

# Passover Foods for Your Pets

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On Passover, a Jewish person may not eat, own, or derive benefit from *chametz* which is fit for human or canine consumption, and owning *chametz* pet food to feed to an animal (even if the animal belongs to someone else or is ownerless) is a violation of the latter two of those restrictions. Although there are certain leniencies for foods that are not fit for human consumption, most modern day pet food would not be in that category. The food may be raw, or not prepared in a way that most people would entertain eating, but that does not put it in the *halachic* category of *nifsal m'achilas adam* – not fit for human consumption.

While *Ashkenazic* Jews have a custom to not eat *kitnios*, they may own and derive benefit from them. To benefit pet owners, the cRc “certifies” certain varieties of pet food for *Passover*, which means that we visit the factory to determine which formulas are *chametz*-free, relieving the consumer of that responsibility. However, if no certified (or recommended) pet food is available, the consumer would have to carefully read the ingredient panel to determine whether a specific product contains any *chametz* (and many, in fact, do).

A complete list of possible pet food ingredients is beyond the scope of this guide; however the following are a few pointers when reading the ingredient panel. If an ingredient does not appear in the following guidelines, it may still be *chametz* or *chametz*-sensitive.

1. In addition to checking for the five *chametz* grains – wheat, barley, rye, oats, and spelt – also look for brewer’s yeast (a common flavoring agent, which is *chametz*), malt (a barley-based sweetener), pasta, xanthan gum (a thickener which may be fermented from *chametz*), and other generic terms which may refer to a *chametz* ingredient (e.g. flour, gluten, middlings, starch, et al).
2. Many varieties of animal feed contain a multitude of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, some of which may well be *chametz*, and there is no realistic way for a consumer to determine which of them are problematic. However, the good news is that vitamins comprise such a small percentage of the animal food that they are *bateil*. Therefore, it is generally accepted that if the animal food was created before *Passover*, it may be used on *Passover*.
3. Some common ingredients used in pet food which do not pose a *Passover* concern are:
  - a. Animal, poultry and fish products.
  - b. Vegetables, such as alfalfa, asparagus, beets, and carrots.
  - c. Assorted *kitnios* foods, such as buckwheat, corn products, lentils, millet, peas, rice, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and soy products.
  - d. Other items, such as barley grass, BHA, BHT, carrageenan, cellulose, colors, eggs, gums (other than xanthan gum), kelp, lactose, linseed, milk products, molasses, oils, psyllium, and whey.

By no means do these pointers cover all of the ingredients used in pet food, and we suggest that you contact a *kashrus* professional if you are unsure about any of the other ingredients in a given pet food.

The following is a list of pet foods approved for Passover 2017. Make sure to check all labels. A product listing both meat and dairy ingredients may not be used any time during the year. Feed available at zoos is often *chametz* and should not be purchased or fed to the animals on Passover. After Passover, pet food with *chametz* may be purchased only from stores which are non-Jewish owned (e.g. PetSmart, Petco) or Jewish owned and have sold their *chametz*.

**NOTE:** Mixes sold in stores often contain *chametz*. It is advisable to mix regular and Passover food together one to two weeks before Passover before switching completely to Passover food. The ratio of regular and Passover food should be changed slowly to get the animal used to the new diet. Check with your veterinarian before changing diet.



One may feed his pet any of the following items:

**CATS: Evanger's:** Beef Tips with Gravy; Chicken Dinner for Cats; Freeze-Dried Beef Liver; Freeze-Dried Beef Tripe; Freeze-Dried Wild Salmon; Organic Braised Chicken Dinner for Cats; Organic Turkey and Butternut Squash for Cats; Slow Cooked Beef Stew for Cats – Grain Free; Slow Cooked Chicken Stew for Cats – Grain Free; Slow Cooked Turkey Stew for Cats – Grain Free; Wild Salmon.

There may be varieties of other name brand pet foods, such as Prescription Diet and Science Diet, which may be *chametz*-free. Consumers are urged to check all labels for *chametz* and/or *chametz*-sensitive ingredients as listed in the introductory paragraph above.

**DOGS: Evanger's:** :100% Beef; 100% Buffalo; 100% Chicken; 100% Duck; 100% Organic Chicken; 100% Organic Turkey with Potatoes and Carrots; 100% Pheasant; 100% Sweet Potato; All Natural Beef Liver Chunks; Beef, Chicken, & Liver; Beef Chunks Dinner in Gravy; Beef Dinner; Beef with Chicken; Braised Beef Chunks with Gravy; Catch of the Day; Chicken Chunks Dinner in Gravy; Cooked Chicken: Duck and Sweet Potatoes Dinner; Freeze-Dried Beef Liver; Freeze-Dried Beef Tripe; Freeze-Dried Wild Salmon; Hunk of Beef; Lamb and Rice Dinner; Lamb Chunks Dinner in Gravy; Senior Dinner; Turkey Chunks Dinner in Gravy; Whole Chicken Thighs; Wild Salmon.

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**FISH:** Fish food, including pyramid feeders, and vacation blocks often have *chametz*. Goldfish and tropical fish can be given tubular worms, frozen brine shrimp, and freeze-dried worms (if they do not contain fillers).

#### **BIRDS (PARROTS, PARAKEETS, COCKATIELS, MACAWS):**

- Millet, sorghum, wild bird food (check for *chametz* ingredients) as main diet.
- Peanuts, sunflower seeds, and safflower seeds can be given.
- Larger birds, such as parrots, can eat pure alfalfa pellets (make sure it is pure alfalfa since it is common to add grains) or dry dog food (see above for list).
- Smaller birds can also eat pure alfalfa pellets – crush before feeding.
- Can supplement with sliced grapes, cottage cheese, rice cakes (birds like these), small pieces of lean meat, *matza*, berries, eggs, canned baby fruits. All large food should be shredded before serving. These items should be given sparingly.
- For minerals, can have oyster shells (calcium) or mineral block such as Kaytee Tropical Fruit Mineral Block Treat.
- The greater the variety, the better.

#### **HAMSTERS, GUINEA PIGS, GERBILS & RABBITS:**

- Best to feed pure alfalfa pellets. Make sure it is pure alfalfa since it is common to add grains. Dried alfalfa may also be given.
- Can supplement with mixture of cut-up fruits and vegetables - carrots, grapes, apples, melon, kale, parsley, oranges, celery, dry corn, sunflower seeds, or cabbage. Can also give some *matza*. If not accustomed to these items, give sparingly.
- Guinea pigs will especially benefit from kale, parsley, and oranges.
- Hamsters will especially benefit from apples.
- Guinea pigs need vitamin C added to diet.

#### **LIZARDS:**

Be aware that mealworms, which as living creatures are not *chametz*, are commonly sold in a bed of wheat flakes or oatmeal, which is *chametz* and, therefore, may not be owned or used on Passover. Live crickets are permissible. Whole insects (live or dead) with no additives or other ingredients are permissible.