



## Learning Resources



# FELINE NUTRITION

### ZIWI PEAK FOR CATS

Cats are renowned for being obligate carnivores, an intrinsic aspect of their physiology that demands a diet rich in meat to fulfill their nutritional requirements. In both wild and domestic settings, cats exhibit a natural inclination toward hunting and consuming prey animals, which are primarily characterized by high protein content, moderate fat levels and negligible carbohydrate presence.

While they may sporadically diversify their diet with fruits, honey or grains to address supplementary nutritional needs, cats lack the digestive mechanisms for efficient carbohydrate processing in large quantities, particularly when unprocessed. This is evident from their lack of salivary amylase production, and little taste perception for carbohydrates. Instead, cats are instinctively drawn to animal fats and proteins, particularly focusing on essential amino acids like alanine, proline, lysine and histidine.

# Unique Nutritional Requirements of Cats

Cats differ from dogs and humans in their dietary needs. They have a heightened demand for protein, deriving their energy exclusively from amino acids sourced through obtained through the consumption of protein, via a metabolic process known as gluconeogenesis. Unlike omnivores and herbivores, which can derive energy from dietary starch and glycogenic amino acids, cats rely solely on meat protein. Although they do secrete amylase in their pancreas and can digest small quantities of starch, their physiology is adapted to maintain blood glucose levels through gluconeogenesis. Furthermore, cats require more dietary nitrogen than any other animal. Lacking the ability to store nitrogen, their liver continually operates at high levels of protein processing, necessitating a continuous intake of meat protein to sustain optimal nitrogen levels (Wortinger, 2007).

## Essential Amino Acids

Of the 22 amino acids, cats require 11 essential amino acids from their diet, as their bodies cannot synthesize these in sufficient quantities. These essential amino acids are taurine, arginine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan and valine. Notably, taurine is critical for feline health, and animal animal protein sources, particularly organ meats are the best natural natural source of this nutrient (Wortinger, 2007).

## Feline feeding behaviours

The feeding behaviours of domestic cats closely mirror those of their ancestors, the *Felis silvestris libyca*, a small African wildcat primarily inhabiting desert environments. These felids are renowned for their proclivity to hunt and consume multiple small prey throughout the day and are considered crepuscular with peak hunting activity occurring in the early morning and evening.

Domestic cats, much like their wild forebears and other carnivores, engage in a repertoire of behaviours that include searching, hunting, capturing prey, followed by postprandial grooming and rest. Notably, cats differ from dogs in their solitary hunting tendencies and preference for frequent, smaller meals. In the wild, a cat may consume between 10 to 20 meals daily, with each meal roughly equivalent in size and caloric value to a mouse (approximately 30g and 23kcal) (Wortinger, 2007). To reach their daily calorie requirement, cats must hunt continuously throughout the day. A feral cat's diet is comprised largely of small rodents (40% of the diet), with the remainder being small rabbits, insects, frogs, lizards and birds. Large wildcats, such as lions and tigers, have different feeding behaviours and tend to eat larger prey and eat less frequently.

Domestic cats exhibit a discerning palate due to their highly developed olfactory senses, rendering them sensitive to variations in food texture, aroma and flavour. Even minor alterations in their diet can lead to cats rejecting their food. This behaviour can be seen during the consumption of live prey. Cats typically have a preference to eat the prey from the head, with the texture dictated by the direction of hair growth (Wortinger, 2007).

The temperature of their food also plays a role, as cats generally prefer their meals to be around 38 degrees Celcius, mirroring the typical body temperature of freshly caught prey. The predatory drive of the cat is very strong, and they will even stop eating to make another kill to optimise their food availability. This drive can be stimulated in a domestic cat by providing enrichment through interactive toys and food puzzles so they can express this natural behaviour. A lack of stimulation can cause boredom, destructive behaviour and anxiety

# Water intake

## Rich in Animal Protein & Organ Meat

Cats, originally adapted to desert environments, are biologically suited to obtain a significant portion of their hydration needs from their diet. In the wild, cats consuming a prey-based derive approximately 70 - 75 percent of their water intake from their food. Domestic cats have retained these evolutionary adaptations, leading to lower thirst drives, reduced water consumption and concentrated urine production (Wortinger, 2007).

