



# Simple Guide to Improving Your Pet's Food



By Dr. Katie Woodley

**\*Disclaimer\*** The information in this guide does not take the place of medical advice or veterinary care. It is meant to educate and supplement what your veterinarian recommends. If your pet is not well, please take them to the veterinarian immediately for an examination, diagnostics and treatment. You are in charge of your pet's health in a way that makes sense to you. Consult your integrative veterinarian for specific health recommendations for the animals in your care. Links in this guide are typically affiliate links that let you help support us.



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“

Your pet's food can  
be the safest form  
of medicine or the  
slowest form of  
poison.

”

Dr. Katie





Navigating your pet's food can be hard and confusing.

Where do you start?

Unfortunately, the pet food industry has taught the majority of veterinarians and pet parents that ultra-processed pet food is best.

But is it best for your pet's health?

Use this guide to learn more about what's in your pet's food and most importantly how to optimize and improve the food you are feeding your fur family.

I praise you for wanting to learn more and do what's best for your pets. You are a part of the movement that will help normalize real food again to help our pets thrive.

Enjoy the guide!

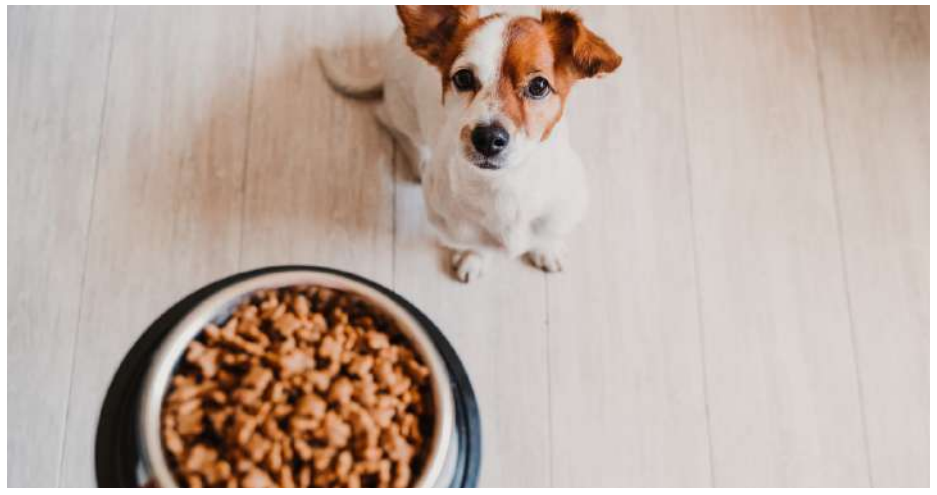
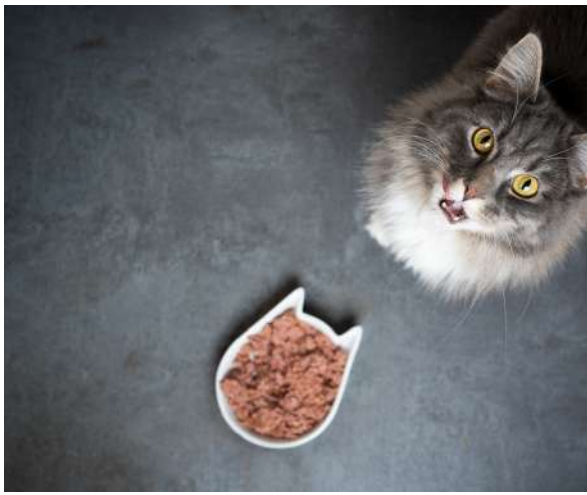
*-Dr. Katie Woodley*





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# Transitioning to a New Diet

You're ready to try a new diet and do what's best for your dog and/or cat. You've thrown away the old, you've got the new food and you start feeding it. But then it happens...diarrhea, vomiting, your pet doesn't feel good. Now you feel like the new food is bad and you just go back to the old, because it was easier and your pet seemed fine on it.

This is a common scenario for many pet parents and it doesn't have to be this way.

Here are my top tips for a smooth transition to a new diet for your dogs and cats:



**Start slow** - 1/4 new with 3/4 old food for 3 days, then 1/2 new with 1/2 old for 3 days, then 3/4 new with 1/4 old for 3 days, then 100% new diet. If there is any GI upset, slow down the transition and it extend it out.



