

Chief Executive of the Pet Food Manufacturers Association, Michael Bellingham, PFMA, looks at some of the latest advancements so you can share the benefits with your customers



Without doubt the field of pet nutrition moves at a fast pace. Offerings have changed dramatically over the years moving us from basic pet foods that provide the right nutrients in the right quantities to more sophisticated foods. We now have diets that are tailored to meet the needs of a particular lifestyle, for example, catering for indoor cats, multiple cat households or to diets catering for the needs of a specific breed.

Nutritious and super convenient, we don't tend to dwell too greatly on the science behind a pet's daily food ration but the science is impressive.

Antioxidants are Ace!

Research has shown that certain antioxidants can be beneficial to senior pets in terms of cognitive maintenance. Research has found that older dogs provided with a diet rich in antioxidants were able to complete difficult tasks and were less likely to suffer from age-related behaviour change. The study also found that dogs on this diet were able to recognise family members more easily and retained greater agility.

The Omegas

Omega 3 fatty acids and omega 6 fatty acids help the known for their ability to help maintain

Pet Food for PET PARENTS

Clever ingredients

healthy skin and coat. They also help support natural defences, liver, eyes, brain, and joints. And, just like in humans, omega 3 fatty acids can help maintain heart health. Valuable forms of omega 3 are found in fish, particularly oily fish, and in some vegetable oils like linseed. Omega 6 fats are primarily found in plant oils like flaxseed and hemp. Animal fats are also a potential source of omega 6.

The Wonders of Fish Oil

There has been a lot of media interest in the past years over the role of fish oils and the potential benefits. We know that fish is good for us but is it good for pets? The simple answer is yes. Studies have shown that DHA, a specific omega 3, can help puppies learn. The studies that scientists are publishing about the benefits of fish oils are impressive, from brain and eye development to joints, fish oil can play a role.

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Glucosamine and Chondroitin

Glucosamine is an essential building block for healthy joints, it's a major component of joint cartilage and, increasingly, has been used to help maintain mobility and deal with joint stiffness. By increasing levels of glucosamine and chondroitin, you can help maintain joint health in cats and dogs.

It's all in the Formulation

It is not just about new ingredients; pet food manufacturers' expertise in diet formulation and knowledge of nutritional requirements has also progressed considerably. For instance, nutrition plays an important role in the correct functioning of the body's natural defence system.

For decades it has been known that a deficiency in certain



nutrients such as vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin C, and particularly zinc and some other trace elements will impair the natural defences of animals and humans. Avoiding such deficiencies is the task of every manufacturer by ensuring their products contain optimal nutrient levels based on their knowledge and the recommended levels. However, increasing the intake of certain nutrients such as vitamin E above the levels recommended to meet the nutritional requirements can further support the animal to allow it to react better to challenges from its environment.

To Supplement or Not?

Too much of any one nutrient can throw the body out of kilter and cause problems. If an owner is feeding a 'complete' diet and the pet is in good health then there is no need to supplement the diet. It is better instead to look at the label to see what ingredients have been added.

With the vast range of pet foods available there really is something to suit all needs and preferences. Pet owners can also buy pet foods safe in the knowledge that there are strict rules in place to ensure that any claims such as 'Contains omega 3 fatty acids to maintain healthy joints' are substantiated with the relevant science. Regulations in this area are further supported by an industry Code of Practice.

For more information visit www.pfma.org.uk

