

Cat Nutrition and Food Standards Transcript

Hi guys, my name is Crystal, I'm a Furry Friends volunteer, have been for several years now. I've been asked to a bit of a piece on nutrition. Just to give you guys an idea of what brands we use within Furry Friends and why.

Just a bit of general info: within Furry Friends, we offer a variety of brands of food for our kitty cats and fosters. All of which are premium brands which offer a complete and whole balanced diet for our cats. We've recently decided to use more Australian brand made foods. Those consist of Advance, Black Hawk and Ivory Coat. We also do use, on occasion, Hills Science Diet as well as Royal Canin, for kitty cats who have more specific dietary requirements. We always alter the food that we offer to suit each kitty cat in care.

I've also been asked to answer a couple of questions that we have. The first being: **why is cheap food bad?**

So, I'd never say any food is bad for your cat, all of them are good in their own ways. Obviously, cost is a factor with food. We have our supermarket branded food and then we have our premium, veterinary sides of food. So basically, with cheap food that we can purchase, readily available within supermarkets, we'd compare them to fast food outlets e.g. McDonalds. They come being high in salt, and also high in fillers. They will fill your cat up, but they won't actually give them the nutrition that's required.

They will just fill your kitty cat up, and they also are very tasty. Taste is usually paramount to nutrition when it comes to supermarket brand foods. Purely because they have very minimal regulations and monitoring on the products on the shelves. They all have to compete with each other on the shelves. Obviously, we all know that if a cat loves a food, we're all going to continue buying it. So, this is where tastiness comes into play, and taste over nutrition creates fussy kitty cats for us. If a diet was chosen on what was cheaper, easier to get and less regulated and tastier, the best food choices wouldn't be being made.

Next question is: **what makes a good quality cat food?**

A good quality food for your cat needs to be balanced and complete. Have a balance of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Those all need to be balanced at a level that each cat requires.

It also needs to have a nutritional guarantee. This provides the complete and whole balanced nutrition for our cats, when they have that nutritional guarantee. They also need to pass some Association of American Feed Control Officials tests. Those tests are expensive, but also they confirm that it's providing the nutritional balances that it says on the packet. But, it also passes a feeding test. So those are a few tests that the AAFCO have in order to have the quality there for those kinds of foods.

The next question is: **are specific foods better?**

Short answer: yes.

Specific foods being age appropriate foods, prescription diet foods, all those specific foods are better to offer to your cat when needed. Offering the specific foods to your cat guarantees the requirement of good health and nutrition.

Different life stages for cats, require different amounts of nutrients. Offering the appropriate age diet to your cat ensures that they are going to get those nutrients in the correct amounts for their age. It's very important to cats' health to have the right nutrients, at the right amounts at the right age. Too much or too little of some nutrients can result in negative effects on your cats organs. So, that's how important it really is to feed specific foods.

Some specific foods such as urinary foods, kidney foods, hairball concerns, obesity foods, those all are really important as well. And this is where I was talking about how we offer each cat their individual needed specific foods. So, if a cat comes into care and they were needing a urinary food, this is very important for their health to continue on this food. There are some times where this food is needed, and this is what is needed for the cat's good health.

So the next question I was asked was: **does expensive = good?**

When we talk about expensive foods, obviously it's the premium foods, the prescription foods. Those are all regulated and tested and that's what we're paying for; the science behind it. When we pay for expensive foods, we know that the testing has been done and the experts are behind it saying that this is what's in the food and this is what it will provide for your cat.

Premium food may be more expensive for your out of pocket cost, but when it comes down to it, you use less of the premium food because it is more nutritionally balanced, but also more digestible. You need to feed less of it because the cat is absorbing most of the nutrients. Which obviously means less waste from the food. This will mean less poo that we need clean up after our kitty cats, which is always a win.

Those are a few benefits with more expensive food. Another thing I forgot to mention is, with your premium foods, they're regulated, but also, you can guarantee their recalls are monitored. So, whenever anything is wrong with their food, they're onto it quite quickly.

The next question I was asked about was: **are cats lactose intolerant?** Great question.

This is a bit of a hot topic. There is some common misconceptions that cats need to be given milk as a regular treat. While most cats enjoy having milk as a treat, the truth is that they are lactose intolerant. So giving them cow's milk as a treat can often have significant health issues as a result. Cow's milk is not part of a cat's nutrition or dietary requirement. They usually suffer stomach upsets and other related problems as a result. Gastrointestinal issues, so they can have quite bad diarrhoea when they're given milk quite frequently. However, specifically formulated milk for cats, so you can actually purchase cat milk products, which are safer than cow's milk. Just keep in mind, it's not required for their diet. Also, those products can be quite fattening. So, if we're going to offer those products as a treat it should be very limited and they should only get it every so often. Also, keep in mind calorie wise if we're offering cat milk, otherwise we do create a bit of an obese kitty cat, at times.

So, yes, we can give cat milk, not cow's milk. Obviously, good things in moderation, so, offered sparingly, as a treat, every so often.

If you have any other questions, feel free to pop them through. I'm more than happy to answer any questions that come through to the best of my ability. Thank you for listening and I hope you guys have learnt a little bit, thank you!