



# Cat Nutrition

A good diet should not only meet your cat's nutritional needs but enhance health and wellness throughout every stage of their life.

The right food will address their individual needs and preferences, be highly palatable and enjoyable to eat, accommodate any dietary sensitivities and keep your cat in good physical health throughout their life.

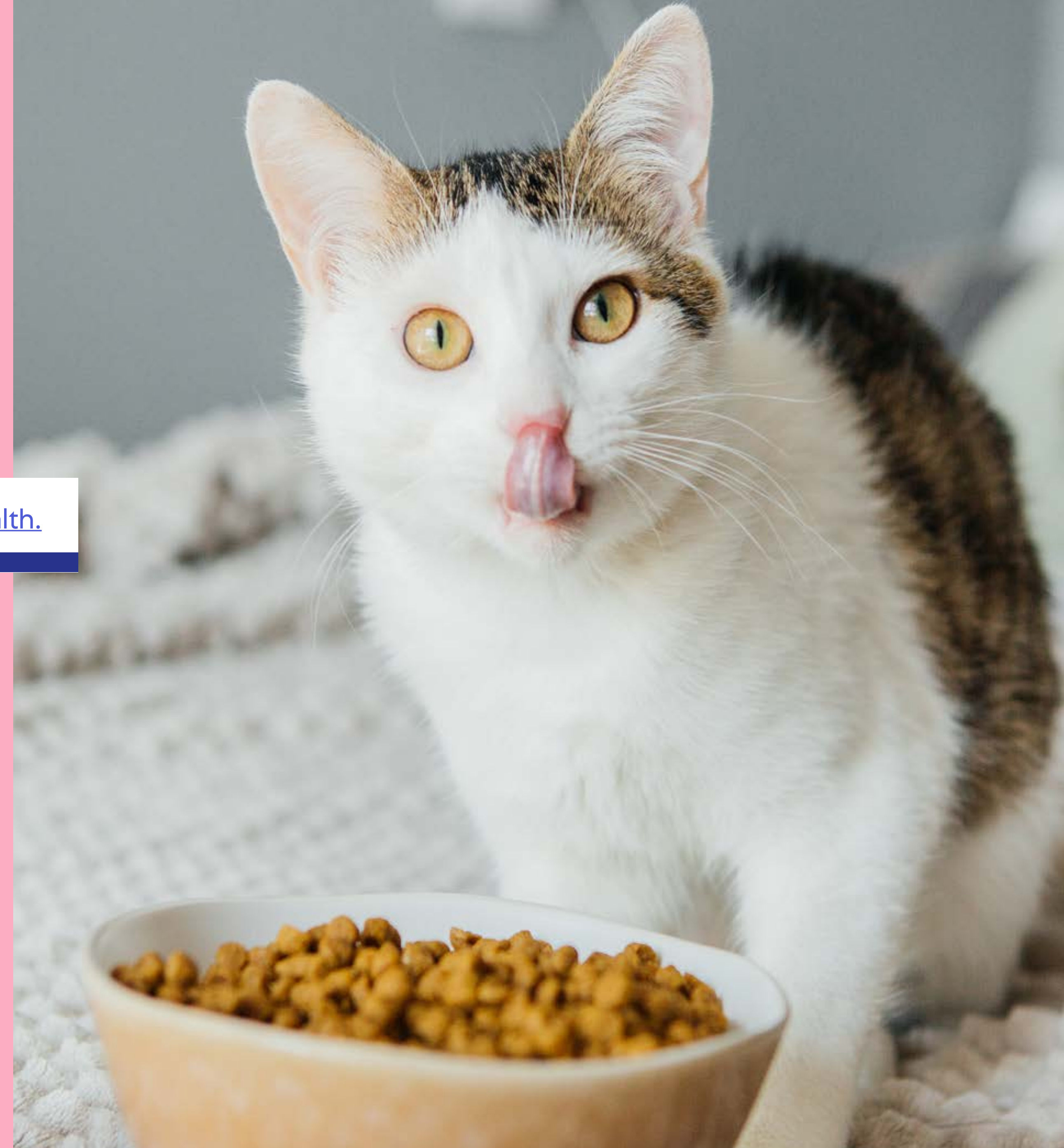
A type of food could be safe and nutritionally complete and still not be the best diet for your cat – just like humans, not all cats will thrive on the same diet.



## Considerations when caring for your cat

Because cats are obligate carnivores, they should never be fed a vegetarian or vegan diet, even if this is a lifestyle choice adopted by their owner. Conversely, feeding an 'all-meat diet' isn't necessarily the answer.

