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17 Worst



DOG FOOD BRANDS

(AVOID #3 AT ALL TIMES)

PREFACE

Your pooch is what they eat.

It's because food affects their appearance, health, and mood.

But with all the options and marketing gimmicks around...

Picking the best one can be overwhelming.

That's why I'm here to help you filter your choices.

And steer you away from low-quality diets for your furry friend.

Continue reading to discover:

- 17 worst dog food brands you should be wary of.
- 5 important things to look for in a quality dog food product.
- The current worst brands in the US, UK, Australia, and Canada.
- And many more...

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17 worst dog food brands worldwide

Before we start, the terms can be confusing.

So here are the typical dog food ingredients with their meanings by AAFCO:^[1]

Term	Description	Examples
Meat	Wet - has around 75% water. Clean flesh from slaughtered animals with or without fat.	Lamb, Beef
Meat meal	Dry - contains 10% moisture. Processed meat from animal tissues without blood, hair, hoof, horn, etc.	Lamb meal, Beef meal
Poultry	Meat from butchered birds	Chicken, Turkey
By-products	Taken from leftover parts of an animal (e.g., lungs, brain, kidneys).	Lamb by-products, Chicken by-products
Meat and bone meal	Product from animal tissues and bones.	Beef and bone meal
Digest	Processed animal materials using acids or heat that give off a ' <i>meaty flavor</i> '	Lamb digest, Chicken digest

#1: Ol' Roy

You'd see this budget-friendly brand at Walmart.

However, since it's on the cheaper side...

Its bag's mostly filler or ingredients with little nutritional value for your Fido.

But before I talk more about this, you may think...

“What does quality dog food have?”

- Named meat source as 1st ingredient.
- Minimum daily nutrient requirements of dogs.^[2]
- Specified sources of meal, bones, fat, or digest.
- More actual meat and whole grains and few by-products.
- Statement from *The Association of American Feed Control Officials*, a.k.a. AAFCO.

Their ‘*Complete Nutrition Dog Food*’ formula has:

Ground Yellow Corn, Soybean Meal, Meat and Bone Meal, Wheat Middlings, Animal Fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), Corn Gluten Meal, Ground Wheat, Animal Digest, Calcium Carbonate, Salt, Garlic Oil, Added Colour (Red 40), Vitamins and Minerals.



Note: These are arranged from heaviest to lightest. So, check the first few ingredients, as they make up most of the dog food.

Grain as primary protein

Based on the list, Ol’ Roy’s main sources of protein are:

- Corn.
- Soybean meal.

But a study says that compared to animal meat...^[3]

Plant-based proteins (e.g., corn) have fewer *essential amino acids*.

They're substances you need to make protein.

Moreover, research shows that dogs digest animal meat better than plant-based ones.^[4]

Thus, most corn and soybean will leave your pooch's system undigested.

And your Fido won't absorb all the nutrients.

Unspecified animal meat and fat

The 3rd ingredient's '*meat and bone meal*.'

It's dried leftover tissues and bones. So it's inexpensive than fresh meat.

But what's concerning is that the brand didn't specify the animal they used.

Besides this, Ol' Roy also has other mystery ingredients, like:

- Animal fat.
- Animal digest.

This is another red flag, as you don't know where they got these from.

If the brand used a high-quality source of meat or fat...

They'll likely specify it on the list. So it could be of lower quality.

Or worse, 4D meats or products taken from animals that are:

- Dead.
- Dying.
- Disabled.
- Diseased.

Recalls

You also need to research the manufacturer. And know if they ensure the quality of their products.

From what I gathered, Ol' Roy dog food has had 6 recalls so far.

Date	Reason of recall
February 2018 ^[5]	Low levels of ' <i>sodium pentobarbital</i> ' or a drug often used in euthanizing.
October 2008, September 2008, June 2007 ^[6]	<i>Salmonella</i> or an infection affecting the digestive system.
March 2007 ^[7]	Contamination of <i>melamine</i> or chemical used in making plastics.
June 2006	Flaking inside the cans.
November 1998	' <i>Aflatoxin</i> ' or a toxic product of molds.

#2: Gravy Train

When mixed with warm water, this kibble will create gravy. Which smells and tastes great for most dogs.

But this can't cover the fact that it has less nutritional value. Like an equivalent to human fast food.

