How to Grade Your Dog's Food

This method of grading dog food was developed by Sarah Irick. It is not to be considered exact science but a starting point for people who need help with how to read labels and choose a good food. You can read about Sarah here. She has provided, with permission to Naper Doodles to include on our website, the Grading Scheme, foods that have already been graded in Alphabetical Order, and dog foods that have been graded In Order of Score.

1. For every listing of "by-product", subtract 10 points
2. For every non-specific animal source ("meat" or "poultry", meat, meal or fat) reference, subtract 10 points
3. If the food contains BHA, BHT, or ethoxyquin, subtract 10 points
4. For every grain "mill run" or non-specific grain source subtract 5 points
5. If the same grain ingredient is used 2 or more times in the first five ingredients (i.e. "ground brown rice", "brewer's rice", "rice flour" are all the same grain), subtract 5 points
6. If the protein sources are not meat meal and there are less than 2 meats in the top 3 ingredients, subtract 3 points
7. If it contains any artificial colorants, subtract 3 points
8. If it contains ground corn or whole grain corn, subtract 3 points
9. If corn is listed in the top 5 ingredients, subtract 2 more points
10. If the food contains any animal fat other than fish oil, subtract 2 points
11. If lamb is the only animal protein source (unless your dog is allergic to other protein sources), subtract 2 points
12. If it contains soy or soybeans, subtract 2 points
13. If it contains wheat (unless you know that your dog isn't allergic to wheat), subtract 2 points
    If it contains beef (unless you know that your dog isn't allergic to beef), subtract 1 point
14. If it contains salt, subtract 1 point

Extra Credit:

1. If any of the meat sources are organic, add 5 points
2. If the food is endorsed by any major breed group or nutritionist, add 5 points
3. If the food is baked not extruded, add 5 points
4. If the food contains probiotics, add 3 points
5. If the food contains fruit, add 3 points
6. If the food contains vegetables (NOT corn or other grains), add 3 points
7. If the animal sources are hormone-free and antibiotic-free, add 2 points
8. If the food contains barley, add 2 points
9. If the food contains flax seed oil (not just the seeds), add 2 points
10. If the food contains oats or oatmeal, add 1 point
11. If the food contains sunflower oil, add 1 point
12. For every different specific animal protein source (other than the first one; count "chicken" and "chicken meal" as only one protein source, but "chicken" and "fish" as 2 different sources), add 1 point

13. If it contains glucosamine and chondroitin, add 1 point
14. If the vegetables have been tested for pesticides and are pesticide-free, add 1 point

Scale:
94-100+ = A
86-93 = B
78-85 = C
70-77 = D
69 = F

Following are some foods that have already been scored:

Alphabetical Order:
Authority Harvest Baked / Score 116 A+
Bil-Jac Select / Score 68 F
Canidae / Score 112 A+
Chicken Soup Senior / Score 115 A+
Diamond Maintenance / Score 64 F
Diamond Lamb Meal & Rice / Score 92 B
Diamond Large Breed 60+ Formula / Score 99 A
Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance Ultra Premium / Score 122 A+
Dick Van Patten's Duck and Potato / Score 106 A+
Eagle Pack Holistic / Score 119 A+
Eagle Pack Holistic Chicken / Score 114 A+
Eagle Pack Large and Giant Breed Puppy / Score 94 A
Eagle Pack Natural / Score 94 A
Eukanuba Large Breed Adult / Score 83 C
Eukanuba Natural Lamb and Rice / Score 87 B
Flint River Ranch / Score 92 B (non-specific fat source)
Foundations / Score 106 A+
Hund-n-Flocken Adult Dog (lamb) by Solid Gold / Score 93 A
Iams Lamb Meal & Rice Formula Premium / Score 73 D
Iams Large Breed / Score 83 C
Innova Dog / Score 114 A+
Innova Evo / Score 114 A+
Kirkland Signature Chicken, Rice, and Vegetables / Score 110 A+
Kirkland Signature Puppy Chicken, Rice and Vegetable / Score 108 A+
Natural Balance Duck and Potato / Score 114 A+
Nature's Select Chicken & Rice Puppy Growth Premium / Score 96 A
Nutrisource Lamb and Rice / Score 87 B
Nutro Chicken, Rice, & Oatmeal / Score 85 C (non-specific fat source)
Nutro Natural Choice Large Breed Puppy / Score 87 B
Nutro Natural choice Lamb and Rice / Score 85 C
Ol Roy / Score 9 F
Pedigree Complete Nutrition / Score 42 F