[Increased dietary moisture is beneficial for cats' urinary tract health.](#)







## Drinking water sources

In addition to a high-quality diet, your cat also requires regular access to fresh water. Cats have a reputation for drinking very little because they are descended from desert animals and can concentrate their urine<sup>1</sup>. However, if their urine becomes too concentrated, it increases the risk of developing crystals or bladder stones in the urinary tract<sup>2</sup>.

**To encourage your cat to drink more, you can try offering water out of a variety of bowls or using a cat fountain as many cats prefer running water**



<sup>1</sup>Herron, ME, Horowitz, DF, & Siracusa, C, 2020, Decoding Your Cat: The ultimate experts explain common cat behaviors and reveal how to prevent or change unwanted ones, 1st Edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: New York

<sup>2</sup>Grandjean, D, & Butterwick, R, 2009, WALTHAM® pocket book of essential nutrition for cats and dogs, 2nd Edition, WALTHAM® Centre for Pet Nutrition: Mars, pp. 1-64





## What makes a balanced diet for your cat

To begin with, it's important to understand that a diet suitable for humans is rarely going to meet the nutritional requirements of our cats. Cats require 41 essential nutrients, across six main nutrient groups; water, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Unlike dogs, cats have a unique requirement for the amino acids taurine and arginine, as well as arachidonic acid (a fatty acid) and must obtain these from their diet<sup>3</sup>.

Deficiencies in these essential nutrients can have severe consequences for their physical health and wellbeing, for example, the development of dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM), a heart condition caused by taurine deficiency.

<sup>3</sup>PFMA, 2015, Cats – Nutritional Needs, Available at: <https://www.pfma.org.uk/the-nutrientsyour-cat-needs>, Accessed 12 January 2022

