

A Rising Tide

Enjoy the availability of better dog foods, but beware of the posers.

BY NANCY KERNS

By every measure, the “natural and holistic” segment of the U.S. pet food market has enjoyed spectacular growth over the past decade – far greater than that of the pet food market as a whole. As one example, figures supplied to *Petfood Industry* magazine by industry analyst Packaged Facts show that the U.S. pet food market as a whole grew at a rate of 5.3 percent from 2003 to 2007, but the “natural foods” segment of that market grew 24.6 percent in the same span. And the “organic” segment experienced an astounding 48.1 percent growth rate.

A rising tide lifts all boats. And the success of the “natural and holistic” niche has been lifting the quality of offerings from the pet food industry as a whole. What pet food company owner or wouldn’t look at those numbers and immediately ask his employees to run out and concoct a product to compete in the “natural foods” niche?

The answer is, apparently, none, because just about every pet food maker has rolled out products claiming to be natural and/or holistic, containing organic and/or

“wild” ingredients. That should be a good thing, right? Well, yes. And no!

It’s good because there are more and more better-quality foods available to dog owners. Today, the medium-quality foods have gotten better, and what we would consider true “premium” foods are much more widely available than they used to. They now appear regularly in most independent pet supply stores (historically the leaders in finding and promoting the healthiest products) but also in chain retail stores. In 1998, the year WDJ was launched, the “big box” pet supply stores had little to offer owners who were looking for the very best-quality dog foods; today, they carry a wide variety of good foods. A few premium foods even appear in higher-end supermarkets!

On the other hand, so do what I’d call “posers” – the catch-up products churned out by the pet food industry giants in an effort to grab some of that “natural and holistic” market share. These products beg the question: Can corporate titans produce foods of the same quality as the little “boutique” companies that were founded

What you can do . . .

- First and foremost: Look at the ingredients panel of any food you are considering for your dog.
- Use the “hallmarks of quality” shown on page 4 to identify good foods.
- Buy a one- or two-week supply, and let your dog be the judge. He should not only like it, but also thrive on it (not suddenly develop digestive, skin, or other health problems).



on the concept of producing only the very best, healthiest dog foods?

I’d like to quickly dismiss the idea that any of the giants – Iams and Eukanuba, Purina, Science Diet, et. al. – could possibly make dry dog foods that are as good as the foods that have a regular presence on WDJ’s “approved foods” list. The fact is, though, of course they could; they have all the resources needed to do so. They could *bury* most of the competition in the “natural and holistic” niche . . . *if* they followed through and used only the same high-quality ingredients typically used by the smaller, boutique brands. But they generally stop short – perhaps because they are unaccustomed to paying a *lot* for their raw materials, or marketing the products at a correspondingly high sales price?

Advantages and disadvantages of scale

The sheer size of a company doesn’t disqualify it from making truly premium foods (although we’ve been accused, falsely, we think, of promoting that idea).



Just a few examples of premium-quality foods.

The corporate giants have some amazing advantages over the boutique food producers; they really *shine* at some aspects of food production – not incidentally, the *very* tasks that the smaller companies don't always do very well.

As an important example, economies of scale enable the giants to conduct more frequent and more thorough quality and safety tests, to produce larger batches with greater consistency (fewer production glitches), retain better-paid and more highly trained employees – in short, to do a better job of producing safe, consistent products.

The giants also employ legions of brilliant food scientists, who are able to conduct incredible research into animal nutrition and health. Their products are better-researched and more thoroughly tested than their small competitors' products – some of which were dreamed up by people with very little education or experience in animal nutrition.

But for all that, what the giants can't seem to do – yet – is to formulate foods using the high-quality ingredients that the "little guys" are using. Many of the companies whose products are on our "approved foods" list buy their ingredients

from local farms, ranches, and fishermen. Most source their ingredients themselves; they don't leave procurement to their co-manufacturing partners or ingredient brokers, so they can be absolutely certain of the origin and quality of every ingredient used in their products. We think that the recalls of 2007 proved the critical nature of this sort of rigor.

It's the ingredients

Nutrition experts don't agree on everything, but one thing they generally concede to be true is that *all* animals enjoy the best health when given a balanced and varying diet of fresh, species-appropriate foods. They also generally agree that highly processed foods are not as healthy as lightly processed foods; some of nature's value is always lost to oxidation, heat, pressure, and chemical interactions. Dry food (kibble) is *the* most processed type of food available to dog owners – but foods that are made with already highly processed (and sometimes, as a result, rather aged) ingredients are at a big disadvantage, compared to those that are made with fresh, whole ingredients.

