

## Vegan Dogs & Cats? Of Course!

For ethical vegans, it makes little sense to sacrifice dozens of equally-sentient creatures to keep one companion animal alive. For years, my wife, Anita, and I have successfully fed our various dogs *and* cats a pure vegan diet. But every so often, I'll come across a comment stream of vegans vigorously defending the perceived need to feed non-vegan foods to their companion animals.

At the World Vegan Summit in Los Angeles (March 2015), I learned counterarguments to some of the most common objections made to feeding pets a vegan diet. I was enlightened by two speakers: Dr. Armaiti May, an L.A. based vegan vet, and Eric Weisman, the founder of Evolution Dog & Cat Food.

Dogs are naturally omnivorous, so there's less objection to feeding them vegan food. But cats are classified as "obligate carnivores," which erroneously implies they *must* eat meat.

Some feel it's cruel to feed a cat plants instead of his/her *natural* diet. The truth is, a cat's "natural" diet consists of small birds, rodents, insects, and reptiles, not the hormone and disease-laden dairy, beef, chicken, and lamb scraps found in many commercial cat foods.



As the labels on cans of Evolution starkly state: *Evolution is the only U.S. pet grade cat/dog food company not using sick, terrorized animals that are butchered while fully conscious with waste parts.*

Furthermore, only a percentage of meat-based pet food consists of actual animal products, with the balance being made up of plants! Hmm, I thought they said true carnivores couldn't eat plants.

Another common objection is that cats require taurine, an amino acid found in meat but not in plants, other than sea algae. Defenders claim that the synthetic taurine used in vegan cat food is not as effective as the real thing. But in truth, the natural taurine in meat is *destroyed* during processing, so manufacturers replace it with *synthetic* taurine! Shouldn't that settle the debate?

Most dogs take readily to and thrive on a vegan diet. Cats can be more finicky. The trick is to slowly mix the new vegan food with the old animal food, gradually increasing the percentage until it's 100% vegan. Trying different vegan products and added flavorings (e.g., nutritional yeast) can help stimulate the appetites of fussy eaters.

When shopping for vegan dog/cat food, make sure the can or package says it is "formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog/Cat Food Nutrient Profiles for [all or particular] Life Stage/s." (AAFCO = Association of American Feed Control Officials.)

Several national brands include a vegan product line (e.g., Natural Balance, Nature's Recipe), but in keeping with the VeganDiego! theme of supporting 100% vegan businesses, try these instead:

- Evolution <http://petfoodshop.com>
- V-Dog <http://v-dog.com>
- VegePet <http://www.vegepet.com>

