



AAFCO[®]
Association of American Feed Control Officials

Pet Food and Specialty Pet Food Licensing and Registration Guidance



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What is AAFCO?

The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is a non-profit organization that sets standards for both animal feeds and pet foods in the United States.

AAFCO is a collaborative association that supports members and stakeholders and promotes a safe feed supply through unified system-based regulation, feed ingredients standards, and laboratory operations.

AAFCO has been guiding state, federal and international feed regulators with ingredient definitions, label standards and laboratory standards for more than 110 years, while supporting the health and safety of people and animals. Our members are charged by their state or federal laws to regulate the manufacture, sale, and distribution of animal feeds and animal drug remedies.



Things to Consider

- Pet Food and Specialty Pet Food licensing and registration is managed at the state level. You should contact each state to determine their requirements.
- [Find A State Feed Control Official](#)
- **There is no single agency or group that will give you approval to sell your product in all states.**
- Remember that laws and regulations change, and you are responsible for knowing and complying with all current laws and regulations.



Licensing and Registration

- Distributing Pet Food and Specialty Pet Food products requires complying with all the local, state and federal regulations that apply to these products.
- Almost all states have some sort of registration and/or licensing requirements that you must meet before all products can be offered for sale; including ecommerce. Some states may exempt pet food and specialty pet food products, but most do not.
- The laws in most states require that you register your products and/or license your company BEFORE you offer your products for sale in that state.



Regulation and Distribution

- It is important to know where and how you are selling your product.
- As a manufacturer it is your responsibility to know what type of product you are manufacturing and where you are selling or distributing it.
- The following slides review some of these considerations.



AAFCO Defined Terms

- The term “**commercial feed**” means all materials or combination of materials which are distributed or intended for distribution for use as feed or mixing in feed.
- The term “**pet food**” means any commercial feed prepared and distributed for consumption by dogs or cats.
- The term “**specialty pet**” means any animal normally maintained in a household, such as, but not limited to, rodents, ornamental birds, ornamental fish, reptiles and amphibians, ferrets, hedgehogs, marsupials, and rabbits not raised for food or fur.
- The term “**distribute**” means to offer for sale, sell, exchange, or barter, commercial feed; or to supply, furnish, or otherwise provide commercial feed to a feeder.
Therefore, Pet Food and Specialty Pet Food is any commercial feed offered for sale, exchange or barter, prepared and distributed for consumption by dogs, cats, or other small animals.



Pet Food and Specialty Pet Food Labeling

- The label and labeling of pet food and specialty pet food is very important and is regulated both on a federal and a state level.
- The product “**Label**” is a display of written, printed, or graphic matter on or with the product.
- The product “**Labeling**” is all written, printed, or graphic matter accompanying the product. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Websites, Social Media, Brochures, etc.
- Label and labeling requirements can be found in the following:
 - The federal regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 21CFR.
 - The [AAFCO Official Publication](#) contains the Model Regulations for pet food and specialty pet food labeling.

What Products May Be Subject to Licensing and Registration?

- Complete Foods for Pets
- Daily Foods for Specialty Pets
- Treats
- Food Supplements (for example: vitamins, minerals, fatty acids)
- Food Mixers
- Veterinary Diets
- Nutrient-added waters
- Homemade food and treats
- Rawhides, hooves, ears, animal bones, ligaments, snouts, and pizzles, unless exempt under conditions found in the AAFCO Official Publication Statements for Uniform Interpretation and Policy #7



Internet Sales

- Many states have regulations regarding distribution of pet food and specialty pet food products through e-commerce sales. This includes websites and Social Media.
- Shipping product into a state in response to an internet purchase constitutes “distribution”.
- Offering and/or selling your products on the internet may be considered distributing your products in every state.
- The responsible party (the manufacturer or distributor listed on the label) should determine the registration and/or licensure requirements of each state in which they intend to distribute product prior to shipment into that state.



Farmers Markets & Fund-Raisers

- Distribution may include the selling of pet and specialty pet foods, including treats, at farmers markets, fairs, fund-raising events, and other venues.
- Many farmers markets are now aware that these items may require state registration and/or licensing before distribution, however some may not be aware.
- If you are planning to use pet or specialty pet treat or food items for fund-raising or to give away, please check with your state regulations regarding these types of situations.



Resources

- See [AAFCO Website](#) for more useful information SKLO
 - See “For Start Ups” under the Resources tab on the AAFCO home page
 - [Find Your State Feed Control Official](#)
- The following publications are available for purchase:
 - The [AAFCO Official Publication](#)
 - The [Pet and Specialty Pet Food Labeling Guide](#)
- Pet Food Label Modernization [AAFCO PFLM](#)

