



What's in the can?

What about the real world?, you may ask. Surely the situation can't be so bad? Well, from our current perspective on chemical constituents, I have to say that the situation is very much worse. In popular books and articles dealing with the noxious substances found in the can and packet the starting point is often the flavourings, colourings and preservatives. Undoubtedly these factory-made products are foreign to the digestive system of carnivores and are bound to have deleterious effects. However, the chemicals in greatest quantity, and generally contributing the most harmful effects, are those provided by the main food ingredients (carbohydrates, proteins, etc).

Note that there are so many different formulations and feed types that it's not possible to comment on them all. And in any case different batches of cans or packets will differ according to the raw materials available on any particular day. The US National Research Council (NRC) lists 165 common feed ingredients of dog food and 147 for cat food, which provide the manufacturers with a wide choice.¹ At the extreme ends of the range manufacturers bake wheat biscuits for dogs and can whole fish for cat food. Both of these products have their own particular drawbacks. However our purpose is to look at the generality of processed foods fed to the majority of pets and which carry the 'complete and balanced' claim. Manufacturers encourage the exclusive feeding of these products for long periods of time. While good for profits, long-term use means long-term side effects for the animals.

Carbohydrates

Cereal grains are the chief ingredient in most dry and semi-moist pet