

# What should I feed my cat?

**Category: Companion animals -> Cats -> Feeding**

Cats are obligate or true carnivores, meaning that they need a source of animal protein to survive. In the wild, cats eat the carcasses of the prey animals they catch which consist of raw meat, raw bones, organs, other tissue and digested vegetable matter. While cats are carnivores they do consume a small amount of the vegetable matter contained in the stomach and intestines of their prey. Cats have adapted over thousands of years to eat this type of diet.

Basic cat feeding guide:

- Provide some variety
  - Feed a high quality premium commercial food
  - Offer some natural foods
  - Natural foods include fresh raw meat (e.g. pieces of raw lamb, pieces of raw chicken) and raw meaty bones
  - Raw food offered to cats should always be fresh
  - Choose human-grade raw meat and raw meaty bones because pet meat/pet mince/pet rolls/pet meat and bone products can contain preservatives which can be detrimental to the cat's health (eg sulphite preservative induced thiamine deficiency which can be acute and fatal)
  - Provide some moist foods in the diet regularly which has been associated with greater urinary tract health e.g. wet can food, fresh raw lamb meat
  - Raw meaty bones provide several important health benefits. They help to keep teeth and gums healthy
  - Suitable raw meaty bones include raw chicken necks, raw chicken wings, raw chicken drumsticks, raw lamb shanks
  - Too many raw bones may lead to constipation. Generally 1-2 raw meaty bones may be provided per week with a few days in between each serving
  - The bone must be large enough so that the cat cannot fit the whole bone in it's mouth or swallow the bone whole
  - Always supervise cats when they eat raw bones
  - Avoid large marrow bones, large knuckle bones or bones sawn lengthwise as cats may crack their teeth on these
  - **Never** feed cooked bones as these may splinter and cause internal damage or become an intestinal obstruction
  - Please check that raw bones are suitable for your particular cat with your vet (some cats with misshapen jaws or dental disease may have difficulty chewing on raw bones)
  - Fish, such as tinned sardines in springwater; tinned tuna and tinned salmon (care with any fish bones) can also be offered as a treat occasionally. Please avoid feeding the one type of fish constantly
  - Cooked meat such as boiled chicken may also be offered occasionally, please ensure there are no cooked bones, onions/onion sauces or other toxic substances present (see below)
  - Cats may also be offered a small amount of vegetable matter
  - Provide cats with access to grass (avoid chemically treated grass and toxic plants) - they occasionally eat grass which may be a source of vegetable matter and micronutrients. Be aware that large amounts of certain types of 'cat grass' can cause hypervitaminosis D.
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- The amount of food required will depend on your cat's size and age, but you should take care not to overfeed or underfeed. Your vet will be able to weigh your cat, assess your cat's body condition score and provide advice
  - Adult cats tend to prefer to eat several smaller meals throughout the day/night. They should ideally be offered food at least 3-4 times per day (eating smaller frequent meals has been associated with greater urinary tract health)

- Please ensure clean fresh water is available at all times
- **Do not** feed the following: onions, garlic, chocolate, coffee or caffeine products, bread dough, avocado, grapes, raisins, sultanas, currants, nuts including macadamia nuts, fruit stones (pits) e.g. mango seeds, apricot stones; fruit seeds, corncobs; tomatoes, mushrooms; the one type of fish constantly, cooked bones; small pieces of raw bone or fatty trimmings

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