

# Keep it safe

## Food handling tips to keep your pets safe

There's a great TV commercial that seems to hit our screens around Christmas and summer. It reminds us all about how to store our festive fare in the fridge and keeping kitchen preparation surfaces clean. Hopefully we all employ the same safety smarts for our pets.

Many people think of pets as having cast iron stomachs or antiseptic saliva, but bacteria can cause some serious problems for our pets. As a pet owner, you need to take some simple steps to prevent food borne illness when handling and storing food. Pet food, like many other types of foods, can be susceptible to harmful bacterial contamination.

### Point of purchase

Always check your pet food packaging prior to purchase. Look for packaging that is in undamaged condition. Reject packaging that has punctures, dents or tears.

Proper storage once home is important to maintain pet food freshness. Large bags of kibble should be stored in large airtight containers. Containers bought from commercial kitchen supplies are the best as they're sturdy and airtight. Use a smaller airtight container for several day's worth of food as this will make feeding times more convenient and will ensure that the larger container is not being constantly opened and therefore food exposed unnecessarily to air.

Dispose of pet food packaging immediately as this will reduce the risk of bringing nasties like cockroach eggs into your environment. Pet food should always be stored in a cool, dry place under 30°.

### Kitchen hygiene helpers

With human food preparation you should wash your hands thoroughly before handling food. The same should be practiced before pet food preparation. Wash pet food bowls, water dishes, and scooping utensils with soap and hot water after each use as well.

Resist the urge to use your pets bowl as a scooping device—use a clean dedicated scoop rather than a bowl. This will reduce the potential for food contamination.

Many cat owners have dry food out for their 'grazers'. Remember to change this regularly rather than just topping it up. If feeding 'wet' food, only leave this out for your cats for a limited amount of time. Once your cat has finished eating, dispose of leftovers in a bag and then trash it.

If your cat's dry food is placed in an area susceptible to ant contamination then place bowls in a shallow trough filled with a few millimetres of water. That way pesky ants will drown before reaching the islands of food.



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