

Shelf-Life: Keeping Pet Food Fresh & Delicious

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With proper preparation and cooking, wholesome and convenient pet food can be made for pets that is safe, nutritious, and very palatable. For Natura that means we start with high quality ingredients, perform numerous quality controls, and pay special attention to the following three areas to make sure that our pet food delivers optimal nutrition to your pet:

Preventing the Fat From Going “Bad”

Dietary fat is essential in the dog’s and cat’s diet. Fat provides energy, important building blocks for the body, and when used in the right balance can keep your pet vibrant. Many of fat’s benefits come from fatty acids which unfortunately can become oxidized by the oxygen in the air all around us. This fatty acid oxidation leads to rancidity with its associated unpleasant odor and taste. **To protect against oxidation, Natura uses nature’s robust oxidation fighter, tocopherols, a natural source of Vitamin E.** Tocopherols absorb oxidative attacks within the food thereby protecting fatty acids from damage. Since canned foods are completely sealed, there is no exposure to air unlike dry foods and treats, thus there is essentially no opportunity for the fat to be damaged by oxidation. Natura also assures its ingredients are fresh by measuring that the natural oxidation of raw ingredients is within our tight specifications prior to receipt. And as a secondary assurance, the finished products are also closely monitored for any oxidation.

Avoiding Bacterial and Mold Growth

The oldest method of preservation known to man is drying. Removing water from food prevents the water from being used by microbes like bacteria and mold to grow. **To make sure that no harmful bacteria are in our foods and treats, Natura carefully cooks or bakes the raw ingredients and then dries the product to a precise moisture content and water activity with frequent monitoring of all production lots.** Achieving a low moisture level and more importantly a low “water activity,” prevents any unwanted microbes from making a pet food their home. However, not all microbes are undesirable and as such Natura intentionally applies dried but still activatable “good” bacteria called probiotics or direct fed microbials to many of our kibbled pet foods. With canned food, all the microbes in the raw ingredients are killed in the canning process and because the can is then completely sealed, the food stays sterile until it is ready to be enjoyed.

Ensuring Food is Nutrient-Rich

The most commonly overlooked issue associated with preserving food is the need to keep nutrients, especially vitamins, at desired levels. When in the presence of essential minerals like iron and zinc, vitamins are subject to degradation over time due to “redox” reactions. **Using chelated minerals like Natura does helps us slow this destruction down.** For some pet foods like the brands made by Natura, turnover at retailers is generally rapid enabling us to also have shorter “use by” dates than some of our competitors. Natura has determined that for our dried foods the optimal shelf-life is 12 months, while for our canned foods two years is ideal to help maintain adequate levels of vitamins and minerals.

If you ever have questions about the use by dates or the freshness of any Natura product, please do not hesitate to contact us at 800-532-7261 or via our website at naturapet.com.

