

Interpreting Food Labels, EU

Ingredients (raw materials) are listed under "composition"

- In descending order of weight (fresh matter)
- The names can be specific or can also be named by their legal category (see example)

Label must include those nutritional additives (vitamins and minerals) with legal inclusion maximums. The amounts are those added (therefore, the overall amount of nutrient might be different depending on raw material provision and effect of processing. Other additives (like preservatives, dyes, or flavouring agents) do not have to be reported by their specific name, but the company responsible for labelling should provide this information if contacted.

Name, address and contact information of the company responsible for labelling must be included. Label does not have to include country of production. If it applies, companies can use "made in the EU"

Label should include traceability information such as batch number and plant approval number. Best before date must be included in month and year (plus day if short shelf life)

[**Product name**]

400 g

**Complete pet food
for adult cats**

Composition: Meat and animal derivatives (4% chicken), vegetable protein extract, derivatives of vegetable origin, cereals, minerals, various sugars

Additives (per kg):
Nutritional additives:
Vitamin D3 xx UI, E1
(iron) xx mg [...].
Preservatives:
antioxidants



weight (kg)	serving / day (g)
2	35
3	50
4	62
5	74



Store in a cool dry place

Analytical constituents: Crude protein XX %, Crude oils and fats XX %, Crude ash XX %, Crude fibres XX %, Moisture XX%

ABC [company responsible of labelling/packaging], address/phone #

BATCH 1234567890
plant ABCD
Best before date MM/YYYY

Net weight must be reported

The pet food label must:

- Specify target species and lifestage
- Specify if the food is "complete" (provides all necessary nutrients and energy for the species and lifestage, and can be used as sole source of nutrition) or "complementary" (does not provide all nutrients and mainly refers to treats)

Feeding instructions can be more or less detailed. Many labels state that these are only recommendations and might vary depending on age, breed, activity and health

Label should include storage instructions (canned food might also include storage instructions after opening)

Dry pet food must recommend that the pet must have fresh water available at all times

Analytical constituents are declared as percentages (grams per 100 g of pet food) in fresh matter. The ones that are mandatory are crude protein, crude oils and fats, crude ash, and crude fibres. Moisture is only mandatory if >14%. The energy density (kilocalories per kg, cup or can) is not mandatory and is often absent from labels.