It's bad enough that most pet foods

are made with meats and fats that are far inferior in quality to what's known as "edible" ("human quality") meats and fats. I'm talking about the things that may go into pet food that cannot go into human-edible products, like meats that don't pass inspection and meat from animals that are dead before they can be slaughtered. Also, the handling and storage of ingredients that are diverted at the processing plant for "non-edible use" – in other words, for pet food – is far inferior to the processes used for "edible" ingredients. (In short, edible ingredients are kept clean and cold all the way through the food production chain; pet food ingredients are not.)

We'd certainly like to identify and promote only those products that contain "edible" meat sources. Unfortunately for consumers, there is no reliable way to do this. A company can say they use only edible ingredients, but few (none?) can legally prove it; according to Federal law, any ingredient that is present at a pet food plant is, by definition, "inedible." So, if a truckload of fresh, refrigerated, wholesome chicken headed to your local supermarket pulls over at a pet food plant, and opens the back door of the truck, the contents of the

Hallmarks of quality (what to look for)

■ Animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.

Ingredients are listed by weight, so ideally a food will have one or two animal proteins in the first few ingredients.

■ **Named animal protein source** – chicken, beef, lamb, and so on. "Meat" is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein "meals" (i.e., "chicken meal") should also be from named species.

■ When a fresh meat appears high on the ingredients list, **an animal protein meal in a supporting role, to augment the total protein in the diet.** Fresh or frozen meats do not contain enough protein to be used as the sole protein source in a dry food (they contain as much as 65 to 75 percent water and only 15 to 20 percent protein. In contrast, animal protein "meals" – meat, bone, skin, and connective tissue that's been rendered and dried – contain only about 10 percent moisture, and as much as 65 percent protein.

■ **Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.** Fresh, unprocessed food ingredients contain wholesome nutrients in all their naturally complex glory, with their fragile vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two food fragments, especially if they are low on the ingredients list. But if there are several present in the food, and/or they appear high on the ingredients list, the lower-quality the food.

■ **Organic ingredients; locally sourced ingredients.** Both of these things are better for our planet.

Signs of corners cut (what to look out for)

■ **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** Higher-value ingredients are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than low-value ingredients (such as by-products) by the processors. The expense of whole meats and meat meals doesn't *rule out* poor handling and resultant oxidation (rancidity), but it makes it less likely. For these reasons, we suggest avoiding foods that contain by-products or by-product meal.

■ **Added sweeteners.** Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little healthy animal protein).

■ **Artificial preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin.** Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (forms of vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve the food as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the "best by" date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.

■ **Artificial colors.** The color of the food makes no difference to the dog; these nutritionally useless chemicals are used in foods to make them look appealing to *you!*

truck are now “inedible” by law. It’s perfectly fine food, but the food maker is not legally permitted to say that it’s edible.

Only human-food plants – inspected by the USDA – can legally claim they use edible meats, and this is only if *not one single inedible ingredient* is on the premises.

Barring the ability to identify the companies that use edible ingredients, we suggest that you look for other evidence of quality. Will – or can – the company identify the sources of its ingredients? Are the ingredients unprocessed, or lightly processed? Or are they a waste product from the production of human food?

We don’t have studies to prove it, but we regard it as a founding principle of holistic healthcare: A diet made with fresh, whole, species-appropriate ingredients (think animal proteins, rather than plant proteins) is far healthier than one made with cheap fats discarded from restaurants, inexpensive carbohydrates produced as waste from the brewing industry, and plant proteins such as corn gluten meal.

Not that many years ago, the pet food industry became a convenient place for the human food industry to dispose of its waste products, without paying landfill

fees. Pet food makers were pleased to have ready supplies of inexpensive ingredients. Owners were happy to buy something to feed their dogs that was so convenient to store and feed. Dogs, as they have been for centuries, were thrilled to get whatever their humans would share with them. The ingredients panel on a bag of dog food was rarely considered.

But today, we’re putting the pieces together: diet affects health. Consumers are responding to the positive changes they’ve seen in their dogs on improved diets, and many companies are responding to consumers’ feedback. But the only way to distinguish the passionate, committed, knowledgeable food makers from the posers is to start looking at, and understanding, the ingredients panel.

