



## **Petco First and Only Major Retailer of Pet Food to Not Sell Food and Treats with Artificial Ingredients**

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SAN DIEGO, Nov. 13, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Petco announced it will not sell food and treats containing artificial colors, flavors and preservatives\* for dogs and cats by May 2019. The move makes Petco the first and only major retailer of pet food and treats to take a stand against such ingredients, reaffirming the company's commitment to being *the* lifelong, trusted partner – for pets and pet parents, alike.



This is a momentous day for Petco, and for the health of the pets we love.

"Since our first store opened in 1965, Petco has been dedicated to ensuring the well-being of pets. That commitment continues today, with our decision to not carry food and treats for dogs and cats containing artificial flavors, colors and preservatives," said Petco CEO, Ron Coughlin. "Some may question whether this makes good business sense, but putting pets' health first has always been the right thing to do for Petco. This is both a major step forward for pets and a natural next step on our journey to become a complete partner in total pet wellness. We hope the rest of the pet industry will join us on this path to better health for the pets we love."

This isn't the first time Petco has taken an industry-leading stance as a champion for pets. In 2014, it became the first national specialty retailer to discontinue the sale of China-made treats following consumer concerns about the safety of such products – and other retailers quickly followed suit. With these new standards, the company aims to raise the bar again for the entire pet retail industry.

In January 2019, Petco will begin removing dog and cat foods and treats with artificial ingredients, both from store shelves and ecommerce, with a commitment to complete the process by May 2019. Some of the more than 40 artificial ingredients Petco is eliminating include FD&C Red No. 3, Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), Glycerol tributyrate, and benzaldehyde, among others.

"We're inviting pet food companies to join us on this journey, even working hand-in-hand with some to pursue potential ingredient changes to meet our new stringent ingredient standards," said Nick Konat, Co-Chief Merchandising Officer for Petco. "In cases where an existing brand is unable to update some or all of their products to meet our criteria by May of 2019, we will not carry either specific products or the brand entirely – and we'll help pet parents affected by such a change to safely transition to a new food or brand that we believe is healthier for their pet."

The change also reflects one of the top concerns pet parents have today: nutrition. It's no coincidence that pet food trends follow closely behind human food trends. According to a recent survey\*\*, 87% of pet parents say feeding their pet food made with no artificial flavors, no artificial colors and no artificial preservatives is important to pet's health and well-being, with 59% of vets agreeing that pet owners should actively seek out foods without those ingredients. Furthermore, 95% of pet parents believe their pet's diet and nutrition is essential to their pet's overall health and wellness, yet more than half (56%) say finding healthy products for their pet(s) is confusing, with another 47% reporting that finding healthy products for their pet is difficult.

"Pet parents are seeking answers that help assure them they are making the right choices," said Dr. Whitney Miller, DVM, MBA, Diplomate ACVPM, and Director of Veterinary Medicine at Petco. "We're stepping out ahead of the industry here because we believe it's the right thing to do. With Petco's new nutrition standards, we will only offer food that we believe supports overall pet health and wellness, making the decision process much easier for pet parents."

Petco has worked closely with in-house and consultant veterinarians, nutritionists, and wellness experts to inform its decision and its new standards for pet nutrition.

"As a veterinary nutritionist, I choose pet foods that are free of artificial colors, flavors, and preservatives when feeding my own dog and cats," said Dr. Susan Wynn (DVM, CVA, CVCH, DACVN), a board-certified veterinary nutritionist at BluePearl Veterinary Partners, a national provider of specialty and emergency veterinary care based in Atlanta, GA. "Consumer opinions have more influence on company practices now than ever before, and market surveys have shown that pet owners are concerned about manufacturing and label transparency. Almost 70% of millennials are more likely to research and purchase foods with natural ingredients. I think these well-informed pet owners will be pleased to know that they can count on Petco to stock the brands in which they believe, and I look forward to the rest of the industry following Petco's lead."

