

The Myth of 100% Complete Processed Pet Foods Randy Wysong DVM

Every day, people by the millions pour food from a package into their pet's bowl. Day in and day out, meal after meal, pets get the same fare. This strange phenomenon is not only widely practiced, but done by loving owners who believe they are doing the right thing. Why? Certainly because it is convenient, but also because the labels state that the food is "complete and balanced," "100% complete," or that the food has passed various analytical and feeding test criteria. Furthermore, manufacturers and even veterinarians counsel pet owners about not feeding other foods such as table scraps because of the danger of unbalancing these modern processed nutritional marvels. The power of the message is so great that pet owners en masse do every day to their pets what they would never do to themselves or their children -offer the same processed packaged food at every meal.

Think about it: Our world is complex beyond comprehension. It is not only largely unknown; it is unknowable in the "complete" sense. In order for nutritionists and manufacturers to produce a "100% complete and balanced" pet food, they must first know 100% about nutrition. However, nutrition is not a completed science. It is, in fact, an aggregate science, which is based upon other basic sciences, such as chemistry, physics, and biology. But since no scientist would argue that everything is known in chemistry or physics or biology, how can nutritionists claim to know everything there is to know about nutrition, which is based upon these sciences? This is the logical absurdity of the "100% complete and balanced" diet claim. It is the reason a similar venture to feed babies a "100% complete" formula has turned out to be a health disaster.

Claiming that anything is 100% is like claiming perfection, total knowledge, and absolute truth. Has pet nutrition really advanced that far? Does a chemist make such a claim? A physicist? Doctor? Professor? Did Einstein, Bohr, Pasteur, Aristotle, Plato, or any of the greatest minds in human history make such claims? No. Has the science of pet nutrition advanced to the point where everything is known about the physiology, digestion and biochemistry of animals, or that everything is known about their food?

Certainly not.

The fact of the matter is that the "100% complete" claim is actually "100% complete" guesswork. At best, one could say that such a claim is the firm possibility of a definite maybe.

Each time regulatory agencies convene to decide how much of which nutrients comprise "100% completeness," debate always ensues and standards usually change. This not only proves that what they claimed before was not "100% complete," but this should also make us highly suspicious about what they now claim to be "100% complete."

Additionally, consider that in order to determine the minimum requirement for a certain nutrient - say protein - all other nutrients used in the feeding trials must be adequate and standardized. Otherwise, if vitamin E, for example, is in excess or is deficient, how would you know if the results of the study were because of the effects of protein or due to something amiss with the level of vitamin E?

If the minimum requirements for all 26+ essential nutrients were all set and absolutely

etched in stone, then there would be no problem. But they aren't. They are constantly changing. This means each time any nutrient requirement is changed, all test results for all other nutrients using the wrong minimum for this nutrient would then be invalid. Most nutritionists simply ignore this conundrum, feeling like cowboys trying to lasso an octopus - there are just too many loose ends. But they continue to perpetuate the "100% complete" myth, and excuse themselves by saying they make adjustments when necessary.

The point is, don't believe the claim on any commercially prepared pet (or human) food that it is "100% complete and balanced." It is a spurious unsupported boast, intended to build consumer trust and dependence on commercial products - not create optimal health. Unfortunately most people think animal feeding is a mystery. It is not. Animal nutrition is not a special nutritional science to which common sense human nutrition principles cannot be applied. Use the same common sense in feeding your pets that you use for feeding your family. Nutrition is not about some special ingredient or the absence of some boogeyman ingredient. Fresh foods fed in variety are always superior to processed food artifacts.

If you feed processed foods, use discernment since just about anyone can create a commercial pet food. The pet food industry has hundreds of brands with officious and beguiling labels, all stamped with the approval of the FDA, USDA, State Feed Regulatory Agencies and the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). Business profiteers and the occasional movie star are the most common force behind the labels. All one needs is a little money and they can go to any number of toll manufacturers and have them slightly modify a shelf formula. Dress it all up with a fancy package, a clever brochure and some advertising and voilà, another brand is added to the 20-billion-dollar pet food industry.

Nutrition is serious health business. The public is not well served by exclusively feeding products from companies without any real commitment to health ... or knowledge of how to even achieve that.

For the past 25 years I have been a lonely voice in the wilderness trying to get people to understand the deadly health consequences of feeding processed pet foods exclusively. People want convenience in a bag and the industry wants the flow of billions to continue uninterrupted. In the meantime the scientific literature offers compelling proof that millions of animals have been maimed and died as a result of feeding thoroughly tested "100% complete" foods with the full imprimatur of government regulation. (Exactly the same thing that abounds in the FDA-pharmaceutical industry.) Examples of pet food disasters include dilated cardiomyopathy from taurine deficiency, potassium imbalances, fatty acid and carnitine deficiencies and numerous other problems that would be expected on a steady diet of dead, devitalized, carbohydrate-based processed foods. Moreover, the whole panoply of human chronic degenerative diseases such as cancer, obesity, arthritis, autoimmunities, dental deterioration and organ failure are at epidemic levels in the pet population ... as should be expected on such a diet.

Not only is feeding the same processed food day in and day out a formula for disease, it is a cruelty to our pets. We take them from their interesting and active wild setting and confine them. That is one thing, but to not even offer them interesting natural meal variety is really quite inexcusable. The answer, like everything else good in life, is a little attention and common sense. Knowledge is the best beginning point.