

How to try plant-based cat food

Why?

900 million land animals are slaughtered for cat food each year¹

Animals are exploited and killed for cat food. This can be in the form of so-called by-products, which still subsidize the animal industry. Even worse, half of the animal products in cat food are produced to meet the demand generated by cat food.

Aren't cats obligate carnivores?

Cats indeed need certain nutrients that in the wild are only found in meat. With modern food processing however, these nutrients can be made from mineral and synthetic sources too, making plant-based cat food "complete" for cats.

Only by-products are used, right?

Unfortunately, no. While about half of cat food in the US is made from by-products and animal meal, the other half (49.2%) is still made from animals bred for pet food.¹

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My 8 year old cat has been on vegan kibble for 7 years. He's energetic and loving with a shiny coat!



u/HealthyPetsAndPlanet

”

Health

No major or consistent health issues have been found for cats eating fully plant-based food²

Overall, the average cat does well on plant-based food. If there was a large negative effect for cats fed plant-based food, it would have been expected to have been found by now. This is true even with the limited science available right now. Health benefits have even been reported, though note these are tentative findings.

How?

1. Buy commercially prepared food

Plant-based cat food is not something you can DIY without expert help

2. Transition very slowly

As with starting any new food for your pet, start with 10% new and 90% current food, well mixed. Keep that ratio for a few days, then increase to 20% new, 80% current, etc.

3. Pay attention to your cat's behaviour

If there is an allergy or other negative change, you can spot it.

If they refuse the food at some point, go back to the previous ratio and stay there, e.g. a 50/50 plant/meat-based food is still an improvement.

4. Monitor and measure

At least track their weight (this should stay the same). For extra assurance, talk with your vet about monitoring blood markers like B12, Taurine, and standard ones. Also ask how to check urinary acidity stays in range

Track urinary acidity for extra safety³

Cats can run into dangerous issues if their urine isn't acidic enough on any diet, especially for male cats on (mostly) dry food. Monitoring their urinary acidity catches possible issues early, when food supplements can still resolve them.

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Our cat has been on plant-based kibble her whole life. She's 5 now. No issues from her diet and her non-vegan vets agree.



u/icebiker

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Can cats digest plants?

Most meat-based cat food today already includes plants, and often even has more plants than animal parts in total. Cats cannot digest most raw plants, so they are processed or cooked. This changes the plants to be digestible by cats.

“ I had a vegan cat for 16 years who was in wonderful health. She passed away from old age, and even then, she had no deficiencies - which is quite rare at the end of life for a female cat. ”

 u/ElineBonnin

However

Plant-based cat food may not always be available for all cats

Plant-based cat food is not globally available. Some locations have no options to buy it, others may have very limited options. A specific cat might not do well on the specific one available, e.g. due to an allergy. A cat might also need prescription food - with no vegan options available at this time.

“ We have raised cats on several commercial vegan cat foods with great results. They have lived (or continue to live) to nice old ages in good health and with great happiness. ”

 u/JayNetworks

“ Healthy happy kitties for years! Zero health problems - don’t let those who haven’t tried plant-based cat food tell you otherwise! ”

 u/Savings_Living5336

Do cats need taurine?

Yes, they do! Taurine isn’t found in plants and therefore is synthetically made and added instead. Synthetic taurine has been added to most cat foods, even meat-based ones, with great success since the 1980s.



Complete plant-based cat foods



1. “The relative benefits for environmental sustainability of vegan diets for dogs, cats and people” / PLoS One - 2023
2. “The Impact of Vegan Diets on Indicators of Health in Dogs and Cats: A Systematic Review” / Veterinary Sciences – 2023
3. “Vegetarian versus Meat-Based Diets for Companion Animals” / Animals – 2016
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