



# THE FELINE

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A MAGRANE PET MEDICAL CENTER INSERT FOR CAT LOVERS, SUMMER 2013

## WHAT SHOULD I FEED MY CAT?



Many of us remember those felines on Grandpa's farm who subsisted on mice, birds, and the milk Grandma would leave for them beside the back door. Even today, "barn cats" and "feral cats" make up a sizable proportion of our nation's feline population. Perhaps you have some in your neighborhood.

But when we take cats into our homes, we assume responsibility for their total health and welfare, including feeding them the best possible food. We become emotionally attached to our cats, and often use emotion when making decisions about feeding them. And we realize that the best possible diet will keep our feline friends healthy longer, and extend the years we spend with them.

It is easy to base pet food purchases on taste alone – what does my cat seem to like, or what flavors do I like? Or on experience – what did I feed my last cat, or what does Aunt Sally feed her cat? Or on advertisements – which commercial has a cat that looks like mine, or which ad appeals to my ideas about human nutrition, or which ad reminds me how much I love my cat?

However, it seems a shame to ignore the findings of professionals who have spent years studying the nutritional needs of cats. There is science behind the formulas developed for cat foods that have been tested over many years on many cats, and the results published. The effort and expense of trying to duplicate what these professionals have achieved would be prohibitive to most pet owners.

For these reasons, Magrane Pet Medical Center recommends that clients use information from AAFCO, the Association of American Feed Control Officials, when choosing food for their cats. AAFCO is a non-profit association of local, state, and federal officials who have responsibility for enforcing state regulations concerning animal feeds. According to AAFCO's website, their organization provides information "resulting in safe, effective and useful feeds." They set the standards for testing done on live animals to demonstrate which formulas are best for cats. Look for AAFCO certification on the label of the cat food you buy!

Cat owners and veterinarians alike know that the nutritional needs of cats are far from simple, and can be more complicated than choosing a regular, prepared diet. For one thing, cats are obligate carnivores. Unlike other species, they cannot obtain the nutrients they need from a strict plant-based (vegetarian) diet. Pregnant or nursing cats, as well as their kittens, have special dietary needs. In addition, obesity that occurs in one out of four pet cats, as well as other medical conditions can change a cat's nutritional needs, requiring dietary adjustments. Magrane carries a variety of prescription diets at our facility.

Other considerations have entered the conversation in recent years. How can I make intelligent decisions about what to feed my furry friends? Can I formulate my own cat food? What about raw diets? Natural/organic prepared cat foods? "Holistic" or "human grade" diets?

Years of study and experience have led Magrane Pet Medical Center to offer the following general advice. This advice is intended for indoor cats; it is difficult to monitor or control the diet of cats with unsupervised outdoor access. Specific information for your particular cat should come directly from the veterinarian handling your cat's case.

Cats should be fed more often than once per day, and water should always be available. Some owners can successfully "free-feed," leaving dry kibble out for cats to eat on demand. Prevent cat access to garbage and carrion. Cover and refrigerate leftover wet cat food; do not allow wet cat food to sit in bowls at room temperature after feeding time. Discard moldy pet foods; feed cats from stainless steel bowls and sanitize these after each use. Store dry foods in a cool, dry location protected from pests.

Is the diet you are feeding working for your cat? Look at your cat's skin, hair, weight, and stool consistency. If any of these are abnormal, get your veterinarian's advice about whether to change or supplement your cat's food. If you decide to change your cat's diet, your veterinarian will usually advise gradually mixing new food to old food over time to avoid causing digestive disturbance.

If your cat is diagnosed as obese by your veterinarian, **THIS IS A DANGER SIGNAL!!** Obesity can shorten your pet's life. Put down less food. Measure the portions and reduce them. Make sure your cat is NOT eating other animals' food, allow NO people food, and severely limit or stop cat treats. Some cat food formulas are labeled as "weight control," but the amount fed still must be measured and limited. Encourage physical activity for your cat. You could set up a routine play time with toys, take your cat for walks on a leash, or acquire another pet for your cat to interact with.

If you have further questions about nutrition for your cat, don't hesitate to call us at Magrane for advice. Our veterinarians and staff want you and your cat to share a long, healthy time together!



by Vikky Warner

*Dear Opie:*

*Our column this month is about the changes in seasons and time. Humans get confused by the change in time twice a year. "Do we spring forward or fall back?" Well, in the spring, we gain an hour of daylight here in Indiana as we follow Eastern Daylight Time. Your cat can be stressed by the changes in time. Cats are "in tune" with the sun, so if your cat is used to eating when the sun comes up, this throws off their schedule because now the sun rise is an hour later. That hour can feel like an eternity to a cat! Please remember to adjust feeding times accordingly.*

*Summer brings warmer weather. While cats love to bask in that sunny window, remember to provide plenty of water and cool places for them to rest when they've had enough of the sun. Also, while humans like the cooling feel of a fan breeze, some cats might not like the effects of the breeze on their fur, or the noise of the fan. Have a safe and fun filled summer!*



## **FRIEND US ON FACEBOOK**

Magrane Pet Medical Center prides itself in staying current with the most up-to-date medicine available for your pet. When it comes to social networking, we want to do the same. However, we can't do this without your help. Please search for and friend Magrane Pet Medical Center on Facebook today and begin networking with our clients and staff. It is a fun way to share stories, pictures, and information with people who have something in common—a unique bond with their pets!



## **CAT GROOMING AT MAGRANE**

Due to popular request, Magrane Pet Medical Center is offering cat grooming. Needed most by long-haired cats, the grooming will include removal of matted hair and shaving to restore a balanced appearance to your pet. Other options include bathing, shaving cats to resemble lions or teddy bears, nail trims, and banishing fleas. For highly nervous cats, we offer mild sedation to make the experience more pleasant for everyone.

Give us a call to schedule your cat's beauty treatment!



If you have a short story about your cat that you would like to share with us, please email it to [stezich1@yahoo.com](mailto:stezich1@yahoo.com) or bring it in to Magrane Pet Medical Center. We would also like a photo to go along with the story. We will make an effort to publish all of the entries submitted. Thank you!