Gravy Train's a low-end US dog food brand.

Thus, like Ol' Roy, grains are also its main protein source. Say corn, soybean, and wheat.

Then it's also followed by a meat and bone meal.

Also, this has grain by-products instead of nutritious whole grains like:

- Wheat flour.
- Wheat middlings.
- Modified food starch.

Plus, it also has iffy ingredients, such as:

- Unknown animal fat and digest.
- Artificial meat flavor (e.g., beef).
- Food colorings (e.g., Red 40, Blue 2, Yellow 5, and 6).

“Are food dyes toxic to dogs?”

FDA approved the use of certain coloring additives in food:^[8]

- Red 3.
- Blue 1.
- Blue 2.
- Red 40.
- Green 3.
- Yellow 5.
- Yellow 6.

Gravy Train has Yellow 5 and 6, Red 40, and Blue 2.

And a study suggests that these (except for Blue 2) can have a contaminant that causes cancer.^[9]

Plus, they may also result in *'hypersensitivity.'* Or when the immune system overreacts to a substance.

Which then leads to an allergic reaction.

#3: Kibbles 'N Bits

Instead of a complete meal...

This is like an unhealthy snack they'll love. And they won't get much nutrition from it.

It's because a bag of Kibbles 'N Bits has mostly plant-based proteins:

- Corn.
- Soybean.
- Wheat middlings.
- Ground wheat flour.

They're healthy. But your dog can't digest them well.

However, it has a specified meat source - beef and bone meal.

Although it's only 4th on the list.

So when combined, the grains could weigh more than it.

Thus, the dog food's digestibility is still poor.

Plus, the brand has generic animal fat and corn syrup.

The latter's unnecessary as the grains already have enough sugar in them.

So over time, vets say it may result in:^[10]

- Diabetes.
- Weight gain.
- Dental cavities.
- Upset stomach.

That's why some dogs who had Kibbles 'N Bits, pee and drink a lot of water daily.

 **Fun fact:** PetMD says that most dogs have a sweet tooth. This might be because, back then, canines in the wild had a diet made of fruits and vegetables. So the added syrup makes this kibble so tasty for Fidos.^[11]

#4: Purina Beneful

This company has been around for over 90 years.

And it carries many brands like Beneful.

But with its price, I'm sure you can get a healthier option for your pooch.

Plus, you won't have to worry about its reputation.

Beneful lists an identified meat as its 1st ingredient.

Say beef or salmon - depending on the formula. And this is good.

But usually, what comes after that are 4-8 different grains, such as:

- Rice.
- Barley.
- Oatmeal.
- Soybean hulls.
- Soybean meal.
- Corn gluten meal.
- Whole grain wheat.
- Ground whole corn.

Now, the meat in the ingredients list is wet.

It's basically about 75% water.

So if you remove that...

All the grains will likely outweigh the meat. And you'll have less animal protein than expected.

Then after the grains, you'll often see a chicken by-product meal. Which is from less-desirable parts of the poultry.

Feedback and recalls

Many dog parents on the Internet claim that their Fidos had odd smelly poop while on Beneful.

But here's what's more alarming:

In 2015, there was a lawsuit against Purina Beneful.^[12]

It claims that the brand's dry dog food made thousands of Fidos sick. (*Over 3,000 complaints online.*)

According to the lawsuit, the culprit's *propylene glycol*.

It's FDA-approved. But you can also see this in antifreeze.

Pet food uses this to absorb extra water. And also to keep enough moisture in the dog food.

But as per Pet Poison Hotline, it's toxic to Fidos in large doses.^[13]

However, in the end...

Purina denied all the allegations. And the lawsuit was dropped in 2016.^[14]

“So, are the complaints about Beneful true?”

They may or may not be real.

However, you can see the complaints about the brand for yourself.^[15]

#5: Purina Alpo

This is a low-end brand from the same company.

So if you look at Alpo's label, you'll notice grains as its main ingredients:

- Wheat bran.
- Soybean meal.
- Whole grain cereals (corn, wheat.)

The animal protein's usually 4th or 5th on the list.

Plus, it's only a by-product or meat and bone meal. And Alpo doesn't even name the animal source.

#6: Purina Dog Chow

This also has grain as its 1st ingredient - corn.

Followed by an unknown meat and bone meal.

