

New Study Reveals Huge Environmental Cost of Feeding Pets Meat

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A major new [study](#) has revealed the substantial—and often overlooked—environmental “paw prints” of meat-based pet diets. The review comes as the world’s pet dog and cat population rises towards one billion animals. It found that the [environmental impacts](#) of feeding dogs and cats meat are significant, growing, and largely ignored in sustainability debates. This is despite companion animals consuming 9% of farmed land animals globally, and up to 20% in some countries. The study, one of the first of its kind, identified diet as the most important factor driving pets’ environmental footprints. Protein choice, and particularly the use of animal products, typically had the greatest impact.



Dogs and cats consume a significant portion of the world's meat

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Billy Nicholles

Pet food is closely linked to the livestock industry, and is a major contributor to rapid climate change and environmental breakdown. In the US, 25–30% of the environmental impacts of livestock production have been attributed to pet diets. One study found that the environmental “paw print” of a single medium-sized dog’s diet in Japan exceeded the dietary footprint of an average Japanese citizen.

Stated Billy Nicholles, the lead author, “This study shows that the sustainability of our pets’ diets can no longer be

ignored. The food we produce for our dogs and cats is a major, neglected contributor to climate breakdown. But it is also a huge opportunity to reduce the environmental burden of our food system.”

The authors concluded that transitioning pets to nutritionally-sound vegan diets is the most

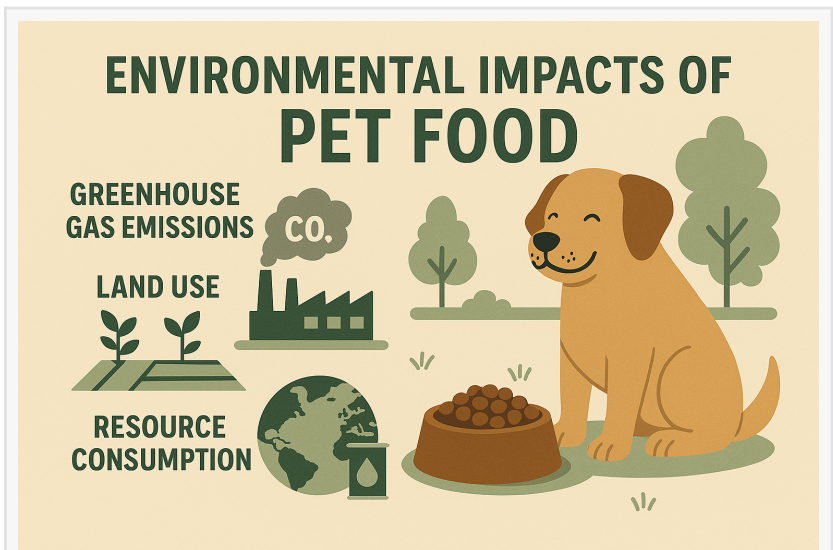
effective way to reduce the environmental impacts of pet food. The [benefits](#) are game-changingly large. A global transition for pet dogs alone would save 1.5 times the greenhouse gases produced by the UK, as well as vast amounts of land and freshwater. The food energy savings would be sufficient to feed 450 million people—more than the entire EU population.

In high-income countries, the benefits are particularly dramatic: a global transition to vegan diets for dogs alone offers one quarter to one third of the environmental gains achievable through human dietary change. Stated veterinary Professor and study co-author Andrew Knight, “The problems of climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly severe, and urgent. We cannot realistically address them without a global transition towards more sustainable diets—including for our pets.”

The study also highlighted the promise of emerging alternative pet foods that may offer similarly large environmental benefits. UK-based biotech company Meatly recently launched the world’s first pet food made with cultivated (or lab-grown) chicken. And Calysta, a company producing animal-free pet food via precision fermentation, offers a product already at commercial scale with environmental impacts reportedly a fraction of those from plant-based ingredients, let alone animal-based ones.

The authors recommended a rapid transition away from meat-based pet foods toward nutritionally sound vegan diets—particularly in countries with high rates of pet ownership.

Stated Nicholles: “The evidence is undeniable. We must address the environmental “paw prints” of our beloved dogs and cats. We now have very good evidence demonstrating the health benefits of vegan pet diets. Hence, the simplest, most impactful action we can currently take is to transition our animals to nutritionally sound vegan pet foods.”



Meat-based pet food has substantial environmental impacts



Meat-based pet food contributes significantly to climate change

Billy Nicholles

Sustainable Pet Food Foundation

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