Representative “top foods”

Here is our “approved dry foods” list for 2010. All these products meet our selection criteria – including our newest criterion, that the company discloses the name and location of its manufacturers. It’s by no means a list of the only good foods on the market; it’s meant as a fair representation of the good-quality foods that are available.

Rest assured that any food that you find

that meets our selection criteria is just as good as any of the foods on our list.

What if your favorite dog foods don’t meet our selection criteria? It’s up to you. If you have been feeding what we would consider to be low-quality foods to your dog, and she looks and appears to feel great, good for you! She’s one of those genetically lucky animals who can spin straw into gold, digestively speaking. But if she has allergies, chronic diarrhea, recurrent ear infections, or a poor coat, we’d recommend that you upgrade.

Note that we’ve listed the foods alphabetically, by the name of their manufacturers. Some companies make several product lines. We’ve listed each product line that meets our selection criteria from each manufacturer. We’ve also highlighted *one* product from each company as a representative, to show what sort of ingredients and macro-nutrient levels (protein, fat, fiber, and moisture) are typically found in that maker’s foods. Be aware that some companies offer dozens of different products with varying nutrient levels and ingredients. Check the company’s website or call its toll-free phone number to get information about its other varieties. 🐾

WDJ’S APPROVED DRY FOODS OF 2010

ADDICTION FOODS — Te Puke, New Zealand; (65) 6273-8981; addictionfoods.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE Salmon Bleu, Viva La Venison, La Porchetta.	MADE BY Taplow Ventures, Vancouver, British Columbia (salmon); Pied Piper Pet & Wildlife, Inc., Hamlin, TX (venison); and Texas Farm Products, Nacogdoches, TX (pork).
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – La Porchetta formula contains: Pork meal, ground brown rice, chicken fat, ground oats, Menhaden fish meal, dried eggs, flaxseed, rice bran . . . 23% protein; 13% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Salmon and venison foods are grain-free. Venison is free-range; salmon is wild-caught.	
ARTEMIS PET FOODS — North Hollywood, CA; (800) 282-5876; artemiscompany.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Fresh Mix (5 varieties) and Osopure (2 varieties, for small breeds).	MADE BY Diamond Pet Products, Lathrop, CA.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Fresh Mix Adult contains: Chicken, chicken meal, turkey, cracked pearled barley, brown rice, oatmeal, millet, peas . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Fresh Mix products display what we call “kitchen sink” formulation; example above also contains chicken fat, duck, salmon, egg product, salmon oil, and salmon meal. Osopure has fewer protein sources (chicken, fish meal, egg).	
BACK TO BASICS — Meadville, PA; (800) 219-2558; backtobasicspetfood.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Chicken and Pork formulas.	MADE BY CJ Foods, in Pawnee City, NE.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken formula contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, chicken fat, salmon meal, oat fiber, alfalfa . . . 23% protein; 17% fat; 4% fiber; 12% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company was sold to Dad’s Pet Care in 2009. Manufacturing scheduled to move to Dad’s own plant in PA. Company says all ingredients will continue to be USA-sourced and manufactured.	
BENCH & FIELD PET FOODS — Grand Rapids, MI; (800) 525-4802; benchandfield.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Holistic Natural Canine.	MADE BY WellPet in Mishawaka, IN.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Holistic Natural Canine contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, white rice, oatmeal, chicken fat, pork meal, dried beet pulp, fish meal . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 4.9% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company offers direct shipping to your home.	

