



AAFCO's "Required testing" of pet foods

Commercial pet food companies love to publish ads that read: "Our pet foods are made following AAFCO guidelines and must pass stringent testing." It makes it sound like they have spent thousands of dollars making their foods perfect for you pets. This sounds good, until we take a close look at the AAFCO test guidelines.

"The Testing Protocols For Providing An Unqualified Representation of Nutritional Adequacy For A Dog Or Cat Food" are spelled out in the book, Official Publication, 1994, Association of American Feed Control Officials Incorporated.

For adult maintenance dog food (your basic Purina, Pedigree, Heinz, or Sams Club food) to pass the AAFCO test:

- * 8 dogs older than 1 yr. must start the test.
- * At start all dogs must be normal weight & health.
- * A blood test is to be taken from each dog at the start and finish of the test.
- * For 6 months, the dogs used must only eat the food being tested.
- * The dogs finishing the test must not lose more than 15% of their body weight.
- * During the test, none of the dogs used are to die or be removed because of nutritional causes.
- * 6 of the 8 dogs starting must finish the test.

That's all there is to it.

The AAFCO protocols for adult maintenance dog food listed in the book, Official Publication, 1994, Association of American Feed Control Officials Incorporated, do not require different breeds to be tested, nor do they exclude any of the larger breeds which are still puppies (nutritionally) when they are 1 to 2 years old. Their protocols require blood tests which screen only four different blood values: RBC number, hemoglobin, packed cell volume and serum albumin. The average veterinary "basic blood profile" screens over twenty-five blood values.

No testing of nutritional levels, immune function, liver panel, etc.

There are many pet food ads making the claim that a food has passed "stringent testing as required by AAFCO." But AAFCO's "stringent" test protocols wouldn't even meet the criteria to have their results published in most accredited scientific journals. Compare the above number of animals used to the numbers used in some of the tests cited in the U. S. Government's National Research Council book,



Nutrient Requirements of Dogs. There are tests cited in the NRC's book which used 500 to 600 test animals which were tested for years before their results were published.

The AAFCO book lists the same type of "stringent" testing protocols for maintenance cat foods, puppy foods, kitten foods, and the gestation/lactation pet foods.

Buyer beware . . . you may be buying a pet food advertised as being a nutritionally adequate diet for all dogs because it passed "stringent" AAFCO testing ... when only six to eight dogs ate that food for 6 months and survived with no more than an "acceptable" 15% loss of body weight.

