

## Don't Sacrifice Dogs' Nutrition

**Pet Nutrition Month in March highlights importance of healthy food.**

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As many pet owners struggle to find ways to save on pet care, there's one area that should not be neglected: pet food. That's why Banfield, The Pet Hospital, is offering tips for ways to help pet owners keep cats and dogs healthy during difficult economic times.

While it may be tempting to switch to lower-cost pet food, Banfield said it's important for pet owners to be aware of the long-term cost-efficiency of feeding their pets a higher-quality diet.

"Nutrition is the foundation of good health, and a quality diet can actually decrease your pet's chance of developing costly health problems in the future," said Karen Johnson, DVM, of Banfield.

High-quality food tends to include less filler. As a result, more nutrients are directly absorbed and used by the pet's body.

In addition, feeding pets a high-quality diet decreases the amount they need to be fed, according to Banfield. The hospital urges pet owners to consider the following tips: Give pets food that's made by companies known for ongoing nutritional research. Make sure pet food stays fresh by minimizing the time period food is stored. Feed pets the right amount according to their weight, and avoid feeding pets as much as they want, or feeding large amounts at once. Maintain a consistent daily feeding schedule to help pets keep normal elimination habits, as well as avoid indoor accidents. Examine the first three ingredients on pet food labels. The most nutritionally rich pet foods contain whole ingredients in the top ingredients, instead of "meals" or ground skeletal meats, organs, or connective tissue. By-product "meals" do have nutritional benefits, but are more beneficial to pets when not among the primary ingredients. Avoid feeding people food to animals. A pet's digestive system is simpler than a person's and can be upset by feeding table scraps.