

Pet food preservatives are harmful.

It's a myth

Some consumers believe that preservatives are unsafe ingredients that shouldn't be added to foods for humans or pets.

The facts

Preservatives are added to ensure pet food remains wholesome and nutritious during distribution and storage.¹

- Preservatives called antioxidants are added to commercially prepared dry foods to help prevent spoilage and breakdown of nutrients.
- The preservatives used in Purina® pet foods are the same ones approved by the FDA for use in human foods.

Fats, proteins and vitamins are the critical nutrients that require preservation during storage.

- Fats may break down during storage if not properly preserved.
- Antioxidants guard against oxidative destruction of fat and other nutrients to help preserve the nutritional quality of the food.

Preservatives or antioxidants can be categorized into two basic types: natural antioxidants that are derived from nature and synthetic antioxidants.²

- Natural antioxidants are found in certain grains, vegetable oils, herbs and spices.
- The most effective and commonly used natural antioxidants are mixed tocopherols (vitamin E compounds) that are primarily obtained from soybean oil or other vegetable oils.

- Synthetic antioxidants are more effective and stable than natural antioxidants.³
 - Synthetic antioxidants are 5 to 10 times more effective than natural antioxidants.
 - They are more stable and better able to withstand the heat, pressure and moisture used during cooking.
 - Because higher levels of natural antioxidants are needed, they are sometimes used in combination with synthetic antioxidants to provide an adequate level of protection.
 - Some of the FDA-approved synthetic antioxidants commonly used in both human food and pet foods include BHA, BHT and TBHQ. These have been proven safe for use in the approved amounts.

Remember

Given the proper information, you can confidently choose foods for your pets that are properly preserved, safe, and provide the guaranteed nutrient content and quality throughout their shelf life.

1. Case LM, Daristotle L, Hayek MG, Raasch MF. Nutrient content of pet foods. In: Case LM, Daristotle L, Hayek MG, Raasch MF, eds. *Canine and Feline Nutrition*. 3rd ed. Maryland Heights, MO: Mosby Elsevier; 2011:141–162.

2. Wortinger A. Nutritional myths. *J Amer Anim Hosp Assoc*. 2005;41:273–276.

3. Aldrich G. Ingredient Myths That Have Altered the Course of Pet Food: Byproducts, Synthetic Preservative and Grains. Nestlé Purina Companion Animal Nutrition Summit; 2013;10–19.