

Internet Interpet

By Phil Tripp

Things have changed immensely in the care and feeding of pets over the past decade that the Internet has served as a resource. There are an incredible number and variety of foods with an equally confronting amount of information on both sides of the dog food debate.

While doing research for the Cuisine de Critters column on pet treats, I remembered a couple of sites that were quite interesting in their coverage of pet food ingredients. In the last issue's Cuisine, I wrote a bit about what goes into the low end supermarket brands opposed to premium, superpremium and ultrapremium foods. We didn't mention brands nor did we reveal the really distasteful side of the pet food manufacturing industrial practices at the economy side of the food chain.

But for the top end, manufacturers have extensive websites with exhaustive information on nutritional values, contents and feeding guides. Some examples are

Hill's-Science Diet www.hillspet.com;
Nutrience-www.nutrience.com.au;
Natural Balance-www.naturalbalance.net.au;
Supercoat-www.supercoat.com.au;
Purina-www.purina.com.au;
Advance-www.advancepetfoods.com.au;
Nutro-www.nutroproducts.com;
Eukanuba-www.eukanuba.com.au;
Iams-www.iams.com.au

From puppy stage to elder dog, there are a broad range of choices in feeding as the pet gets older. An interesting article on choosing a food is a free sample at www.whole-dog-journal.com/sample/food.html. I've been wanting to subscribe to *Whole Dog Journal* for a couple of years, but never quite got around to it. The site at www.whole-dog-journal.com offers print subscriptions at US\$46 for a year but an economical US\$16 for email PDFs of all 12 issues. Having just logged on, I can highly recommend it.

Whole Dog Journal is in the process of visiting several dog food manufacturing facilities, having been invited to some of the premium makers factories for an upcoming series of articles. They want to see firsthand what the state of the art is and also to debunk some Internet myths. And just like any other topic, the Net contains no shortage of controversy or opposing views.

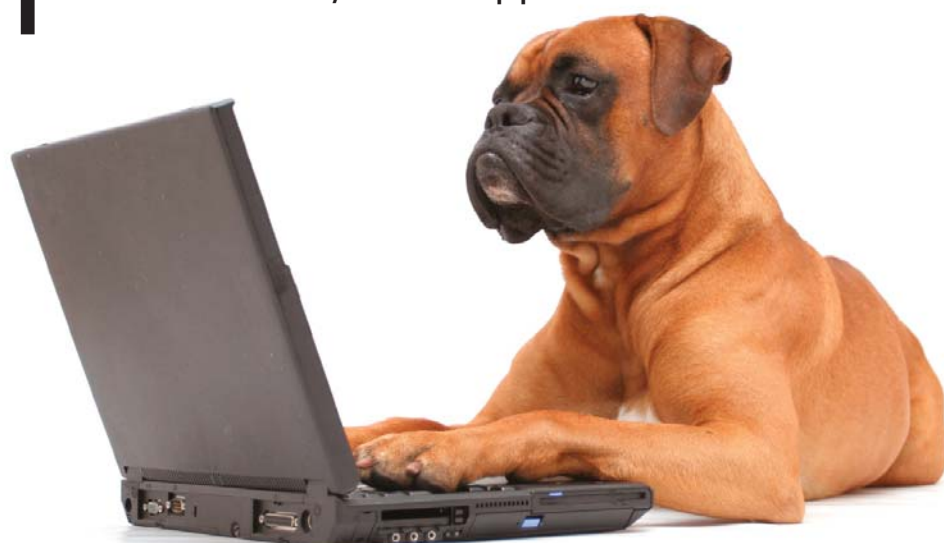
For those who have a strong stomach and open mind, there are a few sites on the Net that tackle this topic. Some of the information cites older research and anecdotal incidents, while others can blind you with science or sicken you with gory analyses of the processes and ingredients of pet food.

One of the first I encountered a few years ago in trying to make decisions on pet foods was Shirley's Wellness Café (www.shirleys-wellness-cafe.com/healthy-pets.htm). Her slant is promoting holistic health for people and animals and has been going since 1996.

