

# How to Feed Pets when You Can't Find Pet Food

One day you go to feed your pet and realize the food bin is empty. Pet food can be costly, and it can also spoil or be hard to get in an emergency. Don't get discouraged. Instead, come up with some ways to hold your pet over until you are...

Method 1 of 3:

## Finding Free Food

- 1. Contact animal shelters in your area.** Shelters often keep a food pantry with collected donations from local businesses. In many cases, you can get some food just by visiting. Even if they don't happen to have any food available, they can direct you to places that do.<sup>[1]</sup>
  1. Shelters may have special rules on how to receive food, such as having you make an appointment or prove that your pet is spayed or neutered. Check the shelter's website for more information.
  2. If you need food, call or talk to someone at the shelter. Tell them something like, 'I can't get any pet food. Do you know where I can find some?'
- 2. Visit a pet food bank to receive monthly donations.** There are non-profit pet food banks and pantries run separately from animal shelters. These places usually give out food once or twice a month. To find the nearest place, search online for 'pet food bank,' followed by the name of the city you're in.<sup>[2]</sup>
  1. Some places give out food freely, while others require you to fill out an application first. These pantries are primarily meant for low-income individuals, so expect them to ask about your financial status.
- 3. Get in touch with pet-related non-profits in your area.** Local non-profit groups and local chapters of national groups often help out pet owners. A few of them serve different parts of the community, such as Pets of the Homeless that donates food to homeless pet owners. To find the nearest organization, search online for 'pet food non-profits' followed by your area. If an organization doesn't have food, they can still link you to places that do, like food pantries.<sup>[3]</sup>
  1. Nonprofits are region-specific, so they won't be able to help much if you don't live nearby.
  2. Speak with shelters and food banks in your area for more information about local non-profit groups. You may also be able to get some food by asking local pet stores, veterinarian offices, and other businesses.
- 4. Ask a regular food bank if they have pet food.** Some non-pet food banks also stock a supply of pet food. Food banks are generally for low-income individuals. If you qualify to receive food from the food bank, you can get pet food from them too. Contact the food bank to see what they have available.<sup>[4]</sup>
  1. To receive assistance from a food bank, you may need to set an appointment and bring any relevant financial information.
  2. Request pet food by saying something like, 'I have a pet, is there any way I can get some pet food?'
- 5. Contact a community meal service to see if they deliver pet food.** Meals on Wheels in the U.S., for instance, has a program called We All Love Our Pets (WALOP). If you qualify to receive food, you can also get pet food. To ask for assistance, search for the name of the program and the area you live in.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. WALOP is meant for seniors, so it won't help you if you belong to another age group. If you qualify, you could also contact your local senior center for more help.
  2. These sorts of programs are not available everywhere. They tend to be more common around bigger cities.
6. **Post a request for pet food on social media.** Put your social media accounts to use by reaching out to other people. Try asking friends and family if they have food available. You could also reach out to non-profit pet groups and shelters for assistance. Another option is to post on community pages to let people in your neighborhood know that you could use some extra pet food.
1. When posting a request, be courteous but straightforward. Try posting, 'I'm low on pet food. Does anyone have any available or know where I can find some?'
  2. Always be respectful when asking to borrow some food. Be prepared for the possibility that no one will have any to give.

Method 2 of 3:

