

How to Convert Your Pet to a New Food

by Chelsea Kent March 6, 2022

Why is my pet being picky?

There are many reasons that a pet will get picky about the food they are eating and here are some things to consider. If you suspect any of these issues let us know and we'll assist you with transition, supplementation and/or behavioral issues.

- 1) **“What the heck is in my bowl?” ... Recognition:** Sometimes pets don't recognize new foods with a different appearance as "food". Many pets are picky about a certain consistency or texture of a food and when a new food varies from what they're used to they won't even try it... even if it smells delicious. In many cases making a new food look similar to their old food makes it more appealing to them during transition. Forming new foods into balls or pellets so it looks like kibble, or adding water, or mashing a food to match a consistency can help get your pet started.
- 2) **“Caviar or Grits?” ... Consistency:** Many pets care more about consistency than flavor. If you have noticed that your pet prefers a certain type of food try a different food in the same consistency but a different flavor.

Some options to adjust consistency are (See "Trying new foods" for more details):

Making a Pate': make any food into a pate' consistency by adding a small amount of water and letting it soak then mashing it up.

Making a Chunky mix: Try temporarily adding chunky food blends into the food that you desire to switch your pet to. Try different soaking times or try lightly cooking the new food the first few times you feed it.

Making a Crunchy: Try balling up small amounts of food, or adding dry Ziwi Peak or Simple Food Project (dry), or slightly cooking a blend to get your pet to transition.

Pay attention to the temperature: Many pets don't like their food too warm or cold. Make sure that if you have a picky eater you take note of your pet's preferences to temperature. Sometimes its important to check their teeth to make sure they don't have a dental problem (such as abscess or fracture) that needs attention that is causing their pickiness.

Pay attention to freshness: Many pets can tell once a food has been open for a period of time and no longer want to eat it. There are many reasons for this. With dry food the oils can go rancid after a period of time. With canned food oxygen may begin to break down chemicals used to denature the food and metal/plastics leach into the food over even short periods of time. With dehydrated and raw food they tend to get slightly crunchy around the edges, leaving a partially crunchy and partially squishy texture that some pets don't like. If your pet doesn't like their food if it's been open for more then one meal consider making each meal fresh or switching to a different product.

3) **"Steak and Eggs, Please?" ...Established Behavior:** You may have created a monster. It's very common for pet owners to worry when their pets don't eat. Sometimes your pets prefer the attention of your worry over their food. Many owners offer their pets enticements to get them to eat. Enticements given after you pet has snubbed their food just teaches them that snubbing their food means tastier treats. You might even give them additional attention and worry and try hand feeding them. The important thing to remember is that the more you baby your pet through eating the pickier they will be in the future. We're happy to help you figure out how to get around behavior based pickiness problems. See enticements under number 13 for tips about giving your pet extras without causing behavioral problems.

4) **Bringing out the Dinnerware... What's in a bowl?:** Some pets have poor vision and a deep or round bowl makes them nervous because it's dark and hard for them to see into. Many cats and dogs, don't like their whiskers touching the sides of the bowl and an oval shaped bowl or plate is the only thing that will make them comfortable eating.

5) **"I'm in charge"... a bit of Trickery:** Some pets don't like to feel bossed around. Your pet might feel anxiety and pressure about eating a new food. Often times if you put the food in an area that they don't normally eat they will feel it was their idea and try it.

6) **"My dish stinks?"... Problems with the food:** There could be something wrong with their food. Pets have the ability to smell far better than you do. They can smell when a food has an unacceptable odor so perhaps there is a problem with the food that you don't know about. It never hurts to take a

food back to the store, even if you're not returning it, and ask the people there (that have regular interaction with the product) if it looks and smells how they would expect it to and if they have heard of any problems with the brand. Asking questions is the quickest way to diagnose problems with your pet.

7) **Gurgle, Gurgle... Stomachache central:** Their food might make them not feel well. Sometimes pets get an upset stomach or abdominal pain without vomiting or diarrhea. Pancreatic issues, stress and anxiety, H.pylori, and MANY other common issues can cause your pet to snub their food simply because they associate eating with a feeling of sickness. Sometimes you have to work them through a transition onto a better food for them to realize that a new food won't make them feel that way anymore. Adding Goat Milk, Microflora, Fido's Flora or Optagest is a great option to help with this problem.

8) **Dinner and a Show... Playing with your food:** Sometimes when pets eat too fast they get sick to their stomach. Slowing down their consumption can be the difference between a picky eater and a great eater. When it comes to cats and dogs playing with food can mean a long, healthy life. For cats it can be helpful to toss freeze dried nuggets that they can feel like they are chasing and catching. Feeding a full meal inside of a toy can slow your dogs' meal time to a safe, choke and bloat free speed. Ask us for assistance in finding ways to get your pet to play with their food and decrease their pickiness.