In contrast, dry kibble typically contains less than 10% moisture. Although some domestic cats may increase their water intake to compensate, many owners use water fountains and other devices to encourage adequate hydration. Canned food, with its higher moisture content, more closely resembles the natural diet of cats and can better support their hydration needs (Pierson, 2013).



# Feeding schedules

Establishing regular feeding times for domestic cats can be challenging. Many cat owners choose "ad libitum" feeding with dry kibble, which theoretically allows cats to eat small meals throughout the day. However, ad libitum feeding can lead to weight management issues and is not feasible with canned food. Canned food poses a significant food hygiene concern due to the risk of contamination from prolonged exposure; it should not be left out for more than 4 hours.

Implementing a structured feeding schedule may require consistent training. Timed feeding, which involves providing portion-controlled meals two to three times a day, offers a practical alternative. This approach allows for effective monitoring and management of daily calorie intake.



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## ZIWI Peak Cat Food: The Optimal Choice

Considering these distinct feline dietary characteristics, ZIWI Peak cat food stands as an exceptional choice for feline nutrition. Here's why!

### Rich in Animal Protein & Organ Meat

Ziwi Peak recipes are formulated with a focus on animal protein and organ meat, ensuring the correct nutrient and amino acid profile for obligate carnivores. By emphasising high-quality animal protein and organ meats, Ziwi Peak effectively supports the nutritional needs of cats, aligning with their natural dietary requirements and promoting overall health.

### Balanced Omega Fatty Acids

Ziwi Peak recipes are enriched with omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids from natural sources, such as fish and animal fats. These fatty acids are vital for maintaining healthy skin and a shiny coat, reducing inflammation, and supporting overall cellular function. This balance contributes to improved skin health and a more robust immune response.

### Supports Healthy Digestion

The inclusion of whole, nutrient-dense ingredients and a variety of organ meats in Ziwi Peak recipes promotes healthy digestion. The diet is designed to be highly digestible, which helps to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal issues such as diarrhea or constipation. The natural prebiotics found in the ingredients also support a balanced gut microbiome.

### Supports Healthy Weight Management

Ziwi Peak recipes are formulated to be nutrient-dense and balanced, which helps in maintaining an optimal weight for cats. The high protein and low carbohydrate content aid in preserving lean muscle mass while preventing excess fat accumulation. This can be particularly beneficial for managing weight in both overweight cats and those requiring weight maintenance.

### References

Pierson, LA 2013, "Feeding Your Cat: Know the Basics of Feline Nutrition", [www.catinfo.org](http://www.catinfo.org)

Wortinger, A 2007, "Nutrition for Veterinary Technicians and Nurses", Blackwell Publishing Professional, Iowa

### High Moisture Content

Ziwi Peak products have a high moisture content, particularly in their canned formulations. This helps to support optimal hydration levels in cats, which is crucial for maintaining urinary tract health and preventing kidney issues. Adequate moisture intake is especially beneficial for cats prone to urinary tract infections or those with a history of kidney disease.

### No Artificial Additives

Ziwi Peak formulations are free from artificial preservatives, colours, and flavours. This commitment to natural ingredients helps to reduce the risk of adverse reactions or allergies in cats. By avoiding synthetic additives, Ziwi Peak ensures that cats receive a diet that is as close to nature as possible, minimizing potential sources of food intolerance.

### Promotes Lean Muscle Mass

Ziwi Peak's high protein content supports the maintenance of lean muscle mass in cats, which is particularly important for active cats and those recovering from illness or surgery. The appropriate balance of protein and other nutrients helps to maintain muscle integrity and overall physical condition, contributing to a healthier, more active lifestyle.

### Enhances Palatability and Acceptance

Ziwi Peak's use of high-quality, fresh ingredients enhances the palatability of the food, making it more appealing to picky eaters. The natural flavours and aromas from the animal proteins and organ meats can stimulate a cat's appetite, which is especially useful for cats with reduced appetite due to illness, stress, or changes in their environment.