



## IS PROCESSED PET FOOD HEALTHY?

PROCESSED PET FOODS ARE CAREFULLY DEVELOPED TO PROVIDE A BALANCED AND NUTRITIOUS DIET

**Processing, whether it involves mixing, cooking, freezing, or drying, plays a crucial role in making pet food safe, nutritious, and appetising.**



### DO DOGS AND CATS HAVE THE SAME NUTRITIONAL NEEDS AS PEOPLE?

Cats and dogs have different nutritional needs compared to people. While we can adjust to variations in our diet over time, pets need consistent levels of key nutrients. Without them, health issues can arise quickly.

Processed pet food formats, whether wet, raw, or dry, labelled as 'complete', are specifically formulated to provide pets with all the essential nutrients they need in every meal, making them the ideal choice for ensuring balanced nutrition.

### ISN'T PROCESSED FOOD BAD FOR MY PET?

Not at all. In pet food, 'processed' simply means ingredients have been prepared through chopping, mixing, cooking, freezing, or drying, to make them safe, nutritious, and tasty.

Processing also allows for the addition of important nutrients and functional ingredients, such as vitamins, minerals, preservatives, prebiotics, and essential fatty acids.

Some of these ingredients can be sensitive to heat or may break down over time. Recipes are carefully adjusted to meet the nutritional requirements throughout the product's shelf life, ensuring pets receive all the necessary nutrients.

Unlike highly processed human snack foods, processed pet foods are carefully developed to deliver everything your pet needs:

- ✓ Balanced in healthy fats and calories.
- ✓ Enriched with essential vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Nourishing and complete.
- ✓ Often supplemented with ingredients with added benefits such as pre/probiotics and fibre.

### WHY IS PET FOOD PROCESSED?

Below are the key benefits offered across different types of processing methods:

- 😊 **Guarantees Nutritional Balance:** Processing allows for exact formulation tailored to species, age, and lifestyle. This means that manufacturers can develop a 'complete' and balanced diet.
- 😊 **Helps Nutrient Absorption:** Cooking and processing improves digestibility, making nutrients easier for pets to absorb.
- 😊 **Ensures Safety:** Processes like extrusion (see below for more information), baking, and pasteurisation, followed by appropriate packaging, help eliminate harmful bacteria and pathogens and ensure products stay safe and stable during their shelf life.
- 😊 **Consistent Quality:** Processed foods ensure a uniform taste, texture, and appearance, making mealtimes enjoyable for your pet.



FURTHER INFORMATION ON PET FOOD INGREDIENTS CAN BE FOUND AT [WWW.UKPETFOOD.ORG](http://WWW.UKPETFOOD.ORG)

## HOW IS PET FOOD PROCESSED?

Different pets have different needs, so there are different formats and processing methods.

### Here's a quick overview:

#### Extrusion

The most common method for dry pet food (kibbles). Ingredients are heated under pressure, forming crunchy bites. This high-temperature process kills pathogens and bacteria.

#### Baking

An alternative method for dry food. Ingredients are mixed into a dough and baked at set temperatures, creating a denser product with a distinct texture and appearance. The heat used also eliminates pathogens and bacteria.

#### Canning & Pouches

Wet food is sealed and then cooked at high temperatures, which destroys pathogens and bacteria while locking in flavour and moisture.

#### Freeze-Drying

Removes moisture to preserve nutrients and extend shelf life, often used in raw diets.

#### Air-Drying

Is a food preservation technique that gradually removes moisture by circulating warm air over an extended period.

#### Cold-Pressed

Is a process that uses low temperature and pressure to form the food, helping keep the natural nutrients.

#### Raw

Raw pet food ingredients are chopped, ground, and mixed to help retain their natural nutrients. The food is not cooked and is preserved through chilling or freezing, with freezing effectively preventing microbial growth.

Each method helps create a safe, digestible, and complete meal for pets with all preferences covered – this includes a pet's meal preference as well as lifestyle and budget preferences for owners.

## FINAL TAKE AWAY

Processed pet food = a complete, safe, and balanced meal your pet can thrive on.

It's healthy processed food – made with science and care. ❤️



## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Visit [www.ukpetfood.org](http://www.ukpetfood.org) for more fact sheets, videos, and guides.

## RELATED TOPICS

- The Different Pet Food Formats
- Dietary Formats for Small Mammals

For more details on this topic and specific processing methods, please refer to our [Processed with Purpose Factsheet](#) and [web page here](#), or simply scan the QR Code opposite.

