Shopping, hand selecting the ingredients and preparing the meal seems a good way to show their love. Whilst this sounds straightforward enough, the reality is different and unless you have developed a meal plan with a dedicated veterinary nutritionist, there is a strong risk you won't be providing the necessary nutrition. A dog for instance needs around 37 nutrients in his daily diet for healthy bodily function and a cat, over 40.

### MOST RECIPES FOR HOMEMADE DIETS ARE NUTRITIONALLY DEFICIENT
A study at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine analysed 200 different recipes for home prepared dog foods. Recipes were selected from websites, veterinary text books, and pet care books. The findings highlighted that 95% of the recipes were deficient in at least one essential nutrient and 84% were lacking in multiple required nutrients. Whilst providing a nutritionally balanced diet from home is not impossible, these results show it is a complicated task with very little margin for error. Calorie control can also be difficult.

### CAN I HOME COOK OCCASIONALLY?
An occasional home prepared meal can be enjoyed by dog and owner alike. If it is ‘occasional’ it won’t interrupt the nutritional balance of the overall feeding regime but please be careful to avoid foods that are toxic to pets.

### HUMAN FOODS TO AVOID
 Certain foods can be toxic for pets including: onions, garlic, raisins, grapes, chocolate, avocados, certain nuts and xylitol-sweetened foods.

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1 University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine ‘Homemade dog food recipes can be a risky business, study finds’ (15 July 2013) 2 www.fediaf.org

**ARE HOMEMADE DIETS A Viable ALTERNATIVE?**

For some owners providing home prepared meals for their pet is an appealing idea.

Members of UK Pet Food formulate their diets in line with the FEDIAF Nutritional Guidelines for Cats and Dogs. These guidelines detail the nutritional needs of cats and dogs at the varying life-stages from growth to senior and they are peer reviewed by independent veterinary nutrition experts throughout Europe.

Providing a pet with a ‘complete’ pet food is akin to a person having their meals routinely put together by a human nutritionist.

**DAILY DIET**

**A DOG REQUIRES AROUND 37 NUTRIENTS PER DAY, A CAT REQUIRES 40+**

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