Have **set meal times**, especially for cats transitioning off of dry food. If your pet is picky (and is otherwise healthy), you can use time-restricted feeding. Take care with cats not eating for extended periods of time (greater than 3 days), since they can become sick.



If your pet is being picky with the new food, crumble some of the old kibble on top or use nutritional yeast (great natural source of B vitamins) on top of the food. Also, add healthy toppers like bone broths or canned tuna/salmon/sardines as encouragement.



At the start of changing the food, try different proteins and different brands if using a pre-made option to find the flavor and texture your pet prefers.



# Transitioning to a New Diet: More Tips For Cats

- ✓ For cats that are stubborn, leave dry food down for only 20-30 minutes at the set feeding times. It's ok to leave canned food down for 12 hours to encourage them to eat this in between. Keep in mind cats need about 150-250 calories per day.
- ✓ Once you've set meal times, start reducing the amount of dry food being presented and replace with the new food. The goal is to stimulate hunger, but not starve the cat.
- ✓ When your cat is used to set meal times, try a meal of only canned food. If they do not eat it, do NOT put down dry food. Try different canned food textures and flavors, along with toppers of freeze-dried crumble or other options listed before. Leave it out. If your cat has not touched it within 18 hours, then put down a small amount of dry food.
- ✓ Play with your cat prior to feeding to stimulate appetite. You can also use a little dry food to stimulate activity, increase calories burned to make them more inclined to try the canned food.
- ✓ Cats have a strong sense of smell and can smell the dry food in the pantry. Put the bag in the fridge, so your cat does not hold out for the dry because they can smell it.
- ✓ Sprinkle tasty toppers on the canned like parmesan cheese, tuna flakes, freeze-dried liver or chicken. You can also try meat baby food mixed in.

Check out [catinfo.org](http://catinfo.org) for more helpful resources

# Ingredients to Avoid in Any Food

There are many toxic ingredients that can be found in pet foods. Here are a few that you must avoid for optimal health in your fur family...

- Carrageenan
- Artificial preservatives
  - BHA/BHT
  - BHTQ
  - Ethoxyquin
- Menadione (menadione sodium bisulfite, menadione dimethylprimidinol bisulfite, vitamin K supplement)
- "Animal/meat meal" - no specific protein listed
- Predominantly peas & potatoes in the first 5 ingredients
- Corn products - corn gluten meal, etc.
- Brewer's rice
- Sweeteners
- Artificial flavors
- Natural flavors



Dry foods can contain many more chemicals, like anti-microbial agents, anti-caking agents, curing, drying and firming agents, surface-active agents, humectants, stabilizers and emulsifiers and here's the thing...they are not required to be listed on the pet food label.

Chemical additives used in dry food are now shown to be second only to dietary protein in causing adverse food reactions in pets.

Waste meat that ends up in rendering to go to pet foods can be chemically denatured before rendering. The chemicals allowed for denaturing include fuel oil, kerosene, and carbolic acid. This is why it's important to know if companies are using 3D or 4D meats.

# How to Improve Kibble Diets



## Real Food Ingredients

Adding real foods into your pet's kibble is one of the best things you can do if you're not able to transition your pet off of this type of food.

Adding in lightly steamed leafy greens at least three times a week has been shown to reduce cancer risk by 90% for certain cancers.

Dogs don't digest carbohydrates well due to their lack of or low amount of salivary amylase present, so it's important to steam or lightly cook the vegetables.

Vegetables that are high in phytonutrients and antioxidants include:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Asparagus

Using meal toppers that have raw or cooked vegetables and meats are another way to improve the quality of the kibble diet. Many of the brands listed also produce meal toppers that alone are not balanced but provide more nutrition for your pets.

## Other Foods To Add

Even when feeding homemade or raw diets, there are other nutritious ingredients you can add to the food to improve your pet's health.

Using canned unsalted, wild-caught sardines, lightly cooked eggs, and adding green-lipped mussels are great sources of additional nutrients.

Many kibble diets are too high in omega-6 fatty acids which are inflammatory, so adding in omega-3s are essential.

Using omega3 supplements can reduce inflammation. Great sources include phytoplankton, krill oil, green-lipped mussel, ahiflower, and better quality fish oils.

Click here to check out some of the supplements I recommend to reduce inflammation in both dogs and cats:  
<https://us.fullscript.com/protocols/thenaturalpetdoctor-anti-inflammatory-support>

# Recommended Kibble Brands

Kibble is not the best diet for your dogs and cats, but we understand if you need to use it or are in a transition. However, especially for cats, make sure to try your best to get them off of kibble because they are obligate carnivores and kibble can create many health issues like IBD, urinary tract problems and pancreatitis. Here are some kibble brands that have stepped up and hold themselves accountable for using good quality ingredients, being transparent about sourcing, and truly want what's best for our pets.