BLUE BUFFALO COMPANY — Wilton, CT; (800) 919-2833; bluebuff.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Blue Life Protection Formulas (3 puppy varieties, 5 adult, 1 weight control, 1 senior dog); Blue Longevity (puppy, adult, mature); Blue Wilderness (2 varieties); Blue Organics (1 variety).	MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY; CJ Foods, Bern, KS; Dad's Pet Care, Meadville, PA; Triple T Foods, Frontenac, KS.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Blue Organics contains: Organic deboned chicken, organic brown rice, organic oatmeal, chicken meal, organic ground barley, organic ground millet, salmon meal, chicken fat . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company plans to launch a “limited ingredient” line in February.	
BLUE SEAL FEEDS — Londonderry, NH; (800) 367-2730; bynaturepetfoods.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – By Nature (6 varieties); By Nature Organics (1 variety).	MADE BY Blue Seal's plant in Arcade, NY; organic food is made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – By Nature Organics contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, lamb meal, organic chicken hydrolysate, organic peas . . . 28% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – “Bright Life” variety has been discontinued.	
BREEDER'S CHOICE PET FOODS — Irwindale, CA; (800) 255-4286; breeders-choice.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – ActiveCare (2 varieties); Advanced Pet Diets Select Choice (6 varieties); AvoDerm Natural (10 varieties); AvoDerm Natural Original Oven-Baked (3 varieties); Health Food for Dogs (1 variety); Pinnacle Holistic (4 varieties).	MADE BY Breeder's Choice's plant in Irwindale, CA.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Pinnacle Holistic Trout & Sweet Potato contains: Trout, oatmeal, herring meal, oat flour, canola oil, sweet potato, calcium carbonate, flaxseed . . . 22% protein; 10% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – ActiveCare line contains “natural chicken cartilage with the highest levels of unprocessed chondroitin and glucosamine.” AvoDerm line developed for dogs with skin and coat issues; AvoDerm Baked meant for dogs with “sensitive stomachs.”	
BURNS PET HEALTH — Valparaiso, IN; (877) 983-9651; burnspethealth.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Burns offers 3 varieties.	MADE BY By CJ Foods, in Bern, KS
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Brown Rice & Chicken contains: Whole brown rice, chicken meal, peas, oats, chicken fat, sunflower oil, seaweed, calcium carbonate . . . 18.5% protein; 7.5% fat; 2.2% fiber; 9% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company offers direct sales and shipping of fresh product to your home.	
CANIDAE CORP. — San Luis Obispo, CA; (800) 398-1600; canidae.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – 7 varieties, including 2 grain-free varieties.	MADE BY Diamond Pet Foods in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Canidae Grain Free All Life Stages formula contains: Chicken meal, turkey meal, lamb, potatoes, peas, chicken fat, lamb meal, ocean fish meal . . . 34% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – “All Life Stages,” “Platinum,” and “Grain-Free ALS” have multiple animal protein sources; other four varieties have just one or two animal protein sources.	
CANINE CAVIAR PET FOODS — Costa Mesa, CA; (800) 392-7898; caninecaviar.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Canine Caviar Holistic Beneficial (5 varieties, including 2 puppy, 2 adult, and 1 “special needs”); Holistic Grain Free (1 variety, venison & split pea).	MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Pearl Millet Adult contains: Dehydrated chicken, pearl millet, brown rice, chicken fat, chicken, whitefish, alfalfa, flaxseed . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 4% fiber; 8% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company says it uses only dehydrated meats – not rendered meat meals – in its 5 Holistic Beneficial varieties. Grain-free variety <i>does</i> use venison meal, said to be from free-range venison.	
CASTOR & POLLUX PETWORKS — Clackamas, OR; (800) 875-7518; castorpolluxpet.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Organix (3 varieties); Ultramix (4 varieties).	MADE BY CJ Foods in Bern, KS (Organix); and Crosswinds Petfoods, Inc., Sabetha, KS (Ultramix).
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Organix Adult formula contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic peas, organic millet, organic oats, salmon meal, chicken fat . . . 26% protein; 14% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Organix's organic certification is by Certified Organic by Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA International, Inc.), Lincoln, NE. Foods have been reformulated since we last reviewed them, with only minor changes. Company offers direct shipping to your home.	
CHAMPION PETFOODS — Morinville, Alberta, Canada; (877) 939-0006; championpetfoods.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Acana (10 varieties); Acana Grain-Free (3 varieties); Orijen (6 varieties, all grain-free).	MADE BY Champion's own plant in Alberta, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Orijen Regional Red formula contains: Deboned wild boar, deboned lamb, lamb meal, potato, deboned pork, peas, salmon meal, whitefish meal . . . 38% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company says all ingredients are fresh (never frozen) and locally sourced. All foods are formulated with higher-protein, lower-carb content than most companies' offerings.	

