

Pet Food and Equine Supplements

Two types of feed products that are often sold with a broad range of label claims are pet foods/treats and horse supplements. The information a manufacturer provides about its products is designed to entice and encourage the customer to buy their feed. While most of the information is truthful and provides useful information about the product, the buyer should be aware that there are some product labels that make great sounding claims but are, at best misleading, and sometimes false.

Not only does the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development regulate that can of cat food, bag of dog food, or box of dog treats or snacks in your pantry, so does the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA's regulation of pet food is similar to that for other animal feeds. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) requires that pet foods, like human foods, be pure and wholesome, be safe to eat, be produced under sanitary conditions, contain no harmful substances, and be truthfully labeled. In addition, canned pet foods must be processed in conformance with the low acid canned food regulations to ensure the pet food is free of viable microorganisms.

There is no requirement that pet food products have premarket approval by the FDA. However, the FDA ensures that the ingredients used in pet food are safe and have an appropriate function in the pet food. Many ingredients such as meat, poultry, grains, and their byproducts are considered safe "foods" and do not require premarket approval. Other substances such as mineral and vitamin sources, colorings, flavorings, and preservatives may be generally recognized as safe (GRAS) or must have approval as food additives. For more information about pet foods and marketing a pet food, see [The Business of Pet Food](#).

Certain types of claims are sometimes made about feed products that cause them to be classified as unapproved drugs. If you are not familiar with how labels are written, much of the required information can be very confusing. So how does the concerned consumer know what to look for or what to steer away from in a product? How does a conscientious pet food or horse supplement manufacturer know what to appropriately tell the consumer about their products?

The Official Publication of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) lists the legally accepted definitions of a majority of the feed ingredients that have been approved for use in animal feeds, along with the name that must be used on every label. It also contains statements of uniform policy used by regulatory officials throughout North and Central America in interpreting many of the regulations dealing with feeds. The publication can be purchased from [AAFCO](#) through their website.

Over the past several years, FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine has published several useful articles about pet foods and other animal feeds. Among the most useful are those included here:

[Pet Food Labels General](#)

[Information on Marketing a Pet Food Product](#)

[Safe Handling Tips for Pet Foods and Pet Treats](#)

[Animal Drug Safety FAQ](#)

Check the [FDA Resources for You](#) for other useful articles relating to your animal's health and feeding.