

# AAFCO Feeding Trials

Summary by Laura Duclos, PhD

## **Guidelines as stipulated by AAFCO:**

1. Designed to evaluate diet suitability for a particular species (canine, feline) and life stage (puppy, adult, reproducing); it is not a one food fits all philosophy
2. Ensures dogs and cats are being fed a complete and balanced diet that will not cause dietary deficiency
3. Each diet formulation must be tested unless the diet can be shown to belong to a “family” of like formulations
  
4. Overriding principals for canine and feline adult maintenance:
  - a. Must use a minimum of 8 animals all of the same breed and over 1 year of age
  - b. Animals must pass a physical by veterinarian
  - c. Test data is compared to average historical colony data as established by a minimum of 30 dogs based on wet and also on dry
  - d. Same diet formulation must be used; different batches of same formula may be used
  - e. Test lasts at least 26 weeks and animals are not allowed to have treats or food other than the test food
  - f. Data collected to include (statistically tested)
    - i. Daily food consumption
    - ii. Body weight at start, weekly, and end
    - iii. Blood test at end
    - iv. Veterinarian evaluation of overall health, skin and coat at start and end
  - g. Notes must be made about medication and reason for medication
  - h. No more than 25% of the animals can be removed from the study
  - i. Any animal that dies must be necropsied
  - j. Diet fails to pass and deemed unsuitable if:
    - i. clinical or pathological signs are evident
    - ii. any animal loses more than 15% body weight
    - iii. blood results deviate beyond allowable limits
  
5. For growth, the same adult maintenance principals apply except:
  - a. 8 animals younger than 8 weeks (canine) or 9 weeks (feline) of age and weaned
    - i. equal sex if possible
    - ii. obtained from 3 different females
  - b. Colony averages are based on puppies or kittens, not adults
  - c. Test lasts at least 10 weeks
  - d. Diet fails to pass and deemed unsuitable if:
    - i. Any animal gains less than 75% (canine) or 80% (feline) body weight of the colony average
    - ii. Clinical or pathological signs are evident
    - iii. Blood results deviate beyond allowable limits

6. For gestation and lactation, the same adult maintenance principals apply except:
  - a. Females must be at least one year of age and have gone through at least one heat period.
  - b. They must be pregnant at time of start and be the same breed as the male
  - c. There is a limitation to the number of offspring per female based on the females weight
  - d. Test begins at start of estrus and ends when offspring are 4 weeks of age (canine) or 6 weeks of age (feline)
  - e. Data collected includes:
    - i. Food consumption of offspring in addition to mother
    - ii. Female weight will be determined at start, weekly, 24 hours after birth, and at end
    - iii. Offspring weight will be determined 24 hours after birth, weekly, and at end
    - iv. Litter size will be determined after birth, after 1 day, and at end
    - v. Offspring will be given a physical with 72 hours after birth and at end
  - f. Diet fails to pass and deemed unsuitable if:
    - i. Any offspring gains less than 75% (canine) or 80% (feline) body weight of the colony average
    - ii. Litter size is less than 80% colony average
    - iii. Clinical or pathological signs are evident
    - iv. Blood results deviate beyond allowable limits