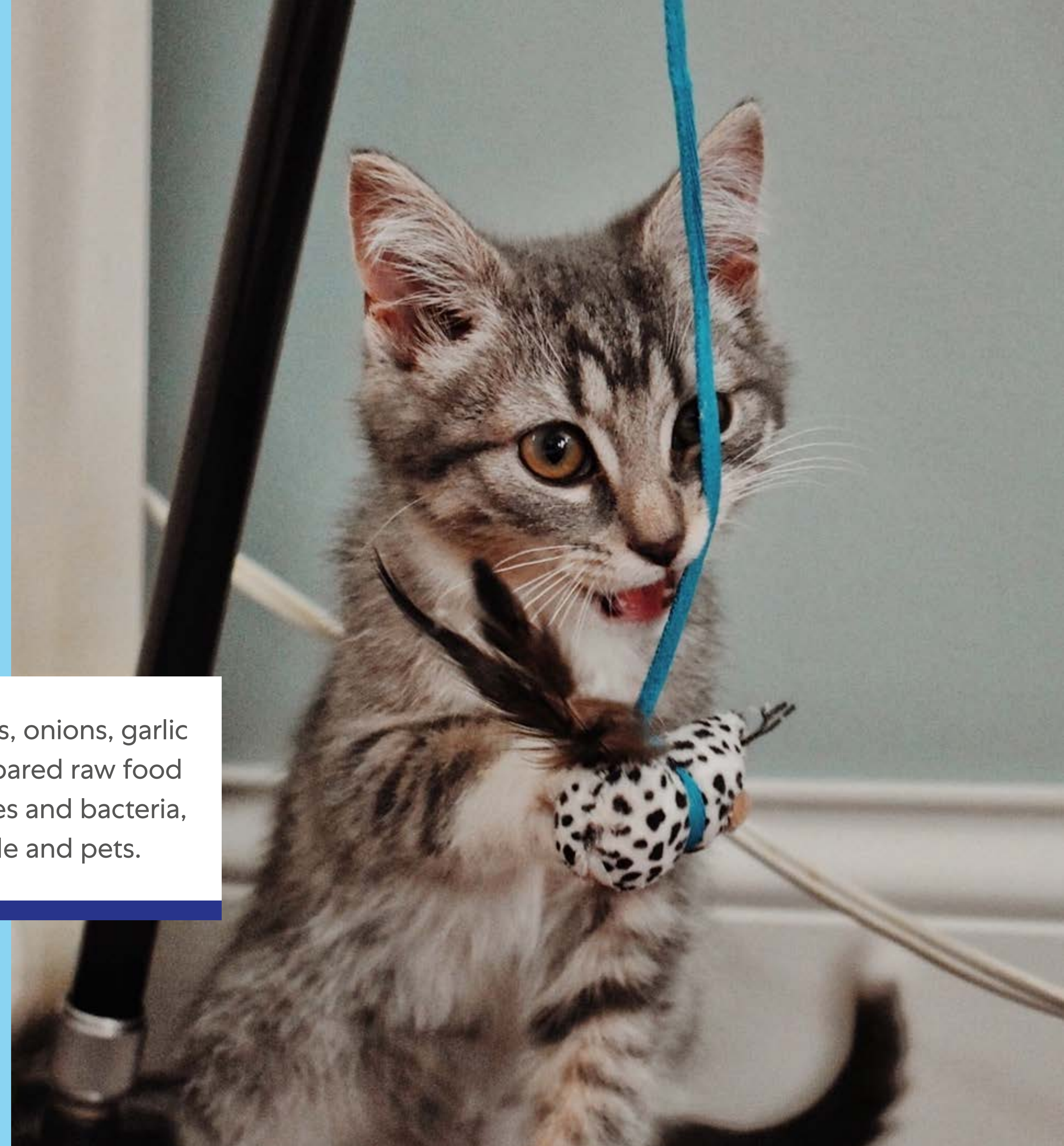


## The challenge of making complete and balanced pet food at home

Researchers at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, studied 114 homemade cat food recipes from websites, pet care books, and even veterinary textbooks. According to the study, all of these recipes were deficient in at least one essential nutrient, with most lacking in three or more.<sup>4</sup>

It's also important to remember that many 'human foods' like grapes, onions, garlic and chocolate are toxic to cats and can even be deadly. Home-prepared raw food diets may also have an additional risk of contamination with parasites and bacteria, making them a potential health and safety hazard to both people and pets.

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, SA, Villaverde, C, Fascetti, AJ, & Larsen, JA, 2019, Evaluation of the nutritional adequacy of recipes for home-prepared maintenance diets for cats, JAVMA, Vol 254(10), DOI: 10.2460/javma.254.10.1172, Accessed 07 February 2022







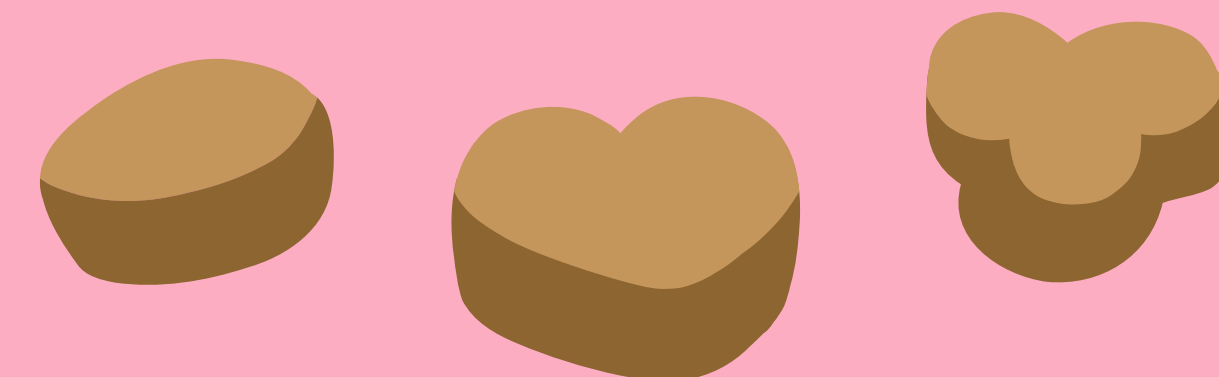
More information about specific requirements of cat diets and the latest scientific thinking can be found [here](#)

## So what should you be feeding?

One way to meet all of your cat's essential nutrient requirements is by feeding a complete and balanced manufactured diet.

In most cases, these diets are based on decades of scientific research and expertise and are carefully designed to provide balanced nutrition according to your cat's life stage or lifestyle. And while it may not look or smell appetising to us, the texture and taste is specifically formulated to maximise a cat's enjoyment of eating.

