

The Ecological Impact of Dog Food



In the United States, the pet food market is estimated to be worth over [\\$30 billion](#). Americans love their pets and will go to great lengths to provide nutrition for their pets.

People will mainly buy pet food based on three main elements. These are marketing, personal beliefs, and what their pets prefer to eat.

Over the last few years, there has been a rise in pet owners feeding their animals human-grade food. Sometimes they will even opt for some superfoods.

While the idea may seem appealing to pet owners, the reality is that such foods may not be ideal. Nor may they be necessary for our beloved dogs. Talk

The impact of dogs on the environment

What many people are not aware of, is the impact of dog food on the environment. Some studies have claimed that a medium-sized dog could have a similar ecological impact to a medium-sized car.

As of 2018, up to a quarter of the meat production in the United States went to pet food. If we were to look at these numbers in global carbon emissions, they would sum up to over 64 million tons per year.

There are many myths propagated by pet food manufacturers and marketers. The ploys are intended to make their products seem ideal in the minds of pet owners. The downside is that this often comes at a huge cost to the environment.

if you have ever asked yourself the question, “what is dog food made of?” then note that A dog’s nutritional needs are very different from a human. By understanding such differences, we can minimize the impact that dogs and other pets pose on the environment.

Human grade pet foods



owner feeding a row of dogs with food bowls or plates, outside and outdoors, all at the same time

By feeding dogs human-grade prime cuts of beef and meat, we increase demand for animal and livestock rearing. This adds extra pressure on the land and space required to raise these animals.

Furthermore, this is also extra pressure on the demand for food. All considering we live in a world that is already dealing with a shortage of food supply. And let's not forget the ever-increasing human population.

Utilizing by-products

One way to tackle the demand placed on the environment is by utilizing all parts of the animal. This is with the exception of hair, bones, hooves, and horns.

The parts not utilized by humans for consumption can still be an excellent source of nutrients and proteins for dogs. Furthermore, pets don't understand prime cuts and will enjoy eating such parts.

The irony is that pet food manufacturers know this but continue to sell the idea that by-products should not be fed to dogs. Their goal is to make their products more appealing to pet owners.

As you decide on the [best types of food](#) for your beloved dog, talk first to your veterinarian. They will be able to advise you on the right brands of food to go for. In this way, you can avoid marketing ploys by large pet food manufacturers that are often based on little more than strategies to boost sales.

Dogs can consume a plant-based diet

[Studies](#) have shown that dogs have an increased ability to draw nutrients from plant-based sources compared to their cousins, the wolves. In fact, part of the dog's remarkable success as man's companion over the years is that they could consume leftovers that didn't always include meat.

This means that we can [reduce further](#) the ecological pressure from raising animals that also need to supply the pet food market.

That said, it is important to note that dogs evolved as carnivores and will therefore not do well with a strictly vegan diet. They need animal products as the larger percentage of their diet.

Reducing the amount of food



Pet food in a wooden bowl with fresh meat, bone, egg and vegetables for a healthy diet for carnivores such as cats and dogs

Many people in the United States are obese. The main reason behind the overweight pandemic is that we are consuming more food than we need.

The same can be said about our pets.

A simple way to reduce the impact that our beloved dogs have on the environment is to reduce the amount of food they consume and only give them what they need to maintain a healthy weight.

How about fish?

Another alternative is to feed our dogs fish. While it is a high source of protein, there is a downside in that it takes away food resources from other marine animals.

Spaying and neutering

The United States has the largest number of pets in the world. While Americans do love their dogs, there is no denying that the populations are out of hand.

By managing the number of unwanted puppies, you play your part as a pet owner in controlling the number of dogs.

Having your dog spayed or neutered means that you will not have to deal with puppies in the future.

Buy your puppy from a registered breeder and avoid back street breeding pens.

Proper waste disposal techniques

Livestock which is later turned into animal and pet food is the largest emitter of the greenhouse gas methane.

A great way of reducing the environmental impact is to encourage positive manure management techniques in agriculture. While this may not be the role of the pet owner, those in the agricultural and livestock production business may benefit from the knowledge.

By employing means such as proper storage and disposal of manure and by using tech such as methane digesters, every livestock farmer can play their part in reducing the amount of methane emissions from their livestock.