A great resource for pet parents to learn more about transparency in the pet food industry and make sure you're making the best choice in pet food companies is by following Susan Thixton and truthaboutpetfood. A pledge from companies to do what's right in pet food is listed here:

<http://associationfortruthinpetfood.com/the-pledge/>

- Open Farm
- Dogs for the Earth
- Lotus
- Farmina
- Carna4
- ZiwiPeak (air-dried)



# Home-Cooked Diets

Cooking for your pet can be one of the most rewarding things you do as a pet parent. Believe me, I know. We cooked for our beloved German Shepherd. Some days it was frustrating, because I was tired, but I knew I controlled what was going into his diet and that I could provide him the best ingredients possible and feel more at peace with the sourcing.

Home-cooking can be stressful and worrisome, but this guide is going to give you the resources to make it easier and less stressful for you.

If you're feeling overwhelmed with cooking, start by adding fresh food into your dog's kibble (see above for healthy options). Cats and dogs have no physiological need for carbohydrates, but I recommend the use of healthy veggies for their antioxidant and phytonutrient properties. Your pets can also benefit from adding in high-quality proteins like sardines and/or eggs into their food a few times a week if you're not ready to transition their diets.



Type here to search for 1000's of more foods not shown below then click Create below



Up to 32 human foods can be selected

See Saved Favorite Selection(s)

See Most Popular Selection(s)

Select At Least 1 Protein Rich Food		Dense Carbohydrates		Oils/Fats (2 At a Time Limit)		Vegetables		Fruits	
Beef, ground, 85%	Lamb, chop	Bailey	Black bean	Corn oil 18:2 Rich	Walnut oil	Asparagus	Bell pepper	Apple	Applesauce
Beef, ground, 95%	Lamb, ground, 80%	Bread, rye	Bread, wheat	Soybean oil	Sesame oil	Broccoli	Cabbage	Apricot, dried	Banana
Bison, ground, 85%	Lentils	Bread, white	Couscous	Peanut oil	Canola oil	Carrot	Cauliflower	Blueberries	Cantaloupe
Calamari (squid)	Moose	Garbanzo bean	Lentils	Almond oil	Flaxseed oil	Celery	Corn	Cranberry sauce	Honeydew
Catfish	Ostrich, 93% lean	Millet	Oats	Almond butter	Safflower oil	Eggplant	Green bean	Kiwi	Mango
Chicken breast	Pork loin	Pasta, wheat	Pinto bean	Peanut butter	Olive oil	Green pea	Kale	Nectarine	Orange
Chicken thigh	Pork, ground, 84%	Potato							
Chicken, ground	Rabbit								
Cod	Salmon								
Cottage cheese, 1%	Shrimp								
Cottage Cheese, 2%	Tilapia								
Crab, canned	Tofu								
Dark breast	Turkey								

View Selected Ingredients (Click to Deselect) x Remove All Foods

CREATE DOG RECIPE
CREATE CAT RECIPE
Save Selection(s) As A Favorite

# BalanceIT - DIY Recipes

## Resource to create home-made diets that are balanced

[BalanceIT.com](http://BalanceIT.com) is a great resource to help you balance home-made diets for healthy dogs and cats. You pick the ingredients you want to use and it will formulate a diet for you. You WILL need to add supplements to it though to ensure that the vitamins/minerals are in balance. They have their own supplements you can use, which are synthetic. These are not better than fresh foods like using organ meats and bones, but they are better than processed foods like kibble and are a great starting place. Here's a free tutorial to check out: [How To Use BalanceIT](#).

You can also use other supplements from companies like [IviBlend](#), [RX Vitamins](#) (Canine Minerals and Canine/Feline Essentials), and [Dr. Peter Dobias](#).

A common mistake that is made with home-prepared diets is variety. We find one recipe we feel comfortable with and forget to rotate the types of proteins and vegetables we use. Remember variety is key, just like it is for our diets. Each protein and vegetable provides different vitamins and minerals that are essential for optimal health. Diets should be balanced over time. Not every meal has to be perfectly balanced.



