIETS AND NUTRITION CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.UKPETFOOD.ORG

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS FOR CATS

Cats are obligate carnivores and have highly exacting nutritional needs, such as high requirements for protein and amino acids. For this reason we advise owners to think very carefully before providing a vegetarian or vegan diet for their cats. There are a number of vegetarian and vegan diets available on the market and manufacturers should be willing to provide sufficient information to reassure you that their product is complete and balanced and meets all the nutritional needs of your cat. It is also important to discuss this option with your vet in the context of your cat's individual needs and source any product from reputable manufacturers only.

Examples of essential nutrients that are naturally found in animal-based sources but can also be sourced from non-animal ingredients:



TAURINE – AN ESSENTIAL AMINO ACID FOR CATS

The particular importance of Taurine in cat nutrition is well documented. It is an essential nutrient for cats and deficiency can lead to major issues such as blindness and/or heart failure. Cats require a dietary supply of Taurine which is naturally found only in animal derived materials. Having said that, synthetic taurine is also commercially available and is safe and efficacious for cats and widely available for inclusion in cat foods and approved as a feed additive for this purpose.

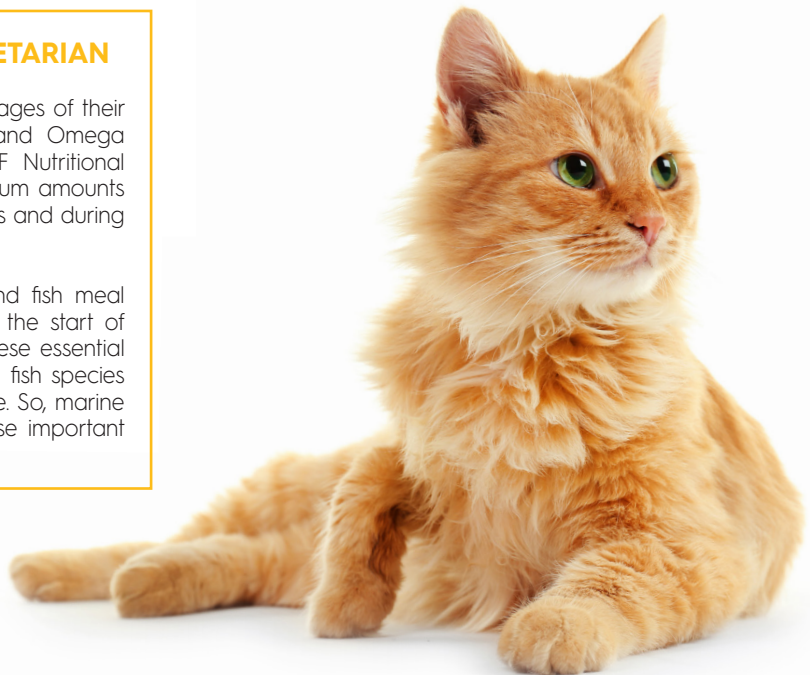
ARACHIDONIC ACID CAN BE SOURCED FROM FUNGUS

An essential fatty acid, Arachidonic acid, is another example of a nutrient required by cats. Whilst it is commonly available from animal-based ingredients, non-animal sources of arachidonic acid may be used in vegetarian/vegan cat food (eg. by incorporating the fungus *Mortierella alpina*).

MARINE ALGAE CAN PROVIDE A VEGETARIAN SOURCE OF IMPORTANT FATTY ACIDS

Cats and dogs, during growth and reproduction stages of their lives, have specific requirements for Omega 3 and Omega 6 long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids. FEDIAF Nutritional Guidelines provide recommendations for the minimum amounts of specific fatty acids for the diets of puppies, kittens and during the gestation period.

Normally these fatty acids come from fish oils and fish meal products. However, certain marine microalgae, at the start of the marine food chain, are also naturally rich in these essential fatty acids. Marine algae is the reason why certain fish species are rich sources of these fatty acids in the first place. So, marine algae can be used as vegetarian sources for these important fatty acids.



This factsheet was last updated in November 2022 by UK Pet Food's Veterinary and Nutrition Committee. For more factsheets and educational resources please visit www.ukpetfood.org/information-centre/pet-nutrition-hub.html or simply scan the QR Code opposite.

