

Page 1 of 5 — Dog Food Label Decoder (1-Page Checklist)

Goal: A 60-second label check before you buy or pour.

Brand / Product: _____ **Bag/CAN size:** _____ **Opened on:** ____/____

1) AAFCO Adequacy Statement

- Life Stage: _____

2) Calories & Portioning

- kcal per cup/can: _____
- Your dog's daily kcal target: _____
- Meals/day: 2 ☐ 3 ☐ Other: _____

3) Company & Quality

4) Ingredient Reality Check

5) Storage & Freshness

Tip: Pick foods by **cost-to-feed (\$/day)**, not bag price. See Page 5.

Worked Example — Dog Food Label Decoder (Sample)

Brand / Product: *HappyPaws Small Breed Chicken & Rice*

Bag size: 12 lb **Opened on:** 09/10/2025

1) AAFCO Adequacy Statement

Text shows: “*Complete & Balanced* for **adult maintenance** ... **AAFCO**.”

Life stage: **Adult** ✓

Feeding trials vs formulated: **Formulated to meet** (acceptable; trials preferred)

2) Calories & Portioning

kcal/cup: **360**

Dog: **10 lb** → start **~250 kcal/day**

Portion math: **$250 \div 360 = 0.69$ cup/day ≈ 0.7 cup/day**

Meals/day: **2** → **~0.35 cup per meal**

Treat cap (10%): **~25 kcal/day** from extras

3) Company & Quality

Nutritionist on staff? **Yes** (listed on site)

QA/digestibility on request? **Yes** (84–88% reported)

Contact/batch code present? **Yes**

4) Ingredient Reality Check

Named proteins first? **Chicken, chicken meal** ✓

No xylitol/onion/garlic? **None listed** ✓

5) Storage & Freshness

Finish within **4–6 weeks**, airtight bin, cool/dry/dark ✓

Don't mix old/new bags ✓

****If this said “intermittent or supplemental feeding only,” you’d need a veterinary-approved balancing supplement or a formulated recipe from a board-certified nutritionist before using it as a base diet.**

Page 2 of 5 — Poop Scorecard (Stool Quality Log)

Goal: Track stool from **1 (hard pellets)** to **5 (watery)**. Aim for **3**.

Day	AM/PM	Score (1–5)	Notes (diet change, topper, stress)	Action
Mon	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Tue	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Wed	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Thu	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Fri	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Sat	AM / PM	—	_____	_____
Sun	AM / PM	—	_____	_____

Scale (quick cues):

1 = hard pellets • 2 = firm but dry • **3 = ideal formed log** • 4 = soft log • 5 = watery

If stool loosens:

- Pause new topper, reduce daily portion by **~10%**, hydrate food; reassess in **48–72 hrs**.
 - **Red flags:** blood, black/tarry, lethargy, weight loss → **call your vet**.
-

Dog Poop Scorecard

FECAL SCORING SYSTEM

1



Hard, dry, crumbly stool (splits apart).

2



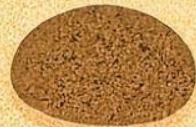
Firm, well-formed with visible cracks.

3



Clearly defined shape with visible cracks

4



Very soft, loses shape; leaves residue.

5



Watery/liquid stool (no texture).

Page 3 of 5 — 7-Day Food Upgrade Challenge

Dog's name: _____ Weight: _____ lb Daily kcal target: _____

Rules: Extras $\leq 10\%$ of daily kcal; change one thing at a time; log with the Poop Scorecard.

Day	Task	What I'll Do	Done
1	Hydration boost	Warm water/low-sodium broth splash on meals	[]
2	Portion check	Re-calc kcal/day; weigh food; split into 2–3 meals	[]
3	Probiotic start	Begin vetted probiotic or 1–2 tsp plain kefir/yogurt	[]
4	Omega-3 intro	Start low dose EPA+DHA ; note brand + mg given	[]
5	Fiber/protein nudge	1–2 tsp plain pumpkin or a few bites lean protein	[]
6	Treat audit	Cap treats at $\leq 10\%$ kcal; swap in low-cal options	[]
7	Review & adjust	Check BCS + stool; tweak portions $\pm 10\%$	[]

Mini wins: smaller kibble size for tiny mouths, slow feeder for gulpers, gentle 7–10 day transitions between foods.

Page 4 of 5 — Quarterly Rotation Calendar (Proteins/Brands)

Use variety for enrichment. Pause rotation if starting an elimination diet.

Quarter	Dates	Base Food (Brand/Protein)	Transition notes (7–10 days)	Poop/Itch notes
Q1	_____	_____	_____	_____
	→		_____	_____

Q2	_____	_____	_____	_____
	→		_____	_____

Q3	_____	_____	_____	_____
	→		_____	_____

Q4	_____	_____	_____	_____
	→		_____	_____

Topper rotation (weekly):

- Mon: hydration boost
 - Tue: kefir/yogurt
 - Wed: fish-oil
 - Thu: protein sprinkle
 - Fri: pumpkin teaspoon
 - Sat: probiotic only
 - Sun: rest/reset
-

Page 5 of 5 — Cost-Per-Day Calculator

Compare foods by what it costs to feed your dog, not by bag price.

Formula:

- **Daily cost (\$/day)** = (Price per bag \$ ÷ Bag calories **kcal**) × Your dog's daily **kcal**
- **Bag calories (kcal)** = (**kcal per cup**) × (**cups per bag**). 1 lb of kibble ≈ **~4 cups** (check your bag's stated density).

Quick worksheet

Brand/Formu a	Bag size (lb)	Pric e \$	kcal/cu p	Cups/ba g	Bag kcal	Your dog kcal/day	\$/day
A	—	—	—	—	(= kcal/cup × cups)	—	(= Price/Bag kcal × Dog kcal)
B	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
C	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Stretch tips: buy the right size; store airtight; finish within 4–6 weeks; spend on the base diet first; keep toppers budget-friendly.

Safety & Credits

- Treats/toppers ≤10% of daily kcal. Avoid xylitol, grapes/raisins, onions/garlic, cooked bones.
- Omega-3 dosing is about **EPA+DHA**; start low and consult your vet for specific conditions.
- Raw foods carry handling risks; use strict hygiene or choose cooked alternatives.
- Sources aligned with veterinary guidance (WSAVA/AAHA/Tufts/UC Davis). This kit is informational and not a substitute for veterinary care.

Owner: _____ Dog: _____

Vet: _____ Phone: _____