



Pesach Foods

For your pets

The only *kashrus* restriction for pet food, aside from the Pesach season, is that a product listing both meat and dairy ingredients may not be used any time during the year.

Some of the basic rules about pet foods on Pesach are:

- On Pesach, a Jew may not eat, own, or derive benefit from *chametz* which is fit for human or canine consumption. Therefore, owning *chametz* pet food or feeding it to an animal (even if the animal belongs to someone else or is ownerless) is forbidden.
- There are certain leniencies for foods that is not fit for human consumption, but most modern-day pet food does not qualify for this status. Although the food may be raw or not prepared in a way that most people would entertain eating, that does not put it in the *halachic* category of *nifsal mei'achilas adam* – not fit for human consumption.
- While Ashkenazic Jews have a custom to not eat *kitnios*, they may own and derive benefit from them, and can, therefore, feed them to their pets.

To aid pet owners, the cRc “certifies” certain varieties of pet food

for Pesach, which means that we visit the factory to determine which formulas are *chametz*-free, relieving the consumer of that responsibility. (We also ensure that they do not contain forbidden mixtures of milk and meat.) However, if no certified (or recommended) pet food is available, the consumer should carefully read the ingredient panel to determine whether it contains any *chametz* (and many, in fact, do). A complete list of possible pet food ingredients is beyond the scope of this guide. However, the following are a few pointers when reading the ingredient panel.

1. In addition to checking for the five *chametz* grains – wheat, barley, rye, oats, and spelt – also look for brewer’s yeast (a common flavoring agent, which is *chametz*), malt (a barley-based sweetener), pasta, xanthan gum (a thickener which may be fermented from *chametz*), and other generic terms which may refer to a *chametz* ingredient (e.g., flour, gluten, middlings, etc.). If any of these are present, you should not own or use this pet food on Pesach.

2. Many varieties of animal feed contain a multitude of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, some of which may well be *chametz*,

and there is no realistic way for a consumer to determine which of them are problematic. However, the good news is that vitamins comprise such a small percentage of the animal food that they are *batel*, and do not pose a concern.

3. Some common ingredients used in pet food which do not pose a Pesach concern are:

- a. Animal, poultry, and fish products.
- b. Vegetables, such as alfalfa, asparagus, beets, and carrots.
- c. Assorted *kitnios* foods, such as buckwheat, corn products, lentils, millet, peas, rice, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and soy products.
- d. Other items, such as barley grass, BHA, BHT, carrageenan, cellulose, colors, eggs, gums (other than xanthan gum), kelp, lactose, linseed, milk products, molasses, oils, psyllium, and whey.

By no means do these pointers cover all the ingredients used in pet food, and we suggest that you contact a *kashrus* professional if you are unsure about any of the other ingredients in a given pet food.

Feed available at zoos is often *chametz* and should not be purchased or fed to the animals on Pesach. After Pesach, pet food with *chametz* may be purchased only from stores which are either not Jewish-owned (e.g., PetSmart, Petco) or are Jewish-owned and have sold their *chametz*.

NOTE: Anytime a new pet food will be used for Pesach, it is advisable to mix the year-round choice and the Pesach food together for one to two weeks before the holiday, before switching completely to Pesach food. The ratio of regular and Pesach food should be changed slowly to get the animal used to the new diet. This allows the pet to gradually get used to the new food and helps avoid painful digestive issues for the pet.

Some brands of pet food offer varieties which are composed of “limited ingredients” (sometimes referred to as L.I.D.). If your pet is currently on a prescription diet food which contains *chametz*, you might be able to substitute an L.I.D. which is certified to be nutritionally complete for your pet and appropriate for its life stage (baby or adult) and health needs. **Check with your veterinarian before changing any diet, particularly if your pet has issues with allergies or illnesses.**

The following is a list of pet foods approved for Pesach 2024. Make sure to check all labels. There are some Evanger’s products that are acceptable for pet use on Pesach, even though the label does not mention “Passover”. You may contact Rabbi Landa at the cRc at ylanda@crckosher.org with a picture of the product label to determine if the Evanger’s item you which to purchase falls in this category.

