

When it comes to pet food, “natural,” “organic” and “holistic” are the same.

It's a myth

In grocery stores and pet stores, the terms “natural,” “organic” and “holistic” are frequently and freely used on packages to imply that foods with these labels are healthier than those without.

The facts

“Natural” and “organic” do not mean the same thing.

NATURAL

- The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) defines and regulates the term “natural” for pet food and animal feed.
- The term “natural” means a feed or ingredient derived solely from plant, animal or mined sources that have not been produced by a chemically synthetic process.
- In addition, natural feed and ingredients do not contain any additives or processing aids that are chemically synthetic.
- However, chemically synthesized vitamins, minerals and other trace nutrients are acceptable.

ORGANIC

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program defines and regulates the term “organic” for pet food and human food. “Organic” refers to the way a crop or animal is grown or raised and handled.
- Organic crops must be grown on land free from pesticides for three years.
- Organic livestock is fed organic feed, is not given antibiotics or hormones, and has access to the outdoors.

Natural and organic foods are not necessarily healthier than conventional foods.

- The USDA makes no claims that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food.
- Organic food differs from conventionally produced food in the way it is grown, handled and processed.

Not all foods labeled organic contain only organic ingredients.

- There are four levels of organic foods
 - 100% organic
 - Organic (95%)
 - Made with organic (70% to 95%)
 - Less than 70% organic
- Look for the USDA organic seal as proof of a certified organic pet food. Pet foods with that seal must contain 95% to 100% organic ingredients.



“Holistic” is a vague term that can have many meanings.

- “Holistic” as it refers to pet food is not defined or regulated by any regulatory body.

Remember

Although pet foods labeled as natural, organic and/or holistic are increasingly popular, the use of these terms can be misleading or confusing when trying to choose the best food for your pet. These terms do not guarantee better nutrition for your pet.