

Natural Foods

Are natural products better for cats? Veterinarians share their expert opinions.

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Manufacturers who claim that there is nothing wrong with chemical preservatives and standard diets are largely supported by the veterinary community. For instance, Francis Kallfelz, DVM, director of the teaching hospital at Cornell University School of Veterinary Medicine and a CAT FANCY columnist, states, "No studies have been done that demonstrate that natural diets are any better than standard diets." As long as AAFCO [Association of American Feed Control Officials] standards for complete and balanced foods are met, Kallfelz says he sees no problem with either type of food.

Jay Luger, DVM, owner of New York's Forest Hills Cat Hospital, agrees. "There is no evidence that standard or natural diets are any better or worse than one another," he says. "The only guideline we have is the AAFCO standard for complete and balanced diets. What we really have to look at is whether or not a particular kitten appears to be gaining weight and developing normally."

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, DVM, of the Cat Care Clinic in Calif., feeds a natural diet to her own cats. "Cats definitely are living longer," she says, "and I'm sure it's due to improved diet." However, Wexler-Mitchell acknowledges that it's impossible to tell the source of ingredients in cat food. "No one is regulating labels or defining what 'natural' means. So you have to look for foods that adhere to the AAFCO guideline for complete and balanced nutrition. It's the best standard we have," she says.