## More Home-Cooking Resources

Here are a few other resources to help you create a balanced home-made recipe:

- <https://peterdobias.com/>
- <http://www.mealmixfordogs.com/>
- <https://catinfo.org/>

These recipe generators still require supplements added into the diet. Feeding just meat and veggies without anything else added is NOT a balanced diet. Keep in mind that nutritional deficiencies take a long time to show up in your pet, just like they do for us. This is why the veterinary profession has a hard time justifying that nutrition plays a big part in many diseases, especially when an ultra-processed diet is being fed.

If you need a reminder why these processed diets are not healthy long-term for our pets and are dealing with gut and skin health challenges, make sure to check out our **Better Gut Health Program** to figure out how to fix your pet's health concerns through nutrition and our healing frameworks.

When feeding your pets a home-cooked diet, remember to calculate their energy requirements off of their ideal lean body condition. Here's a resource for calculating their energy requirements:

- For cats - <https://www.petnutritionalliance.org/cat.php>
- For dogs - <https://www.petnutritionalliance.org/dog.php>

I would ignore the rest of the information on the pet nutritional alliance website, for the reasons listed here:

<https://truthaboutpetfood.com/pet-nutrition-alliance/>



## Is kibble the best food for your pet? Isn't raw harmful? I thought real food was bad for pets?

These are common questions that many pet parents, including yourself, may have in regards to your new puppy's food.

Manufactured or processed pet food includes kibble, semi-moist and canned food. This is where it can become very overwhelming for a pet parent. How are you supposed to know what is best?

Let's go back to the physiology and genetic makeup of your dog.

Dogs do not fall into the obligate carnivore (consuming only animal meat) or pure omnivore (where plant matter makes up the majority of their diet). Dogs have a preference for meat when offered vegetables versus meat, which descends from the wolve ancestry. However, the domesticated dog actually has 3-32 more copies for the amylase gene which is what breaks-down carbohydrates, depending on their association with farmers and exposure to carbohydrates. Physically, dogs can break down some carbohydrates.

Cats are obligate carnivores and have no physiological need for carbohydrates. Unfortunately, many of their diets use pea protein which is not a complete protein source for them.

Dogs and cats will establish life-long taste preferences based on their experiences while young. For example, if you only offer your cat dry food, they will have a preference for them for the rest of their life. This does not mean it is the most ideal diet to optimize health. And feral cats will not go anywhere near dry food since they have not developed that preference.

However, both dogs and cats will do best with the least processed, higher protein diet that you can offer them.





# Balanced Home-Cooked Recipe

Here's an example of a balanced home-cooked recipe from BalanceIT.com using synthetic human supplements for a daily meal for a 35lb healthy dog:

Ingredients	Grams	Amount
(1) Beef, ground, 95% lean meat / 5% fat, patty, cooked, pan-broiled (approx. 94% lean)	340.0 g	4 serving (where 1 serving = 3 oz )
(2) Sweetpotato, cooked, baked in skin, without salt (BalanceIT.com; flesh fed only)	200.0 g	1 cup
(3) Oil, walnut	5.6 g	1 1/4 tsp
(4) Nordic Naturals Omega-3 Pet Liquid	9.2 g	10 mL
(5) Spinach, cooked, boiled, drained, without salt	45.0 g	1/4 of a cup
(6) Broccoli, cooked, boiled, drained, without salt	39.0 g	1/4 of a cup, chopped
(7) Blueberries, raw	37.0 g	1/4 of a cup
(8) Centrum Chewables (400 IU Vit D per multivitamin/multimineral tablet, NO xylitol)	0.6 g	3/8 of a tablet
(9) Generic calcium carbonate tablet (e.g., Tums with no xylitol; 500 mg elemental calcium per tablet; NO Vit D)	2.8 g	1 7/8 tablet
(10) Morton Lite Salt Mixture	2.6 g	1/2 of a tsp
(11) Solgar Chelated Copper (2.5 mg copper per tablet)	0.4 g	3/8 of a tablet

### Nutrition Facts

**Calories:** 914 Calories  
**Protein:** 43% protein calories (392 Calories)\*  
**Fat:** 35% fat calories (320 Calories)\*  
**Carbohydrate:** 22% carbohydrate calories (202 Calories)\*  
**Moisture:** 72.0%  
**Deficiencies:** None, based on AAFCO, with supplement(s) added, 6 without supplement(s) added

This can be the easiest way to feel comfortable with starting out. You can also use the other vitamin/mineral blends listed previously to balance this diet. To make cooking easier, I recommend batch cooking once you get the hang of it and know your pet is enjoying the new food.

