

Pet Food Guidelines

- Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch (MPES) only regulates raw and unprocessed pet food products. All processed pet food and treats (e.g., cooked, freeze-dried, dried, semi-dried) are under California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Food and Drug Branch.
- Raw and unprocessed pet food facilities must meet CDFA regulatory requirements (a private residency will not be licensed). MPES does not require the location to be a commercial kitchen, but it must meet CDFA requirements.
 - Proposed facility must meet city or county zoning requirements. Obtain city or county approval (license or permit) before proceeding further with your plans.
 - Prior to submitting the application and the license fee, the first step is to fill out and submit form 79-025 Request for Survey. Once the form is submitted, an assigned inspector will contact you to conduct an on-site survey to verify and provide feedback if the proposed facility is suitable to manufacture raw and unprocessed meat and poultry pet food products. You can find form 79-025 Request for Survey here: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/MPES/pdfs/79-025.pdf>
 - Once the MPES pet food license is obtained, on-site inspections will be conducted by the operation's assigned MPES inspector or an approved MPES personnel.
- All raw materials and other ingredients used to manufacture raw and unprocessed pet food products must come from an acceptable source recognized by the department.
 - **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected establishment:** Meat products can be purchased directly from a USDA inspected facility. De-naturing or de-characterization of inedible material is not required before leaving the establishment, but it must be shipped under seal. The edible products to be used for pet food must be properly labeled with the USDA mark of inspection.
 - **Licensed and Inspected Establishment:** Licensed MPES retail meat processing establishments (RPE) or county licensed food facilities may sell edible/inedible meat materials for use in pet food, provided that they originate from USDA inspected meat products or are still packaged and labeled with the USDA mark of inspection at sale.

Denaturing Requirements

- It is a requirement of the California Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) that all meat and meat by-products, not intended for human food, be adequately denatured prior to sale.
 - Finished raw and unprocessed pet food products must be properly de-natured (e.g., the addition of charcoal) or de-characterized (e.g., addition of ground bone).

Labeling Requirements for Pet Food Processors

Each product formulation and label must be approved by MPES personnel prior to sale or distribution. Below are the required components of a pet food label:

- The common or usual name of the pet food product
- The name and address of the packer or distributor
 - When the name of the distributor is shown, it shall be qualified by such terms as “packed for”, “distributed by,” or distributors”
- A statement of the net weight of the product (e.g., Net Weight or Net Content)
- The establishment number of the establishment in which the product was processed in conjunction with the words “Processed in Establishment No.”
- A statement of ingredients, if the product is made up of two or more ingredients. Such ingredients shall be listed by their common or usual names in the order of descending proportion
 - Ingredients must be in descending order of predominance
- The words “Not for Human Food”
 - The statement must be clear and predominate
- Handling statement (e.g., Perishable, Keep Refrigerated or Frozen)

Note: Any additional information or claims such as Nutritional Facts are not required by MPES. If included, the processor will need to provide evidence and supportive documentation (e.g., laboratory results) to ensure that the information on the label is not false or misleading.

Claims on MPES inspected pet food labels

Labeling claims must be:

- No false, deceptive, or misleading statements are allowed (e.g., “Human Grade”)
- Have supportive documentation backing up such claims (e.g., Nutritional claims)
- Appropriate certification, letter of guarantee, or laboratory results
 - From suppliers or producers of ingredients and/or raw materials
 - Examples of labeling claims are “Non-GMO”, “Organic”, “Grass Fed”
- Provided, appropriate materials and evidence will be reviewed to ensure that they are current, accurate, and valid.