Then it's succeeded by more plant-based proteins. Which are processed ones, like:

- Soybean meal.
- Corn gluten meal.

As I write this, there wasn't a recall for Dog Chow.

But since you're unsure where it got most of the ingredients...

It's hard to know if they're indeed reliable.

#7: Iams

It's an affordable brand owned by Mars Petcare Inc.

The same big company manufactures Mars bars and M&Ms.

Now, Iams dog food lists a named animal fat (e.g., chicken).

And their formulas also state specified meat as their 1st ingredient. Which is often chicken too.

But again, if you remove water from it...

The meat may weigh less than the grains on the list:

- Brewer's rice.
- Whole grains (e.g., corn, sorghum).



Note: Brewer's rice is a product after making beer. It may not sound appealing. But based on a vet, it offers nutrition to dogs.^[16]

Recalls

Date	Reason of recall
August 2013 ^[17]	<i>Salmonella</i> contamination.
March 2013	Moldy grains.
December 2011 ^[18]	High <i>aflatoxin</i> levels or toxins produced by mold that may damage the liver or cause cancer.
June, July, and August 2010 ^[19]	<i>Salmonella</i> contamination. Low <i>thiamine</i> (vitamin B1) levels.

#8: Grreat Choice

Since it's also a low-end dog food...

It can only provide fillers for your furry friend.

Its dry food usually lists ground corn as its main protein source. Not the best choice like specified meat or meat meals.

Next to it is an unidentified meat and bone meal.

Followed by a grain by-product like wheat middlings. And were succeeded by more grains:

- Ground wheat.
- Corn gluten meal.

And it also has colorings.

Well. Grains aren't bad for all dogs.

They also need those in their diet. But it has to be balanced.

Experts say that most Fidos can only absorb up to 30%-60% of carbs per dry dog food.^[21]

So less or more than that might not be good for your pooch.

#9: Nutro

Here's another common US dog food brand.

Its ingredients seem alright with its price.

But if you check its review in ConsumerAffairs, you'll see a lot of similar complaints by dog parents.^[22]

After eating the kibble, most of the Fidos had the signs below:

- Tremors.
- Diarrhea.
- Vomiting.
- Restlessness.
- Excessive licking of surfaces.

Recalls

Like Iams, the recall history of Nutro is also worrying:

Date	Reason of recall
December 2015 ^[23]	Moldy dog food - Nutro Apple Chewy Treats.
October 2009 ^[24]	Melted plastic pieces.
March 2007	<i>Melamine</i> contamination. (Same case with Ol' Roy, Gravy Train, and Iams)

#10: Kal Kan

This is one of the oldest US dog food brands.

But as of now, Kal Kan only offers 1 formula - '*Adult Dog Food.*'

The brand hasn't had any recalls so far.

However, if you scan its ingredients...

It's not different from the previous brands above.

Kal Kan recipe has:

- Grains are its main protein source.
- Processed chicken by-product meal.
- Unnamed meat and bone meal and animal fat.

So, feeding this to your Fido will only put them on a high-grain diet.

Plus, you don't know where they took most of their ingredients.

#11: Baxters

This is an Australian dog food brand.

And it has this as its 1st ingredient:

'Meat and meat by-products (from beef and poultry).'

It's a bit unreliable. As there could be less fresh meat in the diet than processed by-products.

Also, Baxters use cereal and cereal by-products from wheat. And they're not as healthy as whole grains.

Now, if you look at this report...^[25]

You'll see over 200 claims from dog parents.

Many Fidos got extremely sick hours after eating the formula.

And most of them had these common signs:

- Lethargy.
- Extreme itchiness.

- Difficulty breathing.
- Swollen face and paws.

Based on a study, animal meat (e.g., beef) is a more common allergen in dogs than grains.^[26]

But still, food allergies are rare in our furry pals. As vets say, they only affect 1%-2% of the cat-dog population.^[27]

However, grains of low quality may cause such a reaction in dogs. And this can be due to storage mites.

Now, the claims may or may not be coincidental.

But if you see a better option on the pet food shelf...

You better go for it instead of this brand, as it's not worth the risk.

#12: True Blue

It's another Australian dog food.

But it's also high in carbs and low in protein.

True Blue dog food lists grains as its main ingredients.

And they go in this order:

1. Whole grains.
2. Wheat.
3. Sorghum.

Then its only sources of animal proteins are processed, such as:

- Poultry meal (unnamed).

