

Dr. Billinghurst's BARF DIET™
Biologically Appropriate Evolutionary Nutrition

www.barfworld.com

The Question of "Complete and Balanced"

As any knowledgeable BARF feeder is aware, when feeding pet animals, each meal fed is not required to be complete and balanced. What is required is that the over-all diet is complete and balanced. In an evolutionary setting, nutritional balance has always been achieved over time. The concept that nutritional balance can be achieved over time is basic to the evolutionary BARF philosophy. And that concept is fine for a pet owner who is knowledgeable about BARF and who is making their own pet food. It is also fine for "BARF knowledgeable" people who buy pre-prepared BARF pet food - so long as they know what is in the product[s] they are buying.

But what about pet owners who have no real knowledge of the BARF programme or philosophy? As the idea of BARF grows and spreads, we are going to see more and more BARF pet owners feeding or wishing to feed BARF. Most of these will be pet owners who are used to buying "complete and balanced" pet food.

Education is obviously a major part of the answer, however, there will always be a significant percentage of people that will fall through the educational gaps. With this in mind, we questioned whether we wanted our products to be labeled as "complete and balanced" or "intended for intermittent or supplemental feeding only" according to the standards and philosophy of AAFCO (American Association of Feed Control Officials). To help answer this question we had to explore the meaning of the AAFCO concept of "complete and balanced" as it applies to current grain based commercial pet food.

The claim of "complete and balanced" means that the pet food company making that claim for any particular food is stating that when a sample of that particular product was subjected to a chemical analysis, that sample was found to contain the currently "known to be essential" nutrients at the currently recommended levels according to the currently accepted provisions laid down by AAFCO.

This nutritional state of knowledge - as held by AAFCO - is in a constant state of flux, so that what was valid yesterday is not necessarily valid today and tomorrow will be different again. To put AAFCO's definition of "complete and balanced" in perspective, it is instructive to understand what their definition does not mean.

The concept of "complete and balanced" when applied to commercial pet food, does not mean commercial pet food contains every nutrient that our pets actually require. "Complete and Balanced" when applied to commercial pet food does not mean that a pet food contains all the nutrients our pets need in perfect balance.

Those two bits of information are not known. In fact they are unknowable, and there are at least two reasons for this. Firstly, each individual has unique nutritional requirements, and secondly,

our knowledge of nutrition - to say the very least - is incomplete. Also, by specifying what must be included, there is the very real danger of leaving out - needed nutrients - whose necessity has not as yet been discovered.

Then there is the question of availability. "Complete and balanced" does not mean that the nutrients present in any particular sample of pet food would actually have been assimilated and used had an animal eaten that sample. It is well known that many of the nutrients in processed foods are unavailable to the animal eating the food. Complete and balanced certainly does not mean the product has been tested for a lifetime and found to produce perfect health - whatever perfect health means. In addition, the "complete and balanced" definition does not include any of the protective nutrients currently under scrutiny by nutritional researchers world-wide.

In short, AAFCO's nutritional beliefs, statements, guidelines, regulations, rules, limits, balances, recommendations or levels are not ultimate, final, perfect, complete or correct in any sense of any of those words. They are most certainly no guarantee that the animal eating a food that complies with those guidelines will have available to it, every nutrient it needs in perfect balance for perfect health.

In other words, AAFCO guidelines and recommendations are almost useless, except that they do provide some sort of limited comfort, that the animal eating a product that claims to be regulated by those guidelines will probably not demonstrate in the short term at least, signs of gross nutritional deficiency, although there is no absolute guarantee of this either. Unfortunately, the average pet owner who reads that the product they are buying is "complete and balanced" is completely unaware of the almost meaningless nature of this claim.

Therefore, Dr. Billinghurst's BARF DIET™ will not be referred to as being "Complete and Balanced" in any absolute sense. The best that can be said is that Dr. Billinghurst's BARF DIET™ is nutritionally sound and nutritionally adequate. This means - in addition to containing those nutrients which "must be present" in processed pet foods, the Dr. Billinghurst's BARF DIET™ diet also contains many other essential nutrients. These are the nutrients found only in whole raw foods. Furthermore, all of these nutrients are present in their biologically available form. In other words, this is a diet that goes well beyond the standards laid down for modern processed pet foods.

Yes, a momentous paradigm shift, but after all, that is what we are all about. We are about change, movement and development. New sources of knowledge, new approaches to nutrition combined with new aims. Aiming to produce food that is far more nutritionally complete and balanced and therefore far healthier than current commercial products.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dr. Billinghurst", with a horizontal line underneath.