Organs and other whole food sources like oysters, mussels, kelp, sea salt, chlorella, tripe, eggshell can be used to replace the synthetic vitamins and minerals to make this more healthy.



# Pre-Made Cooked Diets



But not everyone has the time to cook for their pets. Here are great brands that use real foods that are sourced appropriately without nasty chemicals. Many of them are higher in protein content too, because we don't want to carb-load our pets.

- Raised Right
- Evermore
- Carna4
- Open Farm
- ChiDog

Remember to rotate the foods you are feeding. Using different proteins, vegetables for their phytonutrients. You can also add in ingredients to their diets, up to 15% of the diet, without causing an imbalance. I also prefer to rotate brands, to protect yourself against recalls or if there are slight nutritional imbalances, but it also encourages a healthy microbiome.

Rotation through different proteins/meats every week is ideal. If you're using pre-made brands, then rotate with different companies every 4-6 weeks, including using different proteins within those companies.

Adding in different vegetables every week will also help with variety and ensuring that your pet is receiving the right amount of vitamins and minerals to optimize health and nutrition.



# RAW FOODS 101

## Where do you start?

Raw diets are becoming more popular amongst pet parents due to the increasing amount of disease we're seeing in our dogs and cats, especially allergies and GI issues. It's not hard to start seeing a correlation with how ultra-processed kibble diets are putting an insane amount of chemicals into our pet's bodies which are leading to inflammation and chronic disease.

Many pet parents want to take back control of their pet's food and know where the meats are being sourced. However, it can be overwhelming and scary, because you don't want to cause harm.

Raw food diets are not being taught in veterinary school. It's highly likely that your veterinarian is not comfortable and may not agree with this type of feeding. However, it's because they just don't know about it and there is unfortunately mainstream knowledge that is false about how processed foods are better for your pets.

However, you can take back the control and help your pet's thrive by introducing fresh, real foods, whether that's using a great commercial company or making your own DIY meals for your dogs and cats.

This guide will provide additional resources that break down how to get started to make the process less confusing, less worrisome and open up a world of helping your pet thrive naturally.





# What's included in a raw diet?

## Let's start with the basics...

Raw diets will contain:

- Muscle Meat
- Edible Bone
- Organs
- Plants or Fur
- Supplements

The combination of the above will ensure over time that the diet is balanced and meets the optimal nutritional requirements for your pets throughout life. It's not about feeding one meat, some bone, and a little organ. Your pet will do best with a varied diet that rotates the different foods, veggies, and organs that are included in the diet.

These resources are incredible for helping you get started on feeding a balanced and optimal raw food diet:

**Perfectly Rawsome** <https://perfectlyrawsome.com/>

Here you will get the right ratios and supplements to ensure the recipe meets NRC requirements for both dogs and cats.

**Primal Pooch** <https://primalpooch.com/>

Another great resource with FREE guides on getting started on feeding raw to your dogs.

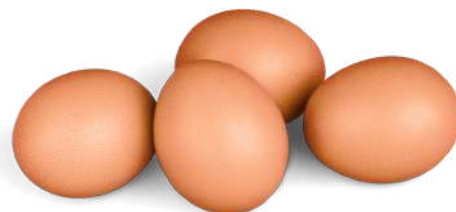
**Pack Lunch Raw** <http://www.packlunchraw.com/spreadsheet/>

Download this free spreadsheet that helps you create balanced DIY recipes.



# DIY Adult Cat Raw Recipe

- 10.5 oz (300gm) Raw ground beef
- 6.7 oz (190gm) Raw pork heart
- 2.1 oz (60gm) Raw beef kidney
- 1 oz (30gm) Raw chicken liver
- 0.45 oz (13gm) Steamed (or dehydrated) blue mussels
- 2 large Raw Egg Yolk
- 1.5 tsp KAL Bone Meal powder
- 1 level scoop Kelp (100mg)
- 1 drop Vitamin E Oil (23000 IU per oz)



Provides 1000 calories.

Typical cats need 150-250 calories per day. Provides ~ 4 days of meals.  
Meets NRC guidelines for a healthy adult cat.

For more balanced recipes, check out <https://perfectlyrawsome.com/>





# Pre-Made Raw Brands

Here's a list of companies that are transparent with their sourcing of ingredients and vow to do what's best for optimal pet health.

