

What Is the AAFCO Statement on a Pet Food Label?



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The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is an organization that sets standards for pet food in the United States. One of the standards set by AAFCO is the statement that must appear on pet food labels.

The AAFCO statement found on pet food packaging explains whether the food contains essential nutrients, how that was determined, and for which life stage the food is appropriate for. It basically lets you know that the food is “complete and balanced” for a particular life stage.

The AAFCO statement on a pet food label provides information about the nutritional adequacy of the food. It states that the food has been tested and has been found to meet the AAFCO’s nutrient profiles for a specific life stage. The statement typically includes the following information:

- The life stage for which the food is intended (e.g. “maintenance,” “growth,” “all life stages”)
- The species for which the food is intended (e.g. “dogs,” “cats,” “dogs and cats”)
- The method by which the food was tested (e.g. “feeding trial,” “formulation”)

For example, a label might state “Animal fed this product as sole ration have been shown to meet or exceed the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles for all life stages”. This indicates that the food has been tested and has been found to meet the AAFCO’s nutrient profiles for all life stages of dogs.

It’s important to note that AAFCO does not test or approve pet food. The statement is just a certification that the pet food has met certain nutritional standards and the statement is made by the pet food manufacturer.

Life stages are separated into two categories:

- Adult Maintenance: These foods are intended for adult dogs or cats.
- Growth and Reproduction: These foods are designed for puppies/kittens and pregnant or lactating females. A newer guideline for puppy foods also includes a statement about large dogs (those over 70 lbs.)
- All Life Stages: Foods that are marketed for “all life stages” must meet the more stringent standards for “growth and reproduction”, while still falling within the parameters required for Adult Maintenance.
- AAFCO does not define a ‘senior’ life-stage. Senior life stage diets are typically formulated meet adult maintenance.

Nutritional adequacy standards established by AAFCO must be met or exceeded in order for a pet food to be marketed as “complete and balanced” for a certain life stage.

Any product that does not meet either standard must be labelled for “intermittent or supplemental feeding only.” These foods are not deemed to be complete and balanced and should not be fed as your pet’s primary diet.

Why choose an All Life Stages diet?

We understand that picking the best diet for your pet can be an overwhelming and difficult task. We want the best for our pets, but pet food labels can be so challenging to understand sometimes.

All life stages pet food is a type of pet food that is formulated to meet the nutritional needs of pets at all stages of their life. This includes puppy and kitten food for young animals, adult food for mature animals, and senior food for older animals.

All life stages pet food is formulated to provide a balance of protein, fat, and carbohydrates, as well as essential vitamins and minerals. The specific calorie needs of a pet will vary depending on their age, size, and activity level.

All life stages pet food is a convenient option for pet owners as it eliminates the need to switch between different types of food as their pet grows and ages. However, it’s important to note that some specialized food, such as diets for pets with medical issues, might require a different type of food.

Typically, all life stages diets contain more protein, fat, and certain minerals than an adult maintenance diet. Calcium, phosphorus, iron, copper, manganese and zinc are all higher in a growth or all life stage diet compared to an adult maintenance diet.

The higher levels of these nutrients can cause concern for veterinary professionals; however, it should be noted that these nutrients still fall within the daily recommended allowance for adult diets and will not pose any issues in an average healthy pet.