

QUESTIONS TO ASK A PET FOOD COMPANY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. DO YOU HAVE A VETERINARY NUTRITIONIST OR SOMEONE EQUIVALENT ON STAFF IN YOUR COMPANY? ARE THEY AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION OR QUESTIONS?	1
II. WHO FORMULATES YOUR DIETS AND WHAT ARE THEIR CREDENTIALS?	1
III. WHICH OF YOUR DIETS ARE AAFCO FEED TRIAL TESTED? WHICH OF YOUR DIETS MEET AAFCO NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS?	1
IV. WHAT TESTING DO YOU DO BEYOND AAFCO TRIALS?.....	2
V. WHAT IS THE CALORIC VALUE PER CAN OR CUP OF YOUR DIETS?	2
VI. WHAT SPECIFIC QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES DO YOU USE TO ASSURE THE CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY OF YOUR PRODUCT LINE? WHAT SAFETY MEASURES DO YOU USE?	2
VII. WHERE ARE YOUR DIETS PRODUCED AND MANUFACTURED? CAN THIS PLANT BE VISITED?.....	4
VIII. CAN YOU PROVIDE A COMPLETE PRODUCT NUTRIENT ANALYSIS OF YOUR BEST-SELLING CANINE AND FELINE PET FOOD?	4
REFERENCE:	4



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The American Animal Hospital Association published a nutritional assessment guideline for cats and dogs in 2010. In this document, specific questions were listed as suggestions to ask of pet food manufacturers. The following Q&A has been adapted from those questions and Royal Canin's position:

I. DO YOU HAVE A VETERINARY NUTRITIONIST OR SOMEONE EQUIVALENT ON STAFF IN YOUR COMPANY? ARE THEY AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION OR QUESTIONS?

Royal Canin is a worldwide company providing nutritional formulas to cats and dogs in 91 countries with 12 manufacturing facilities situated throughout the globe. Formulations are determined by a team of veterinary nutritionists, PhD nutritionists and Masters of nutrition primarily stationed at the Royal Canin Research Campus in Aimargues, France, but also in a number of other countries. In Canada, veterinarians, internists, Masters of nutrition, and many others are available to answer questions about nutrition and our products. There is also a Canadian-based Case Consult team comprised of veterinarians and board-certified specialists available for consultation of dietary recommendations and general case consultations. In 2012 alone, Royal Canin consulted on 11,400 cases from across Canada.

II. WHO FORMULATES YOUR DIETS AND WHAT ARE THEIR CREDENTIALS?

Using the knowledge gleaned from the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition, as well as the world wide body of research, the formulation team develops and validates new nutritional formulations at the Royal Canin Campus in Aimargues, France.

III. WHICH OF YOUR DIETS ARE AAFCO FEED TRIAL TESTED? WHICH OF YOUR DIETS MEET AAFCO NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS?

There are over 50 dry and wet canine, and over 35 dry and wet feline formulas. Of these, 35 formulas have been through growth and/or maintenance AAFCO feeding trials. Most of the other formulas have been validated according to AAFCO nutrient profiles though there are some special formulas with specific therapeutic formulations that precludes meeting the AAFCO nutrient profile.



These formulas have all gone through alternate product testing, and many have been proven through clinical trials to be efficacious in managing the disease processes for which they were intended. All have been fed to either cats or dogs for long term trials, and the cats and dogs have thrived. Examples would be the Canine Hepatic and Renal LP formulas.

IV. WHAT TESTING DO YOU DO BEYOND AAFCO TRIALS?

- ✓ Palatability trials
- ✓ Digestibility trials
- ✓ Blood parameters
- ✓ Relative Supersaturation trials
- ✓ Stool conformation
- ✓ Amino acid analysis
- ✓ Fatty acid analysis
- ✓ Toxicology studies and stability data
- ✓ Clinical trials for efficacy in conjunction with veterinarians and pet owners
- ✓ Peer reviewed research

V. WHAT IS THE CALORIC VALUE PER CAN OR CUP OF YOUR DIETS?

The calories per cup are printed on every bag. The calories per cup, and per can are available on the website, in the product guide and client brochure for each product.

VI. WHAT SPECIFIC QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES DO YOU USE TO ASSURE THE CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY OF YOUR PRODUCT LINE? WHAT SAFETY MEASURES DO YOU USE?