- Meat meal (beef and lamb).

#13: Winning Edge

Contrary to its name...

This Australian brand might not be the winning dog food for most Fidos.

It has the same company as True Blue.

So you won't see much difference in their quality.

First, it also has whole wheat meal as its main ingredient.

Followed by meat meal from beef and sheep.

It's good that the brand named its animal protein source. But it could be better if it's the main element.

#14: Chewdles

Now, let's go to the UK.

This brand's recipes are mostly cereal-based.

It means your Fido will mainly get their nutrition from grains. Say corn, wheat, or rice.

But since it's in a collective term, you don't even know which specific grains are there.

Plus, it also has '*various sugars.*'

And again, those will only add to your pooch's weight.

As your dog will already get enough sugar and starch from the cereals.

#15: Chudleys

This is also a UK brand. And it has similar ingredients as Chewdles.

But, Chudleys have whole grains:

- Oats.
- Wheat.
- Barley.
- Maize (corn).

And these are more reliable than unspecified cereals.

However, meat's only 3rd and 7th on the list.

So it's clear that Chudleys doesn't have much protein that your pooch fully absorbs.



Note: Many parents claim their furry friends had dull, flaky coats with this diet. And VCA says it's a sign of a poor diet.^[28]

#16: Hill Science Diet

This US brand was once a great one, as per reviews.

Not until it changed its formula.

Take their Active Adult dog food as an example.

Like the other brands, it lists grains as its 1st ingredient - whole corn.

Then it's succeeded by:

1. Chicken by-product meal.

2. Pork fat.
3. Corn gluten meal.

The brand has no mystery ingredients.

But its only source of animal protein is a by-product meal. Which is processed.

And in January 2019, Hill Science Diet recalled its canned food.^[29]

"But why?"

The FDA received many calls about dogs getting ill from it.

Then tests found that the wet food had high levels of vitamin D.

And it has serious health risks in dogs, such as:

- Death.
- Kidney failure.

#17: Pedigree

Lastly, this brand's known worldwide. And it may be more popular than Purina.

But since it offers low-end dog food...

Its cost comes with the same price - low-quality ingredients.

Their dry dog food recipes mainly consist of the following in this order:

1. Ground whole grain corn.
2. Meat and bone meal.
3. Corn gluten meal.

4. Animal fat.
5. Soybean meal.
6. Chicken by-product meal.
7. Food colorings (red 40, blue 2, yellow 5 and 6).

So it has more grains than actual meat.

Also, the brand doesn't name the meat and fat they used.

Not to mention the food colors they add to improve the kibble's appearance.

Which has more possible risks than benefits. Say cancer or hyperactivity.

Recalls

Over the years, Pedigree had withdrawn its products 6 times.

Date	Reason of recall
August 2014 ^[30]	Little scraps of metal in dry dog food.
June 2012 ^[31]	Small bits of blue plastic in its canned food.
September 2008 ^[32]	Salmonella contamination in adult formulas.
August 2008 ^[33]	Salmonella contamination.
September 2007 ^[34]	Tiny pieces of metal in products in New Zealand.
March 2004 ^[35]	Possible link to kidney failure in dogs in Asia.

Worst dog food brands per country

What is the worst dog food brand in the US?

The worst dog food brand in the US is Kibbles 'N Bits. It has unnecessary corn syrup, and its meat source is only 4th on the list. So its formula mainly consists of grains that are less digestible for dogs, such as:

- Corn.
- Soybean.
- Wheat and wheat flour.

What is the worst dog food brand in Australia?

The worst dog food brand in Australia is Baxters. It's full of processed by-products. And based on reviews, many dogs got sick upon eating it.^[36]

What is the worst dog food brand in the UK?

The worst dog food brand in the UK is Chewdles. Its main ingredients are cereals instead of animal protein. Plus, it also has added sugars. Which may only cause cavities and weight gain.

What is the worst dog food brand in Canada?

The worst dog food brand in Canada is Purina Mainstay. Its adult formula lists corn as its main protein source. And it also has the following unidentified ingredients:

- Animal fat.
- Animal digest.
- Meat and bone meal.

Often, sources that aren't named are of low quality. And there's also a chance that they came from 4d meats (e.g., roadkills, euthanized animals).

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