



THE NATURAL AUTHORITY™

ON DIETARY FIBER

Introduction

Natural sources of dietary fiber, including beet pulp, rice bran, oat fiber and chicory root, are commonly used in pet foods. Although fiber is not considered an essential nutrient, it is beneficial to dogs and cats by promoting intestinal health and helping to regulate digestive motility, as it is for humans.

What benefits does dietary fiber add to pet food?

Dietary fiber is classified as both a fermentable and non-fermentable. Natural sources of fiber contain a combination of both fermentable and non-fermentable fibers to help regulate the digestive tract and maintain the functional environment for healthy digestion within the large intestine.

- **Pet Health:** Non-fermentable fiber (i.e. insoluble fiber) helps ensure the efficient absorption of dietary nutrients in the small intestine by normalizing intestinal transit time. Food moving too quickly through the intestines can result in diarrhea and poor nutrient absorption. Food travelling too slowly can lead to constipation. Non-fermentable fiber also absorbs water from the intestines which can help ease defecation. Thus, the appropriate balance of non-fermentable fiber in pet food can help avoid undesirable stools. Additionally, increased levels of non-fermentable fiber in cat food have been shown to help ingested hair pass through the digestive tract, thereby reducing the occurrence of hairball symptoms.
- **Digestive Tract Health:** The large intestine absorbs water and electrolytes from undigested foods and stores waste for elimination. Large quantities of beneficial bacteria called microflora live in the large intestine and feed off of undigested food. Bacterial digestion of fermentable fiber (i.e. soluble fiber) produces short chain fatty acids which can be absorbed by the large intestine and utilized as energy by the body. A healthy population of “good” bacteria in the colon can also reduce the likelihood of harmful bacteria invading the hospitable environment of the large intestine, decreasing the susceptibility to infection.

Is it true that natural fiber sources are “just fillers”?

Many myths have been circulated regarding the nutritional benefits of fiber sources and their value as viable ingredients in pet foods. Because they are not fully digestible, fiber sources like rice bran or beet pulp have been labeled controversial ingredients, claiming to be “just filler” with no dietary benefit. This is not true. Natural sources of fiber are important in maintaining digestive regularity, promoting a healthy digestive tract environment, and helping pets feel full after a meal. Natural fiber sources are generally considered to contain a good balance of fermentable and non-fermentable fiber which optimizes gastrointestinal and overall pet health.

NUTRO® formulas are based on the principles of natural nutrition described in this article.



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