## Using Food in Your Home

1. **Make your own pet food using household ingredients.** For instance, find a simple recipe for dog food. One of the easiest ways to make a basic meal is by mixing together rice, meat, and a green vegetable. Divide up the food and store it in your refrigerator so your pet has balanced meals throughout the week. You can make do with what's in your home until you're able to find some pet food.<sup>[6]</sup>
  1. Basic grain and meat mixes are fine for dogs and cats, but tweak recipes for other types of pets.
  2. Keep your pet's basic nutrition in mind. Balance meals as best you can with healthy ingredients. If you don't have much available, do the best you can.
2. **Search for lean meats in your freezer for meat-eaters.** You won't find a simpler meal than chicken for most pets. Other meats, including turkey, fish, or even lean beef, are also safe to use. Cook the meat to serve as is, or mix it with grains and veggies for a more wholesome meal. Basic meats are safe for many animals, such as dogs, cats, snakes, lizards, and even parrots.<sup>[7]</sup>
  1. Stay away from fatty meats, if possible, since they tend to be unhealthier and not as cost-efficient. If you don't have any other options, you can get by with them in the short-term.
  2. Another good source of protein is eggs, and almost all pets can eat them. Beans work too, but only after they have been cooked.
3. **Get canned vegetables to feed animals that can't have meat.** Save your leftover veggies for rabbits, turtles, and some lizards, for instance. Green beans, peas, carrots, corn, spinach, and lettuce are a few good choices to use. If you're using canned vegetables, rinse them off in cold water first to remove excess salt. Fresh vegetables can be used as well if you happen to have any.<sup>[8]</sup>
  1. To ensure vegetables are safe no matter what kind of pet you have, peel off the skin and cook them first.
  2. Dogs and cats can eat vegetables too. Use them to supplement other foods, such as meats and grains.
4. **Use grains for an inexpensive but filling food.** Grains are a great option for almost all pets except ones that only eat meat. Use small, sugar-free grains like cooked rice, cereal, crumbled bread, or even pasta. Try mixing the grains with other food, such as by combining equal amounts of white rice and boiled chicken for a simple meal.<sup>[9]</sup>
  1. Grains usually aren't the healthiest food for most pets, but you're most likely to have some available in your home. Cats, dogs, parrots, and even rabbits are a few kinds of pets that eat grains.
  2. Use nutritious grains if you have them. Brown rice, quinoa, oats, barley, and bran are good choices. They are always better than white rice or white bread.

3. If you don't have grains available, you can use dairy in some cases. Dogs and cats, for instance, can have yogurt or cottage cheese, but it isn't the best choice for most pets.
5. **Select low-sugar fruit in moderation for snacks.** Fruit is fine for almost all animals except ones that only eat meat, like snakes and some lizards. Apples, strawberries, and blueberries are a few great choices. Many pets also enjoy fruits like bananas, oranges, and pumpkin. Fruit is best served as an occasional snack or mixed in with other types of food, but it can help tide your pet over in a pinch.<sup>[10]</sup>
  1. If you feed your pet fruit, remove inedible parts, including skin and seeds. These parts are a choking hazard or even poisonous.
  2. For example, fruits should only be about 10% to 20% of a rabbit or turtle's diet. Giving them too much fruit will make them sick.
  3. Remember what your pet is able to safely eat. For example, cats and dogs can't have grapes, but birds can.

Method 3 of 3:

## Storing Food for Emergencies

1. **Purchase shelf-stable freeze-dried or vacuum-sealed food.** Freeze-dried and vacuum-sealed pet foods become more popular with each passing year. They are not only packed with nutrients, but they last a long time. One pouch of pet food provides all the food and nutrients your pet needs in a day. This kind of pet food stays fresh for 5 years or more, so you can easily store it in your pantry to break out during rough times.<sup>[11]</sup>
  1. Try getting an emergency pet food kit online. Many pet stores also sell freeze-dried and vacuum-sealed treats.
  2. If you can't get an emergency food kit, keep some regular pet food on hand. For example, buy canned pet food for your pantry. Use it to hold your pet over while you locate other sources of food.
2. **Use a vacuum-sealer to store food long-term.** Measure out about a week's worth of your pet's food. Place it in a vacuum bag, then run it through the sealer. The sealer sucks all the air out of the bag so the food lasts longer. As long as the bag stays sealed, it can last for up to 3 months in a cool, dark part of your pantry.<sup>[12]</sup>
  1. For indefinite storage, move vacuum-sealed food into your freezer. Make sure it's in a spot where the bag can't come undone.
  2. Vacuum sealers can also be used to store other types of food. For instance, set aside some meat, veggies, and grain to make pet food on the fly.
3. **Store extra pet food in case of an emergency.** Try keeping enough food to last at least a few weeks, at the very least. If you can get enough for several months, then you will be well-prepared for tough times. Choose food that lasts well outside of the refrigerator or freezer, such as canned dog and cat food. Bags of shelf-stable pet food last for a fair amount of time too, but plan around the expiration dates.<sup>[13]</sup>
  1. Canned food lasts about 2 years. Bags of food stay fresh for 1 to 2 years. Look for the expiration date printed on each container.
  2. Keep an eye on those expiration dates. Rotate out old foods. When the expiration date nears, use the food and replace it with something new.
  3. If you're dealing with meat-eaters like snakes and lizards, freeze extra food. You can buy mice and insects in bulk, freeze them, then thaw them out when you're ready to use them.

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