

I HAVE A COUPLE OF BUMPER STICKERS ON THE REAR WINDOW OF my old Volvo. One reads: *If you love animals called pets, why do you eat animals called dinner?* (A fair question, if you ask me. We are revolted by the idea of eating a cat, dog or horse, but many people positively relish the idea of chowing down on a cow, sheep, pig or chicken).

A couple of weeks ago, when I was shopping at our local natural food market, I found a hand-printed note on the passenger seat of a car. It said something like: *"If you don't eat meat, then what do you feed your pets?"* Unfortunately, the person who asked the question did not leave their name or phone number, but I would like to answer that question here.

Many vegetarians avoid the problem by not having pets, or companion animals. But since most of us love animals, when a stray presents itself at our door, we often find ourselves the reluctant (at first, anyway) caretakers of cats and/or dogs.

It is possible to feed cats and dogs well, and with little effort, on a vegetarian diet. In fact, they will probably be better off for it. All but the most expensive pet foods can contain diseased and contaminated meat and fish by-products. (If we are worried about humans getting "Mad Cow Disease," what about our pets?) Dogs are the easiest to feed because they, like humans, are omnivores. In other words, they'll eat anything! They like, and need, vegetables and fruits (our dog, Polly, loves apples, cantaloupe and corn).

Your local pet food store can order Nature's Pride Vegetarian Canine Diet kibble for you. They probably already carry other Nature's Pride products. A 20 lb. bag is approximately \$35 including tax, which is cheaper than some other high-quality dog kibbles. Nature's Pride also has a vegetarian canned dog food.

The kibble, which Polly loves and thrives on, smells clean and contains nothing that a human would not consider eating. It contains no preservatives, and is made from ground whole brown rice, soy flour, barley flour, vegetable oil, carrots, garlic, and all the necessary vitamin and mineral supplements. It contains a minimum of 18% crude protein, and the package reads: *"Animal feeding tests using the Association of American Feed Control Officials' (AAFCO) procedures substantiate that Nature's Pride Vegetarian Canine Diet provides complete and balanced nutrition for maintenance."*

Cats have very different nutritional needs, and many people will tell you that a cat cannot be vegetarian. Well you can feed them vegetarian food and they can enjoy it and be perfectly healthy. They might not be totally vegetarian, however. Who knows how many mice they are catching? But at least you do not have to contribute to the slaughterhouse industry to keep them healthy and happy.

Vegetarian Cats & Dogs



by Bryanna Clark Grogan

Cats need a higher protein diet than dogs, and they have other special needs, such as arachidonic acid, the fatty acid necessary for growth; taurine, an amino acid; and Vitamin A, since they cannot make it from beta carotene like humans and many other animals.

Fortunately, the company harbingers of a New Age makes a supplement powder called **VEGECAT**, which, when added to some simple vegetarian recipes, provides all the nutrients your cats need. They also make **VEGKIT** powder for kittens and pregnant and lactating cats, and **VEGEDOG** for those who want to make their own dogfood. The recipes provided with **VEGECAT** "meet all nutritional requirements" according to **AAFCO** Cat Food Nutrient Profile. The supplement will only cost you a few cents per day, per animal.

You can order **VEGECAT** from *Barney's Choice*, a natural pet

supply store in Montreal if you form a buying club with a few other people and order at least \$100 worth of supplies, the owner, Valerie, will give you the wholesale price. They also have an excellent low bulk price on **VEGEYEAST**, a high-acid engevita-type yeast for pets. For a catalogue and shipping info, write to:

Barney's Choice

5345 rue St. Urbain

Montreal, PQ, H2T 2W8

Tel. (514) 279-2075 or 5014

Fax (514) 279-0658

E-mail bchoice@infobahnos.com

Web site www.infobahnos.com/~bchoice

The **VEGECAT** instruction booklet includes ideas for “making the change” to vegetarian pet foods, and a few easy recipes. My cats like the Garbanzo-TVP (or tofu) recipe. I make double the 10-day recipe and freeze it in old margarine containers. I add boiling water to the TVP, which makes it more like canned cat food consistency. Before serving, I warm up each portion with a spoonful of hot water. Although I cook my own garbanzos in large quantities and freeze them for future use, you can use canned beans and then the recipe requires no cooking. If you like, add a little grated raw vegetable or chopped sprouts to each serving.

I also make the cat kibble recipe, which one of my cats prefers. Instead of laboriously slicing it up as instructed, I tear up the baked mixture and process it to coarse chunks in four quick batches. It dries out faster this way, too. I just coat each serving of kibble with a little VegeYeast powder.

Cats are prone to urinary tract problems and this type of diet can be very beneficial. Some vets still recommend adding 250-500 mg vitamin C to each meal to help prevent infection and keep urine acid. You can buy inexpensive ascorbic acid at your pharmacy 1/87 tsp is equal to 500 mg of vitamin C. This is not necessary if you use **VEGEYEAST** powder, which is high-acid.

Some snacks that dogs and cats like:

Toast with Canoleo non-dairy margarine or olive oil

Peas, corn or baked squash

A pitted olive

A cantaloupe ball

A sliver of pizza

A bit of tofu with tamari

A bit of pasta with tomato sauce

Good luck, you will feel much better, and so will your animal companions. They will not be ingesting questionable “foods” that you would never consider touching with a ten-foot pole!

From “Soybean Diaries,” Oct. 1996. Ms. Grogan is a vegetarian food writer and cookbook author. Her cookbooks “The Almost No-Fat Cookbook” and “The Almost No-Fat Holiday Cookbook” are available from the EarthSave office.

