

What's really in the bowl?

Most pet owners don't know.
That's about to change.



Week 3

What 'Complete & Balanced' Really Means

WHAT 'COMPLETE & BALANCED' REALLY MEANS FOR YOUR DOG

The phrase complete and balanced appears on most dog food packaging and is often taken as a sign of quality. In reality, it confirms that a food meets minimum nutritional requirements, but it does not tell the full story about ingredient quality, digestibility or how those nutrients are delivered.

Understanding what this claim does and does not cover helps owners make more informed feeding decisions and look beyond marketing language when choosing a food for their dog.

HOW THE STANDARD WORKS

- Complete means all essential nutrients are present
- Balanced means those nutrients are in the correct proportions
- Standards are set by FEDIAF and confirm the food is suitable as a dog's sole daily diet*
- If no life stage is stated, higher nutrient levels must be met*

OWNER'S CHECKLIST

- Named meat or fish listed first
- Ingredients clearly described, not vague terms
- Complete and balanced for the correct life stage
- Quality ingredients, not just added synthetic nutrients
- Minimal artificial additives or fillers
- Clear feeding guidelines based on weight and age

WHERE 'COMPLETE & BALANCED' CAN FALL SHORT

Foods that meet the same nutritional standard can still vary widely in quality. Some achieve complete and balanced nutrition using clearly identified, digestible ingredients, while others rely on heavily processed or less bioavailable sources, meaning dogs may absorb fewer nutrients**.

A food can meet the standard while relying on:

- Synthetic nutrients rather than natural sources
- Fillers used mainly to add bulk
- Artificial colours, flavours or preservatives
- High carbohydrate levels compared to protein

Although these foods meet regulatory requirements, they may be less supportive of long term health**, leading some nutrition specialists to question whether complete and balanced has become more of a marketing reassurance than a true indicator of quality***.

HELPING YOU FEEL CONFIDENT IN EVERY BOWL

At Dearboy Petcare, complete and balanced nutrition is only meaningful when it is backed by ingredient quality and clarity. Our focus is on helping owners understand not just whether a food meets the standard, but how and why it does.

As part of What's Really in the Bowl, we continue to break down everyday feeding terms using evidence and transparency, so owners can feel confident, informed and proud of the choices they make for their dogs.