Product quality begins with the audit of every single ingredient from each supplier. Currently, over 60% of the ingredients used are sourced in Canada (with a goal of 90% by 2015) - a patriotic practice, but one that also delivers a strategic benefit should there be issues at the border. Each ingredient prior to entering the facility must be subjected to analysis conducted by trained technicians to confirm quality and safety. The centerpiece of the plants laboratory in terms of product safety is the use of Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS), an analytical test that compares the “fingerprint” of an ingredient to a database of standards (this database takes 3 years to establish). If the NIRS results for the incoming ingredient do not match the standard, then the ingredient is rejected prior to unloading.



The manufacturing facility is composed of 3 separate, but interconnected parts. Each part is color coordinated: red zone for pre-cooking, yellow for cooking and blue for cooked. The manufacturing facility is designed in a vertical arrangement which allows for an energy efficient flow, while the computerized formulation management system ensures that every formula is created precisely. In the first area of the facility (red zone), dry ingredients are received and stored. All incoming ingredients are sampled and tagged to allow traceability - right to the source. To show further vigilance in this process, the ingredients in every bag of our formulas can be traced back to each stage of manufacturing, delivery and supplier.

Ingredients are precisely weighed, ground and mixed to create a homogenous mixture. This mixture of ingredients is then delivered to the “kitchen” where heat and pressure will be supplied in the extruder to produce the kibble. A minimum temperature of 90oC is reached to ensure the control of bacteria, such as salmonella and listeria. Access to this area is strictly limited to skilled and authorized personnel only. Positive pressure, just as in veterinary surgeries, reduces the possibility of bacterial contamination. Pneumatic pressure moves the kibble to the dryer, which, again, is arranged vertically for greater energy efficiency and more uniform drying. The kibble descends through 7 graduated zones until the correct moisture content is achieved.

The Royal Canin Veterinary Exclusive finished product is packaged in the 3rd area of the facility. Metal detectors are used during the process to provide a final safety check before the kibble is packaged. As the bags are filled, nitrogen is forced into the packaging to displace oxygen. Consequently, once the bag is sealed, there is minimal contact between the kibble and oxygen. This process ensures the food maintains a higher degree of freshness and palatability.

To enhance the level of biologic vigilance employees cannot move freely from one painted zone to the other. Employees and tools working in the red zone cannot cross into the blue zone. The blue zone defines the area of the plant involved with finished product and packaging which has been sterilized by the extruder. Employees in the plant are required to wear special footwear, hair nets and clothing and require hand sanitization before entering the blue zone.

Our safety measures however, do not end just there. The Americas satellite laboratory situated in Guelph, Ontario, is a state of the art laboratory that conducts detailed analyses on all ingredients and finished product from plants in North and South America. This lab is integrated with labs in Asia and France, ensuring the quality and safety of all Royal Canin products worldwide. The consequence of this remarkable technology from start to finish is that pet owners can be assured that Royal Canin Veterinary Exclusive products are free of any contamination and are 100% safe.



VII. WHERE ARE YOUR DIETS PRODUCED AND MANUFACTURED? CAN THIS PLANT BE VISITED?

The majority of the dry formulas for the Canadian market are produced at our new facility in Guelph, Ontario. This facility is part of a network of plants in North America, where certain formulas may be assigned to specific plants for production to supply the entire North American market.

For example, while every plant can produce any of the formulas, this unique network provides an opportunity for the facilities to specialize in some areas, improves efficiency of production, and enables us to continue to supply the market should there be a situation that resulted in supply interruption from a particular plant. The wet formulas are made in our wholly owned plant in North Sioux City, South Dakota.

The plants are all dedicated to the manufacture of Royal Canin products. There is no third-party co-packing or subcontracting. The contracts, technologies, quality controls, and product testing that help ensure safety, nutritional precision and performance are in place at all of these facilities. And yes, tours can be arranged. Approximately 600 veterinarians, veterinary technicians, office managers and associates of customer service teams have visited the plant in Guelph since its opening.

VIII. CAN YOU PROVIDE A COMPLETE PRODUCT NUTRIENT ANALYSIS OF YOUR BEST-SELLING CANINE AND FELINE PET FOOD?

This information can be provided for every Royal Canin Veterinary Exclusive product on the market.

REFERENCE:

Baldwin K, Bartges J, Buffington T, et al. AAHA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines for Dogs and Cats. J Am Anim Hosp Assoc. 2010; 46: 285-296.