



5 Things We Learned from Pet Parents in 2021

What's on the minds of today's pet parents? Every year, FONA (Now Powered by McCormick) fields a national survey of cat and dog parents to understand what matters the most to these primary household shoppers.

1. Flavor is (the most) important.

When asked to rank the most important attributes of their pet's food, cat and dog parents agreed that flavor choice is critical.

Across 12 different priorities (such as affordability, balanced nutrition, organic ingredients, etc.), pet parents ranked flavor at the top of the list. "The food is a flavor my pet likes" ranked #1 for cat parents and #2 for dog.

Flavor ranked highest with a mean score of

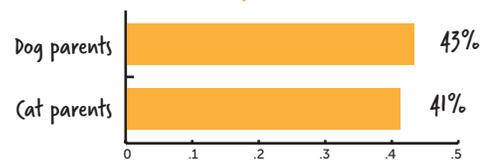
4.1/5 for dog parents 4.3/5 for cat parents

2. Limited ingredient diets are here

Diets that claim limited ingredients remain popular with both cat and dog parents.



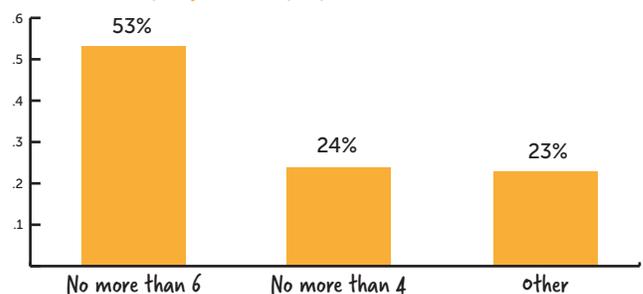
% of pet parents feeding a limited ingredient diet



In addition, pet parents who are not currently feeding a LID, 69% of dog owners and 73% of cat owners indicated that they would be interested in feeding a limited ingredient diet in the future.

So how many ingredients do pet parents expect to see in a LID? Looks like less is more for these pet parents.

of ingredients preferred in a limited diet



3. Natural flavor builds trust.

When presented with a list of 19 common ingredients, parents overwhelmingly approved of natural flavor.

83%
of dog parents

78%
of cat parents

indicated that Natural Flavor was one of their top priorities.

Natural flavor was ranked higher than any other ingredient including deboned beef (76%), brown rice (74%), oatmeal (85%), and beef fat (52%).

For cat parents, natural flavor was second only to deboned chicken (83%) with 78% approving of its inclusion in their cat's food or treats.

4. Functional treats are growing.

When it comes to functional treats and supplements, joint health is the most popular reason for purchase among dog owners followed by skin & coat, bad breath, and calming. With cat parents, urinary tract health was the leading reason for purchase followed by calming, skin & coat, and immunity.

64%
of dog parents

42%
of cat parents

indicated that they currently feed their pet functional treats or supplements.

Just like for human supplements, leading manufacturers of functional treats rely on flavor to increase the perception of efficacy in their products. Flavors like vanilla and lavender lend themselves to stress and anxiety relief while flavors like mint and parsley can promote breath freshening support.



5. Mixing wet & dry food is a special treat.

Mixing wet food with dry kibble is nothing new for many pet parents; however, the recent availability of specially designed food toppers and a growing variety of humanized flavors in wet food has resulted in increased combination feeding.

of the parents who prefer to feed their pets a mixed diet over other ones

25%
of dog parents

40%
of cat parents

mix wet food and dry kibble occasionally as a special treat.

Not only does mixing increase their pet's enthusiasm for their meal, it also opens the door to a variety of new flavors and textures. For parents of medium and large size dogs, mixing in wet food opens the door to an exciting assortment of small cans and trays of wet food that are typically intended for small dogs and cats.



There's more where this came from. We also asked about human grade claims, shopping behavior, product aromas, and flavor preferences.

Want to learn more?
Let's chat!

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