DELLA NATURA COMMODITIES — Bayside, NY; (866) 936-2393; dellanaturapet.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Wenaewe (3 beef-based varieties, and 1 vegetarian variety). A senior variety is planned.	MADE BY Erro S.A. in Dolores, Uruguay.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Wenaewe Adult formula contains: Organic beef, organic brown rice, organic canola seed, organic flaxseed meal, organic sunflower seed, organic buckwheat, organic barley, organic millet . . . 20% protein; 12% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Imported from Uruguay. Company says all beef is “beyond organic,” free-range. Vegetarian variety uses soy meal for protein source. Note that we are not fans of vegetarian diets for dogs.	
DIAMOND PET PRODUCTS — Meta, MO; (800) 658-0624; chickensoupforthevetloverssoul.com; premiumedgepetfood.com; professionalpetfood.com; tasteofthewildpetfood.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover’s Soul (4 varieties); Premium Edge (6 varieties); Professional Pet Food (7 varieties); Taste of the Wild (3 varieties).	MADE BY Diamond’s own manufacturing facilities in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Taste of the Wild High Prairie formula contains: Bison, venison, lamb meal, chicken meal, egg product, sweet potatoes, peas, potatoes . . . 32% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Taste of the Wild formulas are grain-free.	
DICK VAN PATTEN’S NATURAL BALANCE — Pacoima, CA; (800) 829-4493; naturalbalance.net	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Natural Balance Original Ultra (4 varieties); Natural Balance Limited Ingredient Diets (5 varieties); Natural Balance Vegetarian; and Natural Balance “Organic.”	MADE BY CJ Foods, Bern, KS.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – “Organic” formula contains: Chicken, organic brown rice, chicken meal, organic oats, organic millet, organic barley, organic sorghum, organic potato . . . 22% protein; 13% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company tests for contaminants and makes the test results available on its website.	
DOGSWELL, LLC — Los Angeles, CA; (888) 559-8833; dogswell.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Happy Hips (with glucosamine and chondroitin); Shape Up (lower fat); Vitality.	MADE BY Tuffy’s Pet Foods in Perham, MN.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Vitality contains: Chicken, chicken meal, oats, barley, brown rice, natural flavors, chicken fat, flaxseed . . . 24% protein; 12% fat; 6% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Will direct ship food to your home.	
DRS. FOSTER & SMITH — Rhinelander, WI; (800) 826-7206; drsfostersmith.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Drs. Foster & Smith Dog Food (5 varieties).	MADE BY CJ Foods in Bern, KS and Pawnee City, NE.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, brewer’s rice, oat groats, chicken fat, beet pulp . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company is a retail catalog company, so it will direct-ship to your home.	
EVANGER’S DOG & CAT FOOD COMPANY — Wheeling, IL; (800) 288-6796; evangersdogfood.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Evanger’s Dog Food (3 varieties).	MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH (whitefish and chicken varieties) and Fromm Family Foods, Mequon, WI (pheasant variety).
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Brown Rice variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, chicken meal, potato product, pearled barley, chicken fat, carrots, celery . . . 26% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Evanger’s owns its cannery, but has its dry foods made by co-packers, with ingredients it sources.	
FIRSTMATE PET FOODS — North Vancouver, BC, Canada; (800) 658-1166; firstmate.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – FirstMate Grain-Free (6 varieties); FirstMate Classic (4 varieties); Skoki Grain-Free (6 varieties); Skoki Classic (4 varieties)	MADE BY FirstMate’s own plant in Chilliwack, BC, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – FirstMate’s Chicken & Blueberries formula contains: Potato, chicken meal, chicken fat, whole blueberries, and vitamins/minerals (that’s it!). 25% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Skoki formulas cost less than FirstMate, which is the company’s “premium” line.	
FROMM FAMILY FOODS — Mequon, WI; (800) 325-6331; frommfamily.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Fromm Four-Star Canine Entrees (6 varieties, including 1 grain-free); Gold Nutritionals (5 varieties); Fromm Classics (2 varieties).	MADE BY Fromm’s own plant in Mequon, WI.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Fromm Classic Adult formula contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, white rice, chicken fat, fish meal . . . 23% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Four-Star foods contain the most ingredients and variety; Gold line is formulated with multiple animal protein sources; Classics line formulated with chicken as major protein source.	



