



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Tips on Choosing Cat Food

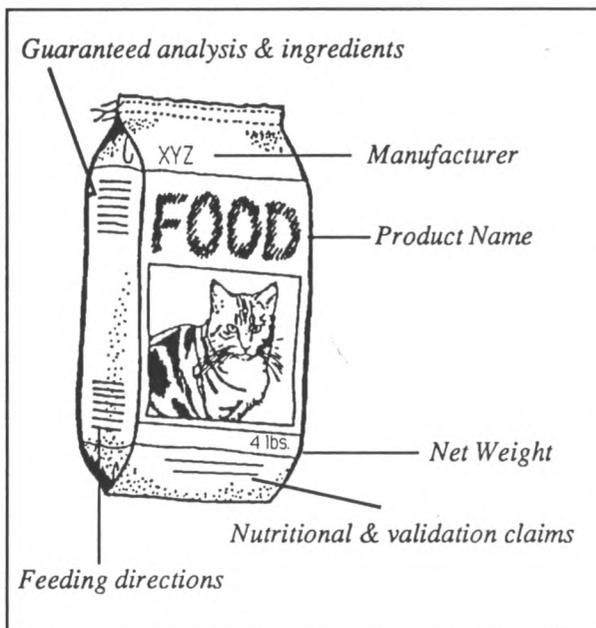
Pet food labels are required by law to contain basic information (see insert). This information can assist you when selecting a cat food. The validation claim on the label must be derived from one of the following methods: estimation from listed values, laboratory analysis, or passing feeding trials of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). The guaranteed analysis is required to list the minimum percentages of crude protein and fat, and the maximum percentages of fiber and moisture. Ingredients are listed in descending order of concentration.

Ear Mites

Ear mites are a common problem of kittens and cats. Kittens frequently acquire the infestation from their mother, since mites are transmitted easily by contact. Signs of an ear mite infestation include a characteristic dark-brown ear wax, scratching at the ears (sometimes so severely that lesions appear at the base of the ear), head shaking and tilting. In most cases, both ears will be infested.

Diagnosis is based on the microscopic examination of ear wax. Treatment consists of applying ear mite medications per the veterinarian's instructions.

When deciphering labels you should know that "flavored" cat food is not required to have the real food in it such as fish or cheese, only the flavor. Cat foods that use "dinner" on their label, such as Seafood Dinner, must contain 25 percent of the item listed on the label. "Meat-by-products" means that the food contains pig, beef or lamb, with the exclusion of horn, hoof, hair and hide. "Poultry digest" contains the remnants of poultry (i.e. viscera, intestines) which are fermented in a vat. The fermentation is stopped with the addition of hydrochloric acid. Although the process sounds repulsive, the end product helps to acidify a cat's diet which aids in the prevention of feline urologic syndrome (FUS). "Mealproduct" means that any body part can be included in the product, except for feathers.



Impact of Fecal Impactions

Constipation is a relatively common problem for cats. Fortunately it is less life threatening than diarrhea. However, prolonged constipation that is left untreated may progressively worsen and result in serious, and sometimes, permanent conditions such as megacolon.

Typical signs of constipation include crouching and straining for prolonged periods without defecating or only producing a small amount of hard, dry feces. (Caution: Straining to urinate is very similar to defecation. Constipation is seldom life-threatening; however a cat with a blocked urinary tract is in danger and requires treatment by a veterinarian.) Constipated cats may

also eat poorly, lose weight, lack energy and vomit. If you observe any of these signs, have your cat examined by a veterinarian.

Diet, environmental changes, infected anal sacs, fractured pelvis, intestinal obstruction by tumors, metabolic imbalances, dehydration, and certain medications can cause constipation.

Treatment for mild to moderate cases of constipation includes high-bulk diets, laxatives, and occasionally suppositories or enemas to induce evacuation of bowel contents. In more severe cases, manual evacuation or surgery is required.

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