

How to Choose Healthy Dog Treats



Our little cocker spaniel, Barney, lowered his ears like he always does when he is not feeling well.

He jumped off the couch and began wandering around the living room. Moments later, I heard him retching from behind the couch.

“That’s it,” I thought. “I’m throwing the rest of the bag away.”

Barney had just eaten – and thrown up – a popular dog treat that proudly identified itself as ‘all natural’ and ‘safe for all dogs’ on the packaging.

This was the second time I’d given him one of these treats. He’d eaten the first one almost a week ago...and threw it up a few minutes after eating it.

After Barney threw up the first one, I chalked it up to coincidence.

But the second one? That was a big warning sign!

We had been trying for months – years, really – to find safe and healthy dog treats, but no luck.

I finally decided to research and publish some simple guidelines for any doggie-parents frustrated with their own struggles to find healthy goodies for their furry friends.

After reading this article, you’ll be armed with the knowledge necessary to keep your pups safe when feeding them dog treats or using training rewards.

Navigating the sometimes confusing or contradictory nature of ingredients lists on pet products can be difficult.

To keep everything clear, I organized these guidelines into three simple sections.

Read on to find out how you can keep your furry family member safe with healthy dog treats that are genuinely good for him.

#1: Stay Away from These Ingredients

- Sugar
- Artificial Colors
- Artificial Flavors
- Animal By-Products
- Corn

Here's a few thoughts about each.

Sugar – Dogs are scavengers and will eat pretty much anything they can get into their mouths.

Unlike humans, they don't know the harmful effects of junk food and can't make informed choices.

[Pets.WebMD.com](https://www.petswebmd.com) stresses that sugar *“offers no nutritional value to your dog and can lead to excess weight, teeth problems, and even the possibility of diabetes.”*

Next, look for the following phrases in ingredients:

Artificial Colors - These are added to dog treats to ensure they look good to dog owners.

Unfortunately, artificial colors may cause aggressiveness, sleep issues, and hyperactivity.

Artificial Flavors - Avoid any dog treats that list 'artificial flavors' in the ingredients as these are only used to mask a bitter taste of a low-quality treat.

Such flavorings only serve to encourage your pet to eat low quality foods...like human children who learn to only eat unhealthy processed foods because they 'taste better.'

Animal By-Products – also known as 'meat digest' are essentially scrap material of animals: feet, stomach, intestines, and so on.

Fans of animal by-products defend them, saying they are no different to the dogs eating them than the so-called 'healthy' cuts of meat.

However, nutritionally these by-products do not add up, meaning your dog is just eating empty calories.

Corn – If you're new to the idea of checking your dog food or treat ingredients, this one may have been a surprise.

Dog treats containing corn can cause multiple issues for dogs.

For instance, corn is only digestible to the extent it's been processed. If the corn is uncooked or unprocessed, your dog will have trouble digesting it.

#2: Beware of These Misleading Label Tricks

Don't fall for the 'all natural' trap!

The term 'all natural' is used by sneaky food manufacturers of human and pet foods. They use it to fool us into thinking a product labeled 'all natural' must be safe and healthy.

Not true! 'All natural' is a vague term and does not mean anything related to actual food quality.

'All natural' pet foods and treats are often full of animal by-products and a host of other undesirable ingredients.

According to The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) *"Pet food labelers must comply with the definition to use the words 'Natural' or 'All-Natural' on any pet labels."*

The AAFCO says 'Natural' or 'All Natural' means the pet food ingredients must have come from the earth.

The ingredients must come "solely from plant, animal, or mined sources" either completely unprocessed or processed in natural ways.

Some of those processes might be *"physical processing, heat processing, rendering, purification, extraction, hydrolysis, enzymolysis, or fermentation."*

What does all this mean to you?

Simple - ground up bird feathers, bird beaks, and other undesirable ingredients can easily find their way into these supposedly 'healthy' treats, as they are indeed technically "natural."

Such labeling practices are, unfortunately, completely legal.

Also, deceptive labels may try to fool you by merely listing 'animal, meat, or poultry' as protein.

Such vague labels may be used to mask ingredients such as hooves, fur, hair, and many other ingredients.

Those ingredients can (and often are) ground up and included in pet products as inexpensive fillers.

#3: Look for These Ingredients in Dog Treats and Training Rewards

Stick to dog treats that include natural, healthy ingredients, like these:

- Whole meats
- Fruits
- Grains
- Vegetables

No big mystery here - your dog will do much better with a treat that has natural ingredients of the same kind that humans would be better off eating

The ingredient list should also specify the proteins in the treat, such as:

- Beef
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Fish

What to Do Next

After reading this article, you now have the information you need to easily navigate the shady labeling on major manufacturers' dog treat packages. You can now make the best choices possible for your pup.

But what if you didn't have to do any of your own investigating?

I finally found our dog Barney a series of great tasting treats that meet all the criteria in this article and many more.

If you would like to take all the guesswork out of choosing healthy treats for your dog, click [HERE](#). You'll discover an alternative to the mammoth corporations and their dizzying array of deceptive labeling and half-truths.