This list is not complete with all brands, but it's important to ask the manufacturer the questions discussed in this [free webinar](#) to check if the company is following good manufacturing standards:

- [VivaRaw](#) (use code DRKATIE for a discount)
- [Darwin's Natural](#) (use code DRKATIE for a free gift)
- Raw Feeding Miami
- NorthStar Bison
- Hare Today
- TikiCat
- Steve's Real Food
- Small Batch Pet Food
- Paleo Ridge
- AllProvide

# RAW FOOD RESOURCES

## To learn more...

### Amazing books to read:

- [Raw & Natural Nutrition for Dogs by Lew Olson, PhD](#)
- [Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet by Steve Brown](#)
- [See Spot Live Longer by Steve Brown](#)
- [Dr. Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs and Cats: Simple Homemade Food by Beth Taylor and Karen Shaw Becker DVM](#)
- [Work Wonders: Feed Your Dog Raw Meaty Bones by Tom Lonsdale](#)
- [Raw Meaty Bones Promote Health by Tom Lonsdale](#)
- [Give Your Dog a Bone by Dr. Ian Billinghurst](#)
- [The BARF Diet by Dr. Ian Billinghurst](#)
- [Raw Dog Food by Carina Beth MacDonald](#)
- [Raw Feeding 101 by Scott Jay Marshall](#)
- [Feeding Dogs by Dr. Conor Brady](#)
- [Yin & Yang Nutrition for Dogs by Dr. Judy Morgan](#)

### Websites to follow:

- [Perfectly Rawsome](#) – focuses on species-appropriate diets for a variety of pets (dogs, cats, ferrets, etc.)
- [Keep the Tail Wagging](#) – Run by Kimberly Gauthier, she details her experiences with a raw diet and shares information for those looking to get started with raw.
- [The Raw Feeding Community](#) – a source of unbiased, informative information for all raw feeders.
- [Raw Feeding Rebels](#) – A website dedicated to promoting the benefits of raw and natural (unprocessed) diets for dogs, cats, and even fish.
- [The Truth About Pet Food](#) – Run by Susan Thixton, The Truth About Pet Food is a tireless advocacy effort 100% supported by pet food consumers (not raw related).
- [Poisoned Pets](#) – Shares pet food consumer advocacy info (not raw related).
- [Pack Lunch](#) – Blog focusing on raw feeding and natural healthcare.
- [Healthy Dog For Life](#) – Dan Scott has authored several books on dogs and has a great blog dedicated to raw feeding and natural healthcare.
- [The Lazy Raw Feeder](#) – Tips and tricks for feeding raw. Aimee not only feeds raw, she works for a prepackaged raw dog food company too.
- [Dogs First](#) – Dr. Conor Brady holds a Doctorate in Behavior and Nutrition. He studies the effects of diet on the mammalian digestive system and their resulting behavior. After years of intensive research, he separates correct, independent information from the heavily biased pseudoscience of big industry, offering free advice on all things canine health and raw feeding.
- [K9's Over Coffee](#): Run by Barbara Rivers, a dog walker and pet sitter by day, and a raw food and canine exercise blogger by night.

# RESOURCES

## For Optimizing Your Pet's Nutrition



Here are a few resources to help you get started with using real food to help your pet thrive naturally:

- Association for Truth in Pet Food - <http://associationfortruthinpetfood.com/the-pledge/>
- DIY Home-cooked Meals - [BalanceIT.com](http://BalanceIT.com)
- [Dr. Conor Brady - Feeding Dogs](#)
- [Dr. Becker's Real Food For Healthy Dogs & Cats](#)
- [Dr. Judy Morgan - Yin & Yang Nutrition For Dogs](#)

Nutrition is the foundation of health, and unfortunately many pets are experiencing gut and skin health issues that are frustrating to resolve. If you need more guidance and frameworks to help your pets heal and feel their best again, make sure to get our [Better Gut Health Program](#) so you can feel confident in the next steps to take to heal the root cause of your pet's gut health issues.

If you're wanting a deeper dive into the other foundations of health for your pets, make sure to watch our FREE masterclass: [Top Natural Ways To Help Your Pets Live Longer](#)

Thanks for being a part of our community and wanting the best for your pet. Together we will create the change that's needed to help our pets thrive so that we have many more years of their furry companionship.

Thank you again for your support!

With love and gratitude,

*Dr. Katie Woodley*

[www.thenaturalpetdoctor.com](http://www.thenaturalpetdoctor.com)

[info@thenaturalpetdoctor.com](mailto:info@thenaturalpetdoctor.com)

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