One may feed his pet any of the following items when bearing cRc:



CATS

Evanger’s: Holistic Quail Dinner; Organic Beef Dinner; Organic Braised Chicken Dinner; Organic Turkey and Butternut Squash; Seafood & Caviar Dinner; Wild Salmon



DOGS

Evanger’s:

Complements: 100% Beef; 100% Buffalo; 100% Chicken; 100% Duck; 100% Quail; 100% Salmon; 100% Sweet Potato

USDA Organic: 100% Organic Chicken; 100% Organic Turkey with Potatoes and Carrots; Organic Beef Dinner; Organic Chicken & Turkey

Heritage Classics: Beef, Chicken, & Liver; Beef with Chicken; Cooked Chicken, Senior Dinner

Super Premium: Beef Dinner; Chicken Dinner, Duck and Sweet Potatoes Dinner; Lamb and Rice Dinner

Hand Packed: Braised Beef Chunks with Gravy; Catch of the Day; Hunk of Beef; Whole Chicken Thighs

CATS & DOGS

Evanger’s Treats for Dogs and Cats: Freeze-Dried Beef Liver; Freeze-Dried Beef Tripe; Freeze-Dried Wild Salmon



FERRETS & HEDGEHOGS

Evanger’s for Ferrets & Hedgehogs: Chicken Complete Balanced Dinner

There may be varieties of other name brand pet foods, such as Prescription Diet and Science Diet, which may be *chametz*-free. Consumers are urged to check all labels for *chametz* and/or *chametz*-sensitive ingredients as listed in the introductory paragraph above.



FISH

Fish food, including pyramid feeders, and vacation blocks, often has *chametz*. Goldfish and tropical fish can be given tubular worms, frozen brine shrimp, and freeze-dried worms (if they do not contain fillers).



BIRDS

Finches, parakeets, and cockatiels: Millet and canary grass seed can be used as the main diet.

Canaries: Canary grass seed and rapeseed are acceptable.

Parrots: Safflower seeds and sunflower seeds are acceptable.

• Birds enjoy variety. You can provide this for larger birds, such as parrots, with pure alfalfa pellets. **NOTE:** Make sure it is pure alfalfa, since it is common that grains are added to them. Smaller birds can also eat pure alfalfa pellets. For the latter, crush the pellets before feeding.

• One may supplement with sliced grapes, berries, or canned baby fruits. All large food should be shredded before serving. These items should be given sparingly.

• For minerals, birds can have oyster shells (calcium) or mineral block, such as Kaytee Tropical Fruit Mineral Block Treat.



SMALL MAMMALS

Gerbils: Millet, sunflower seeds, and safflower seeds are acceptable.

Hamsters: Sunflower seeds, potatoes, and small amounts of greens and vegetables are acceptable; one may supplement with grapes, apples, melon, and oranges. If your pet is not accustomed to these items, give sparingly.

Guinea Pigs, Rabbits, and Chinchillas: Timothy hay, greens, and vegetables are acceptable; one may supplement with grapes, apples, melon, and oranges. If your pet is not accustomed to these items, give sparingly. Guinea pigs will especially benefit from kale, parsley, and oranges, in small amounts. Oranges will supply needed Vitamin C to their Pesach diet.

Mice and rats: Sunflower seeds, greens, vegetables, and potatoes are acceptable.



REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Iguanas, Tortoises, and Turtles: Greens and vegetables are acceptable; turtles can also have small amounts of raw chicken or cut-up earthworms.

Anoles, Bearded Dragons, Dart Frogs, Tree Frogs, and small Lizards: Crickets are acceptable.

Snakes: If possible, schedule this as a non-feeding week

Dwarf Aquatic Frogs: Tubifex worms or blackworms are acceptable.

Newts: Tubifex worms, bloodworms, or blackworms are acceptable.

Be aware that mealworms, which, as living creatures are not *chametz*, are commonly sold in a bed of wheat flakes or oatmeal, which is *chametz*. Therefore, mealworms may not be owned or used on Pesach. Live crickets should be gut-fed on bits of potato and vegetable 24 hours before feeding to lizards, to enhance their nutrition for the lizard. Whole insects (live or dead) with no additives or other ingredients are permissible.

We are grateful to Esther-Bayla Goldhammer for her assistance in researching pet foods.