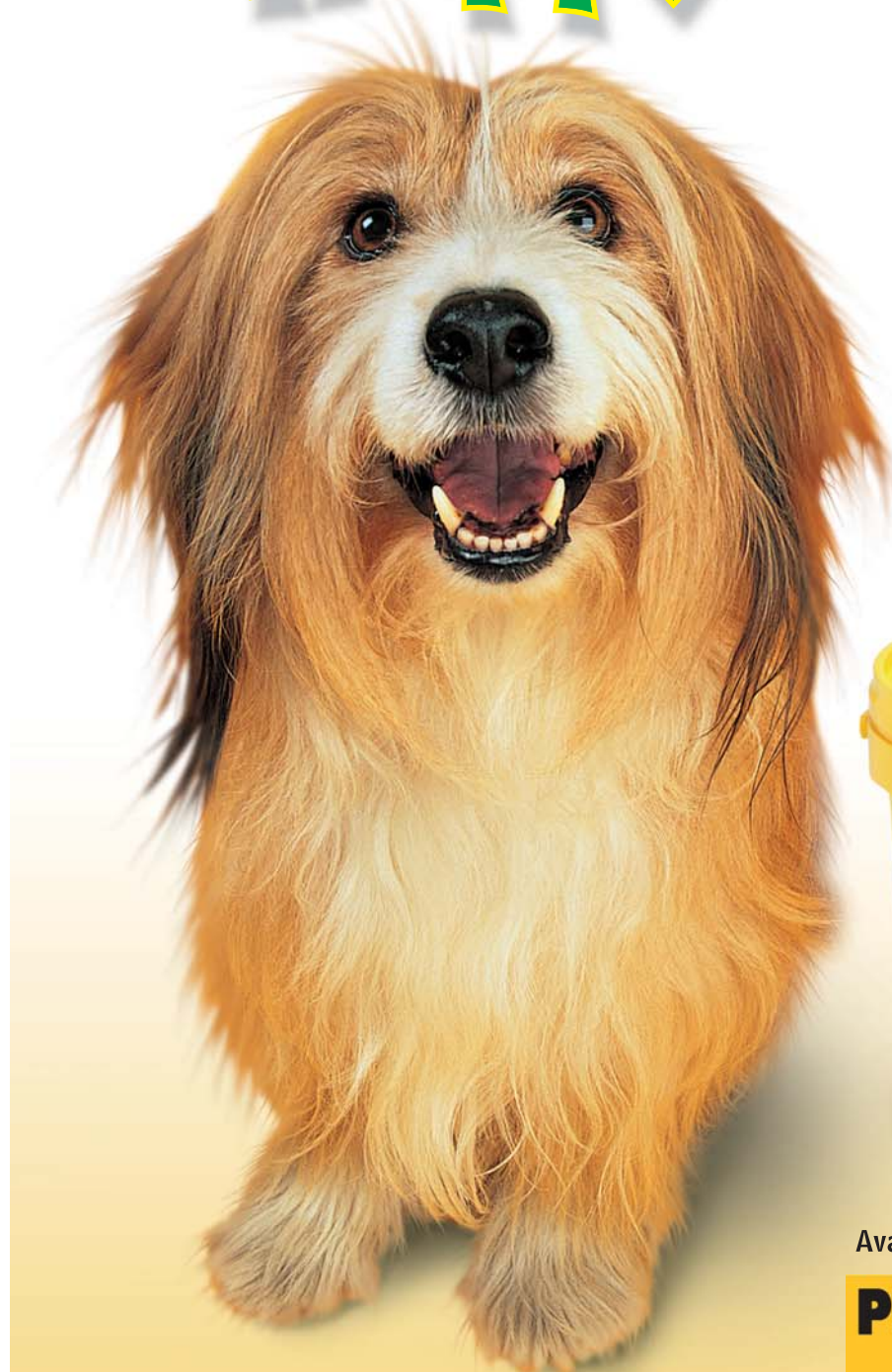
Pet-Grub (www.pet-grub.com) is a site that promotes the making of homemade pet food for dogs and cats that stemmed from a book which is available to be printed online under an honour system of donation.

Food Not Fit For A Pet (www.nexusmagazine.com/articles/petfood1.html) is based on an article from Nexus magazine in 1996 that blew the lid of pet food manufacturing processes. Things have changed immensely since, but it's still a riveting read.

Next issue we'll turn you onto a variety of shopping sites that do home delivery of products, saving your back from lugging that 20 kilo bag of kibbles or cases of prime canned product.



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