LAUGHING DOG, INC. — Lodi, CA; (805) 653-7813; laughingdoginc.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — Young Dog, Brave Dog, Wise Dog.	MADE BY Taplow Feeds, Chilliwack, BC, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Brave Dog (adult) variety contains: Chicken meal, fish meal, oats, barley, chicken fat, brown rice, potato, white rice . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — Company says these make Laughing Dog superior: a vacuum infusion process that infuses (rather than just coats) the kibble with enzymes and probiotics, and its use of coconut oil in the formula.	
LIFE4K9 PET FOOD CORP. — Dawsonville, GA; (888) 543-3459; life4k9.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — LIFE4K9 (2 varieties).	MADE BY Bio Biscuit in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada, and Hampshire Pet Products, Joplin, MO.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Chicken & Barley formula contains: Chicken, chicken meal, barley, oats, whitefish meal, olive oil, dicalcium phosphate, calcium carbonate . . . 21% protein; 9% fat; 2.5% fiber; 11% moisture.	
MISC INFO — These are baked foods; company feels strongly that baked foods are superior to extruded foods.	
LINCOLN BIOTECH — East Bend, NC; (800) 253-8128; lincolnbiotech.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — Zinpro is available in only one formula.	MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods, in Sherburne, NY.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Zinpro contains: Menhaden fishmeal, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, herring meal, oat flour, rice flour, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — Company feels that dogs don't get enough zinc, causing skin and coat problems, so Zinpro is formulated with a bioavailable zinc.	
MERRICK PET CARE — Amarillo, TX; (800) 664-7387; merrickpetcare.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — Merrick Dog Food (7 varieties); Before Grain (3 varieties).	MADE BY Merrick Pet Care, Hereford, TX.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Merrick's Wilderness variety contains: Buffalo, oatmeal, barley, salmon meal, venison, brown rice, canola oil, flaxseed . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 2.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — Available via direct shipping with no shipping charges in the U.S.	
MULLIGAN STEW PET FOOD — Jackson, WY; (888) 364-7839; mulliganstewpetfood.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — Mulligan Stew (3 varieties).	MADE BY Mountain Country Foods, Okeene, OK.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Chicken variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, oats, chicken meal, chicken liver, alfalfa meal, flaxseed meal, eggs . . . 26% protein; 11% fat; 8% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — All dry foods are baked, not extruded. Company says all ingredients are sourced in from U.S. farms and ranches.	
NATURA PET PRODUCTS — Santa Clara, CA; (800) 532-7261; naturapet.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — California Natural (8 varieties); Evo (6 varieties); HealthWise (5 varieties); Innova (11 varieties,); Karma (1 variety).	MADE BY Natura's own plants in Fremont, NE and San Leandro, CA.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Innova Adult Red Meat Large Bites variety contains: Beef, lamb meal, barley, brown rice, potatoes, sunflower oil, rice, lamb . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — California Natural foods contain a single animal protein source; Evo foods are grain-free, high in protein and fat; Innova foods contain several sources of animal protein; Karma is Natura's only baked food, and its only organic food.	
NATURE'S VARIETY — Lincoln, NE; (888) 519-7387; naturesvariety.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — Nature's Variety Instinct Grain-Free (3 varieties); Nature's Variety Prairie (5 varieties).	MADE BY Pied Piper Mills in Hamlin, TX.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — Instinct Chicken Meal variety contains: Chicken meal, tapioca, chicken fat, pumpkin seeds, Menhaden fish meal, alfalfa meal, Montmorillonite clay, natural chicken flavor . . . 42% protein; 22% fat; 3.2% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — Company strongly promotes diet rotation among varieties and types, offering complementary frozen raw and canned foods.	
OMNIPRO PET FOODS — Madison, MS; (601) 898-7773; omnipro.net	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato.	MADE BY Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato contains: Salmon, fish meal, potatoes, peas, ground barley, millet, egg product, oatmeal, canola oil . . . 25% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — The highlighted variety (in our opinion, OmniPro's sole premium food), may be a toe in the water of this market.	
PERFECT HEALTH DIET PRODUCTS — Elmsford, NY; (800) 743-1502; phdproducts.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE — PHD Viand (1 variety).	MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY — PHD Viand contains: Lamb meal, chicken meal, brown rice, corn, Naturox (natural antioxidant mix), barley, oats, chicken liver digest . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO — Company suggests using its products to supplement a fresh food diet.	