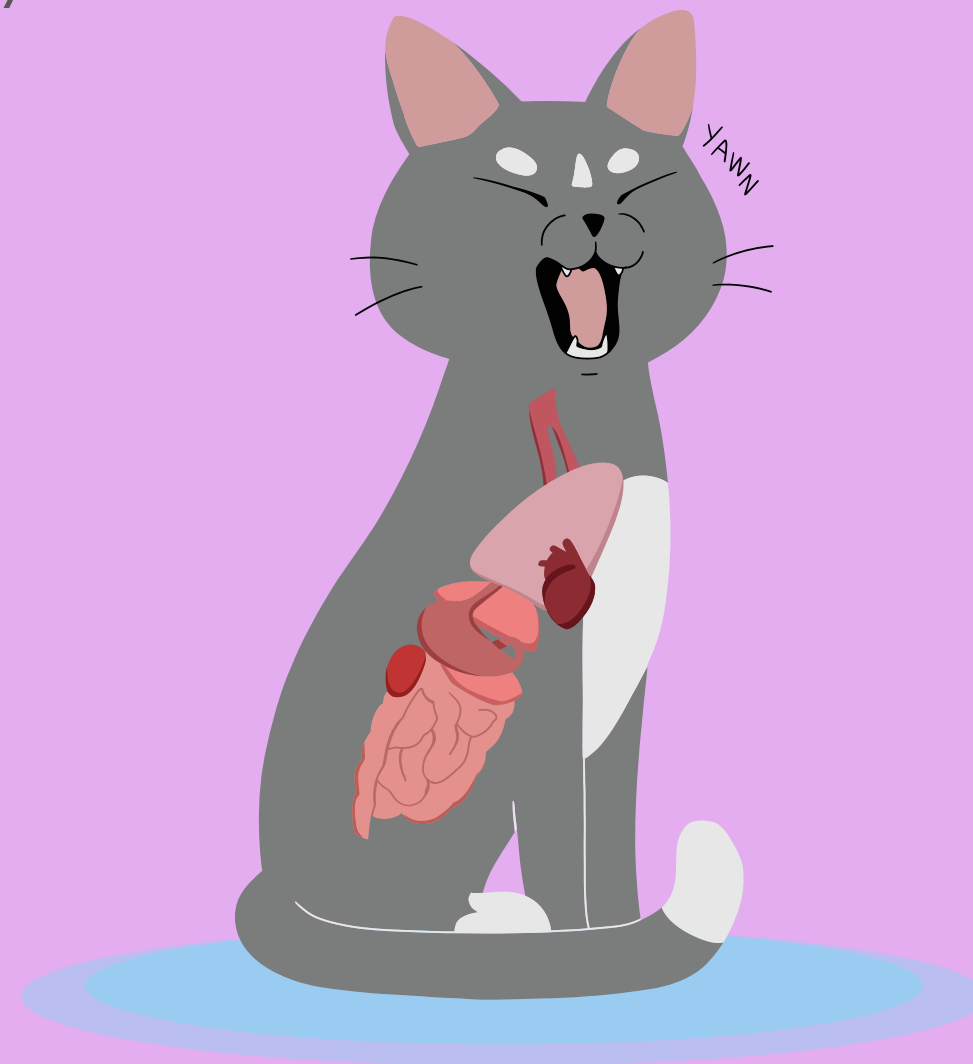
Strict guidelines and legislation ensure that manufactured pet foods are created in line with the latest scientific standards and quality ingredients.





## Your cat's microbiome

Companies that prioritise scientific innovation are also constantly researching ways in which nutrition can enhance or support health. For example, there is currently a great deal of interest in the feline [microbiome](#) and how tailored nutrition may better support a healthy population of gut bacteria. Early research suggests that the microbiome has a significant impact on physical health including, digestion, allergies and gastrointestinal disorders,<sup>5,6</sup> and may even play a role in mental health.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>5</sup>Wernimont, SM, Radosevich, J, Jackson, MI, et al., 2020, The Effects of Nutrition on the Microbiome of Cats and Dogs: Impact on Health and Disease, Front. Microbiol. doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2020.01266

<sup>6</sup>Deusch, O, O'Flynn, C, Colyer, A, et al., 2014, Deep Illumina-Based Shotgun Sequencing Reveals Dietary Effects on the Structure and Function of the Fecal Microbiome of Growing Kittens, Plos ONE, DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0101021, Accessed 07 February 2022

<sup>7</sup>Capuco, A, Urits, I, Hasoon, J, et al., 2020, Current Perspectives on Gut Microbiome Dysbiosis and Depression, Advances in Therapy, Vol 37, 1328-1346







## When choosing the right food for your cat, consider:

- Is the food nutritionally complete?
- Is it formulated for your cat's life stage?
- Does it support any health conditions your cat might have?
- Is your cat producing good quality stools?
- Is it suitable for your cat's lifestyle?
- Does your cat seem to enjoy eating it?
- Is the texture and kibble size suitable for your cat?
- Is it easy for you to store and safely prepare?
- Can it be fed in a manner that suits you and your cat?
- Is your cat physically thriving on it?
- Is it helping you maintain a healthy weight for your cat?

**If you're unsure if your cat's diet is right for them, ask your veterinarian for advice.**

Learn more about nutrition and emotional wellbeing for your pets at [shine.waltham.com](https://shine.waltham.com)