Setting a new standard for nutrition is only the first step the company has planned in becoming the most trusted source for pet wellness. As part of this initiative, in 2019 Petco will also launch the Petco Pet Wellness Institute: a coalition of experts from all spectrums of pet health and wellness. Together, veterinarians, nutritionists, pet psychologists, academic researchers, and other credentialed leaders will ensure Petco is offering the best information, education, and services – not only for nutrition, but for a wide array of topics and issues impacting pets' overall health and well-being. Part of the institute's mandate will be funding evidence-based research to help further understand and define industry-wide issues, including the impact of food and ingredients on pet health. While data around pet wellness is currently limited, the institute will help provide clarity and inform Petco's initiatives, ensuring the brand is continuing to meet the demands of modern pet parents.

While Petco's transformation will affect certain brands, and ideally motivate companies to change ingredients, the company already carries a full range of high-quality, specially formulated foods that already meet and even exceed its new standards. In addition, Petco currently offers a variety of products, services, and advice to help pet parents care for the complete health of their pets at every stage of life. Pet parents looking for guidance on what to feed their pets can find information available in-store by consulting with Petco's knowledgeable employees (partners), including Petco Certified Pet Food Specialists, and online at [Petco.com/betternutrition](http://Petco.com/betternutrition).

"The goal here is superior health and well-being for the pets that bring so much love and joy to our lives," said Coughlin. "Our bold nutrition stance combined with our continued expansion of veterinary services in our stores, are great examples of the many ways we're evolving to meet the needs of modern pet parents."

For more information about Petco and its new nutrition standards, go to [Petco.com/betternutrition](http://Petco.com/betternutrition). For additional media assets [please see here](#).

*\* Through referencing available guidelines provided by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) and the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Petco defines artificial colors, flavors and preservatives as:*

- *Color from artificial sources: any dye, pigment, or other substance that can impart color to a food that is not derived from a natural source.*
- *Artificial flavor: any substance, the function of which is to impart flavor, which is not derived from a spice, fruit or fruit juice, vegetable or vegetable juice, edible yeast, herb, bark, bud, root, leaf or similar plant material, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, or fermentation products.*
- *Artificial preservative: chemical substances added to or sprayed on the outside of food to retard spoilage, deterioration, discoloration, or contamination by bacteria and other disease organisms. Does not include preservatives that are derivatives of natural compounds.*

\*\*From Oct. 15 – Oct. 20, 2018 Edelman Intelligence fielded a 10-minute online survey that included 1300 pet parents and 100 veterinarians across the United States, ages 18+. The data was weighted to be nationally representative on age, region and race/ethnicity. Pet parents are defined as dog and cat owners who either possess or share primary responsibility for buying products and services for their pets. The pet parent margin of error is +/- 2.72% at the 95% confidence level. To be included in this study, veterinarians had to have attained a post-graduate degree (e.g. DVM, MA, MBA, LLD, or PhD). The veterinarian margin of error is +/- 9.8% at the 95% confidence level. Edelman Intelligence is a global, full-service market research firm that provides corporate, non-profit and government clients with strategic intelligence to make their communications and engagements with stakeholders the smartest they can be. The firm specializes in qualitative and quantitative research, measurement, tracking and analysis in reputation, branding and communications.

#### **About Petco and the Petco Foundation**

Petco is a leading pet specialty retailer with more than 50 years of service to pet parents. Everything we do is guided by our vision for Healthier Pets. Happier People. Better World. We operate more than 1,500 Petco and Unleashed by Petco locations across the U.S., Mexico and Puerto Rico; complete pet care services and veterinary advice through [PetCoach](#); and [petco.com](#). [The Petco Foundation](#), an independent nonprofit organization, has invested more than \$200 million since it was created in 1999 to help promote and improve the welfare of companion animals. In conjunction with the Foundation, we work with and support thousands of local animal welfare groups across the country and, through in-store adoption events, help find homes for more than 400,000 animals every year.

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