PET CHEF EXPRESS — New Westminster, BC, Canada; (604) 916-2433; petchefexpress.ca	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Pet Chef Express is the sole variety.	MADE BY Nutreco Canada, Inc., Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Pet Chef Express contains: Salmon meal, oats, millet, hullless barley, canola oil, salmon oil, carrot, potato . . . 25% protein; 10% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company provides home delivery in parts of Canada.	
PET VALU — Markham, Ontario, Canada; (800) 738-8258; performatrinultra.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Permatrin Ultra (3 varieties).	MADE BY Elmira Pet Products, Ontario, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Permatrin Ultra Lamb & Brown Rice formula contains: Deboned lamb, lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, rice, pearled barley, dried egg product, millet . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Permatrin Ultra is sold exclusively in PetValu stores in Canada and the northeastern U.S.	
PETCUREAN PET NUTRITION — Chilliwack, BC, Canada; (866) 864-6112; petcurean.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Go! Natural (4 varieties, including 1 grain-free); Now! (4 formulas, all grain-free). Summit Holistics (3 varieties).	MADE BY Elmira Pet Products in Elmira, Ontario, Canada.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Summit Australian Lamb variety contains: Australian lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, canola oil, natural flavors, dried alfalfa, potassium chloride . . . 21% protein; 10% fat; 2% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Go! Natural grain-free variety was recently reformulated with lower protein and fat; Now! varieties contain no rendered meats.	
PRECISE PET PRODUCTS — Nacogdoches, TX; (888) 477-3247; precisepet.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Precise Plus (4 varieties).	MADE BY Texas Farm Products' own plant in Nacogdoches, TX.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Precise Plus Adult variety contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, chicken, barley, chicken fat, beet pulp, oats, flaxseed . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Precise is owned by Texas Farm Products. The company says it expects to update its formulas this year.	
SMARTPAK CANINE — Plymouth, MA; (800) 326-0282; smartpakcanine.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – LiveSmart (5 varieties).	MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – LiveSmart Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, oats, beet pulp, chicken fat, dried eggs . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Direct shipping is available. Food is available sealed in custom-measured single-serving packages for maximum freshness.	
SOLID GOLD HEALTH PRODUCTS FOR PETS, INC. — El Cajon, CA; (800) 364-4863; solidgoldhealth.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Solid Gold (8 varieties).	MADE BY Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA and Meta, MO.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – WolfKing Adult Variety contains: Bison, ocean fish meal, brown rice, millet, oatmeal, pearled barley, rice bran, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 9% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Varieties include adult, puppy, and small-bites. Barking at the Moon contains fish and beef and is grain-free.	
TUFFY'S PET FOODS, INC. — Perham, MN; (800) 525-9155; nutrisourcedogfood.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Natural Planet Organics (1 variety); NutriSource (10 varieties); PureVita (3 varieties).	MADE BY Tuffy's own plant in Perham, MN.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Natural Planet Organics formula contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, natural flavors, organic flaxseed, chicken fat . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Natural Plant Organics certified by Oregon Tilth. PureVita varieties each contain a single source of animal protein.	
VERUS PET FOODS — Abingdon, MD; (888) 828-3787; veruspetfoods.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – VeRUS (5 varieties).	MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – VeRUS Adult Maintenance variety contains: Lamb meal, oats, brown rice, rice bran, flaxseed meal, sorghum, chicken fat, chicory pulp . . . 22% protein; 10% fat; 5% fiber; 12% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Company says all lamb used in foods is free-range, grass-fed, New Zealand lamb.	
WELLPET — Tewksbury, MA; (800) 225-0904; wellpet.com	
LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Holistic Select (10 varieties); Wellness Core (3 grain-free varieties); Wellness Simple Solutions (3 varieties, each with a single source of animal protein and rice); Wellness Super5Mix (9 varieties).	MADE BY Wellpet's plant in Mishawaka, IN; Hagen Pet Foods in Waverly, NY; CJ Foods in Bern, KS; American Nutrition, Inc., in Ogden, UT; and Diamond Pet Foods in Gaston, SC and Lathrop, CA.
REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Wellness Super5Mix Complete Health Lamb, Barley & Salmon Meal variety contains: Lamb, Menhaden fish meal, oatmeal, barley, brown rice, rye flour, tomato pomace, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 11% moisture.	
MISC INFO – Formerly known as Old Mother Hubbard and Wellness Pet Care, WellPet now owns and operates a former rival (Eagle Pack).	

