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Ingredient Splitting — Deceptive Dog Food Labeling Trick



Checking the label for ingredient splitting

Ingredient splitting is one of the pet food industry's most **misleading** marketing practices.

Of course...

Dog food companies **deny any wrongdoing**. They claim they're simply following [Federal labeling guidelines](#).

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They insist ingredient splitting is a **deliberate** attempt by pet food companies to **mislead** consumers... and a deceptive **trick** designed to make an ingredients list look **more attractive** to potential buyers.

So...

What Is Ingredient Splitting?

Ingredient splitting is the **creative** practice of dividing a more abundant (inferior) ingredient into **smaller portions** of similar items.

It's a sneaky way to **artificially boost** a more desirable item (like **meat**) to a **higher spot** on the ingredients list... while **lowering** the ranking of a less desirable item (like rice or corn).

And it's all **completely legal**.

Here's How It Works

Let's say you have a dog food in which **corn and rice** are the **main** ingredients in the recipe.

Now...

Because grains are **less appealing** to a dog food shopper than meat, designers are compelled to **lower** the positions of **non-meat items** on the ingredients list.

Keep in mind...

Pet food manufacturers are **required by law** to arrange each item on every ingredients list in **order** of its **precooking weight**.

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Before Splitting		
Rank	Ingredient	Content
1	Corn	30%
2	Rice	20%
3	Chicken Meal	18%
4	Ingredient A	?
5	Ingredient B	?
6	Ingredient C	?
7	Ingredient D	?

After Splitting		
Rank	Ingredient	Content
1	Chicken Meal	18%
2	Corn Meal	15%
3	Corn Flour	15%
4	White Rice	10%
5	Brown Rice	10%
6	Ingredient A	?
7	Ingredient B	?

Notice that corn and rice rank #1 and #2... **before ingredient splitting.**

Now...

What happens if we “split” the first two items on the list into **smaller portions** of similar ingredients?

With that goal in mind...

Let’s divide corn into **smaller amounts** of corn meal and corn flour... and let’s split the rice into smaller **portions** of brown and white rice.

And **like magic**...

Even though the **amount** of chicken meal remains **unchanged**, it’s now been raised to the **first** position on the ingredients list.

Avoid ‘The First Ingredient’ Trick

Can you see how a dog food company could use ingredient splitting to **mislead shoppers**?

... ..

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Have you ever noticed a dog food **package** boasting, “meat is the first ingredient”?

Like this...



What does “#1 ingredient” really mean?

It’s easy for a pet food shopper to **misunderstand** this claim.

For example...

Do the words, “Chicken is the #1 ingredient” mean chicken is the **most plentiful** ingredient in the recipe?

Or do they mean that the food’s designer was able to successfully use **ingredient splitting** to manipulate the order of the list?

Or...

Do they mean chicken is the first ingredient because the recipe actually contains a

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The Bottom Line

Ingredient splitting is neither **good... or bad**.

Unless a company chooses to **use** ingredient splitting to **mislead consumers**.

Bottom line...

Don't place **excessive value** on claims that meat is the first ingredient. Keep in mind, ingredients can be **manipulated** to change their order.

Which is why...

The **first 5 ingredients** in any recipe tend to provide a **much more accurate** picture of a pet food's actual content.

What to Look for?

When **searching** for ingredient splitting, follow these **suggestions**:

1. **Ingredients matter**. Begin every dog food evaluation with the label. After all, how could any food be magically better than the ingredients that were used to make it?
2. Don't **overvalue** the first ingredient. Ignore scammy claims. Instead, consider the healthiest and most plentiful components at the top of the recipe.
3. Study the **first 5 ingredients** to determine the most abundant items in any dog food formula
4. Look for evidence of ingredient splitting. Be skeptical when you find **multiple versions** of similar ingredients clustered together near the top of the list. For example, if you find white rice, brown rice and rice flour included in the first 5

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Our Best Advice

If you'd like to save time, consider visiting one of our "Best Dog Food" pages below. We've already **assessed** over **5700 recipes** to uncover these **top-rated** dog and puppy foods.

Top Recommendations

The following brands have been selected by The Dog Food Advisor based on [our rating criteria](#)... which includes consideration of ingredient splitting.

- [Best Dog Food by **Category**](#)
- [Best **Dry** Dog Foods](#)
- [Best **Wet** Dog Foods](#)
- [Best **Puppy** Foods](#)
- [Best **Dry Puppy** Foods](#)
- [Best **Wet Puppy** Foods](#)
- [Best **Small Breed Puppy** Foods](#)
- [Best **Large Breed Puppy** Foods](#)
- [Best **Senior** Dog Foods](#)
- [Best Dog Food for **Allergies**](#)

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