Pedigree Adult Complete / Score 14 F
Pet Gold Adult with Lamb & Rice / Score 23 F
Pro Plan All Breed / Score 68 F
Pro Plan Natural Turkey & Barley / Score 103 A+
Purina Benful / Score 17 F
Purina Dog / Score 62 F
Purina Come-n-Get It / Score 16 F
Royal Canin Bulldog / Score 100 A+
Royal Canin Dachshund 28 Formula / Score 97 A
Royal Canin Natural Blend Adult / Score 106 A+
Sensible Choice Chicken and Rice / Score 97 A
Science Diet Advanced Protein Senior 7+ / Score 63 F
Science Diet chicken adult maintenance / Score 45 F
Science Diet for Large Breed Puppies / Score 69 F
Solid Gold Bison / Score 123 A+
Timberwolf Organics Lamb and Venison / Score 136 A+
Wellness Just for Puppy / Score 117 A+
Wellness Super5 Mix Chicken / Score 110 A+
Wolfking Adult Dog (bison) by Solid Gold / Score 97 A

Numerical Order:
Grade A
Timberwolf Organics Lamb and Venison / Score 136 A+
Solid Gold Bison / Score 123 A+
Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance Ultra Premium / Score 122 A+
Eagle Pack Holistic / Score 119 A+
Wellness Just for Puppy / Score 117 A+
Authority Harvest Baked / Score 116 A+
Chicken Soup Senior / Score 115 A+
Eagle Pack Holistic Chicken / Score 114 A+
Innova Dog / Score 114 A+
Innova Evo / Score 114 A+
Natural Balance Duck and Potato / Score 114 A+
Canidae / Score 112 A+
Kirkland Signature Chicken, Rice, and Vegetables / Score 110 A+
Wellness Super5 Mix Chicken / Score 110 A+
Kirkland Signature Puppy Chicken, Rice and Vegetable / Score 108 A+
Dick Van Patten's Duck and Potato / Score 106 A+
Royal Canin Natural Blend Adult / Score 106 A+
Foundations / Score 106 A+
ProPlan Natural Turkey & Barley / Score 103 A+
Royal Canin Bulldog / Score 100 A+
Diamond Large Breed 60+ Formula / Score 99 A
Royal Canin Dachshund 28 Formula / Score 97 A

Sensible Choice Chicken and Rice / Score 97 A
Wolfking Adult Dog (bison) by Solid Gold / Score 97 A
Nature's Select Chicken & Rice Puppy Growth Premium / Score 96 A
Eagle Pack Large and Giant Breed Puppy / Score 94 A
Eagle Pack Natural / Score 94 A
Hund-n-Flocken Adult Dog (lamb) by Solid Gold / Score 93 A

Grade B
Diamond Lamb Meal & Rice / Score 92 B
Flint River Ranch / Score 92 B (non-specific fat source)
Eukanuba Natural Lamb and Rice / Score 87 B
Nutrisource Lamb and Rice / Score 87 B
Nutro Natural Choice Large Breed Puppy / Score 87 B

Grades C and D
Nutro Chicken, Rice, & Oatmeal / Score 85 C (non-specific fat source)
Nutro Natural choice Lamb and Rice / Score 85 C
Eukanuba Large Breed Adult / Score 83 C
Iams Large Breed / Score 83 C
Iams Lamb Meal & Rice Formula Premium / Score 73 D

Grade F
Science Diet for Large Breed Puppies / Score 69 F
Bil-Jac Select / Score 68 F
Pro Plan All Breed / Score 68 F
Diamond Maintenance / Score 64 F
Science Diet Advanced Protein Senior 7+ / Score 63 F
Purina Dog / Score 62 F
Science Diet chicken adult maintenance / Score 45 F
Pedigree Complete Nutrition / Score 42 F
Pet Gold Adult with Lamb & Rice / Score 23 F
Purina Benful / Score 17 F
Purina Come-n-Get It / Score 16 F
Pedigree Adult Complete / Score 14 F
Ol Roy / Score 9 F

Meet The Person Who Developed This Method:

My name is Sarah Irick and I am a Great Dane owner and rescue volunteer. I am a Civil/Industrial Engineer, not a veterinarian or animal nutritionist by education or employment. I do not work for a pet food manufacturer nor am I affiliated with one. I am just an individual who is concerned about what I feed my dogs and wants to help others decide what to feed their own. I cannot remember the exact date I designed this system, though I know it's been more than a year (probably 2-3 years ago). I was concerned with the way people sometimes throw out names of "good" dog foods that maybe aren't so

good, and others take their words for it. Foods that maybe used to be good before their ingredients were changed for the worse or before better options became available are still being touted by some as being super-premium and I disagree. Since many pet owners do not have the time or inclination to do as many hours of research into pet (specifically dog) nutrition as I and many of you have, I wanted an *easier* way for them to compare labels. Unfortunately it is still a bit cumbersome (sometimes 2 people calculate the same food and get different scores even) but it's better than nothing in my opinion.