

## Pet food labelling - look out for the logo



### Summary:

- Pet food labelling in Australia should comply with Australian consumer law and the Australian Standard for manufacturing and marketing of pet food (AS5812) provides detailed guidance on labelling of pet foods.
- The PFIAA represents the prepared pet food industry in Australia and along with state and federal government departments, the Australian Veterinary Association and the RSPCA developed the Australian Standard AS5812 for pet food labelling.
- The nutritional recommendations of globally recognised bodies including the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) are utilised by major pet food manufacturers as reference for the nutritional requirements of cats and dogs.

## What does a label tell us?

The old adage of "when in doubt, read the label" applies to pet food as to other products. Pet food labels contain a large amount of information which can be useful when selecting the appropriate pet food and determining how to feed your pets.

The Australian Standard for manufacturing and marketing of pet food (AS5812 – 'The Standard') provides detailed guidelines for compliant pet food labelling in Australia. All the major manufacturers of prepared pet foods in Australia have been subject to independent audits and are now compliant with the Australian Standard AS5812, providing an added element of quality and trust to Australia's popular and widely fed prepared pet foods.

## Label requirements under AS5812

The labelling guidance in AS 5812 has been developed to reflect and align with other existing global standards such as those in Europe and the USA and help companies comply with Australian consumer law. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has a central role in promoting competition and ensuring fair trading. The ACCC were informed about the development of the standard and reviewed the PFIAA Code of Practice, which pre-dated the Standard and served as the basis for the subsequent development of AS5812.

Pet food labels complying with The Standard are required to include the following information on labelling:

### Identification as pet food



The words "PET FOOD ONLY" (or words to similar effect) is to appear conspicuously on the label

(or printed onto the end of a can) and an illustration of the whole body or head animal species for which it is intended (e.g. a dog or cat) is also to be included on the label.

### Nutrition information panel

A statement of either guaranteed or typical (average) composition, in regards to protein and fat is required to be included on labels. Labels may also include information about energy content and other nutrient levels in the food.

### Variety and Namers



AS 5812 states: 'The variety name of a pet food shall be informative and an accurate description of the style and flavour.' The Standard includes detailed guidance to

assist both manufacturers and consumers in regards to content and variety names of pet foods.

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For instance with regards to variety naming of canned pet foods, section 3.1.3 states: *'If a meat ingredient constitutes 25% or more of the meat component and is the main meat ingredient then that meat may be referred to as the variety name of the product'*.

**Example:** Where beef is the main meat ingredient in a product and is present at more than 25% then that variety can be named 'beef'.

*It is important to realise that these "rules" concerning variety names are provided in AS5812 to define minimum conditions that must be met. For instance, in the above example, the canned 'beef' variety pet food may include a much higher beef content than in the example above.*

## Nutritional adequacy statement

This pet food is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) dog food nutrient profiles for adult maintenance.

Information as to whether the product provides a complete and balanced diet for their pet at a particular life stage, or whether it is intended to be fed with other foods for nutritional completeness (e.g as a treat or complimentary food) is required. The nutritional recommendations of a globally recognised USA body - the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) are used as reference by AS5812 with regards to nutritional adequacy. These AAFCO nutrient profiles for dogs and cats are regularly reviewed and updated, reflecting new scientific studies in assessing the nutritional needs of pets. Scientifically validated feeding protocols have also been developed by AAFCO to assess the nutritional adequacy of pet food products for a particular species and life stage.

### Feeding guide

-  up to 5 kg feed 1 cup
-  5 kg to 10 kg feed 1.5 cups

## Directions for use (Feeding guide)

Labels provide directions for feeding the food to pets. It

should be recognised that these are only a guide and

individual pets may require more or less food than recommended, depending on their metabolism, lifestyle and lifestage. The pet owner is usually best placed to determine how much and how often to feed their pet, using the pet's demeanour, body condition and general health to guide them. If in doubt, please consult your veterinarian.

## Date labelling

### Best before:

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Pet food labels with a longer shelf life (e.g 2 years +) shall include a packaging date. In the case of shorter shelf life products such as those requiring refrigeration this date labelling will include either a 'best before' statement or a 'use by date'. It is important to follow any specified product storage conditions to ensure product integrity and safety.

## Ingredients list

### Ingredients:

wholegrain cereals (wheat, corn &/or sorghum), meat & meat by products (from poultry, beef &/or lamb), vegetables (carrots, beans, parsley), salt, vitamins (including A,D, B1, B12), minerals (including iron, calcium, phosphorus), antioxidant.

The Standard advises that pet food labels list the ingredients (with the exception of water) in descending order (by weight) and states: "Ingredients will be presented in an informative and consumer friendly manner". It is also required to provide pet owners with information concerning what species of animal meats (e.g poultry, beef, fish) are included. A further requirement is that the statement of ingredients shall list food additives, including advising if flavours, colours, preservatives, vitamins and minerals are added. The Standard specifically requires that where preservatives such as sulphur dioxide or sulphites are included these shall be identified on the label, by inclusion of their common, prescribed, proprietary name or the FSANZ Food Standards code number.

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## General consumer information



In common with many other packaged foods sold in Australia, prepared pet foods labels provide further useful and important information to help pet owners.

Pet foods often include product features and these are required to be consistent with Australian consumer law. Reflecting this, the Standard advises that

“labelling should not directly or indirectly mislead or misrepresent the product to the purchaser”.

## Product branding

Manufacturers generally ensure that their brand name appears in a prominent position on the pet food label. The words, pictures, logos and colour schemes which define the product may be registered as trademarks for exclusive use.

## Name and address

The Name and address of the company responsible for the product must appear on the label.

## Weights and measures

The net weight of the product is to be included on the label.

## Bar coding information



Bar coding is an international system of product identification, and all pet food products sold through the major retail outlets in

Australia carry bar codes. The bar code is a series of numbers represented by the width and spacing between the bars. The bar code provides information on the country of the manufacturer, the manufacturer's identity and product identification, plus a check digit for bar code validation.

## A badge of honour, a sign of integrity

Pet owners are now provided with considerable information on pet food packaging to help them decide which foods are appropriate for their pet dog or cat. The development of Australian Standard 5812 and the widespread adoption of the Standard by PFIAA members (who provide over 95% of packaged, commercial pet foods in Australia) means that all Australian pet owners can have confidence on the extensive information provided on-label. It means even more peace of mind when choosing your pet's meals.



### References:

American Association of Feed Control Officials: [www.aafco.org](http://www.aafco.org)

Australian Standard AS 5812, available to purchase at

<https://www.saiglobal.com>

### This article is for general information only

This information is provided by the PFIAA as general information only. For detailed advice about the Australian Standard AS5812, please refer directly to the Standard. For advice and information concerning treatment and feeding your individual pet, we recommend that you seek the advice of your veterinarian. The PFIAA does not warrant that this document provides a comprehensive review of all relevant clauses of AS5812 or legal requirements for pet food labelling under Australian Consumer Law.