


# California Companies Tackle Dog Food Allergies

 [Glenn Bossik](#), Yahoo Contributor Network  
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California resident Joe Lascola was ecstatic. He said his Italian Greyhound, Guido, had recently celebrated its eleventh birthday. According to Lascola, a veterinarian told him to put the dog to sleep when it was only one year old. Guido had major health problems.

But Lascola never gave up on his pet. He started making home-cooked meals for Guido. "Someone told me, 'You ought to think about cooking for your dog,'" he said. "So I did."

Despite the vet's grim prognosis, Guido survived. And now Joe Lascola runs [California K9 Kitchen](#), a company that makes homemade food for dogs.

Lascola learned about pet nutrition the hard way. He said Guido had a stomach ulcer caused by inflammatory bowel disease. He attributed Guido's stomach problems to the meat proteins in commercial pet food. "Most of the foods were made with chicken or beef or lamb," he said. "He was rejecting those proteins."

Lascola started cooking meals for Guido while still continuing to give the Greyhound *some* commercial dog food. Then, in 2007, the [FDA](#) announced that pet food was being recalled. "He was on one of those brands that was on the recall," Lascola said, describing a threat to Guido's health. "He ended up in the hospital." After that, he added, he didn't give Guido anymore commercial dog food.

The FDA later concluded that an ingredient in dog and cat food had been contaminated with melamine, an industrial chemical.

Now, Lascola partners with animal nutritionist Susan Lauten, PhD, to help provide clients with specialized meals for dogs. "After my dog was so sick, the vet referred me to her," said Lascola. "So, she saved my dog's life."

Dr. Lauten noted that she helped formulate several diets for Guido over the years. "He's very sensitive to foods," she said. "And he stays on immunosuppressants all the time to keep his immune system from attacking his body."

Veterinarians refer pet owners to Dr. Lauten, and she formulates recipes for the owners. She says she looks at the medical records and test results and creates an appropriate diet for the pets.

She often works with Joe Lascola, who cooks pet meals from her recipes through his company, California K9 Kitchen. Lascola offers home delivery of pet meals.

Dr. Lauten has her own company - [Pet Nutrition Consulting](#). Among her services is diet analysis. Her Web site says this form of analysis can be done to make sure home-cooked and commercial pet foods meet standards from AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) and NRC (National Research Council).

The study, [Nutrition Through the Life Cycle](#), details AAFCO's nutritional profiles for dogs and cats. The profiles define the amount of protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals that these animals need. NRC has created similar guidelines.

According to Dr. Lauten, proteins are a common cause of food allergies in dogs. Authors Elaine Waldorf Gewirtz and Jordan Herod Nuccio say in their book, [The Everything Natural Health for Dogs Book](#), that food allergies can give dogs gastrointestinal problems, ear infections, and skin irritations. When asked about the prevalence of allergies in dogs, Lauten said: "It seems more and more animals are having food allergy and/or immune disease."

Lauten's observation shows that homemade pet food may become increasingly important to pet owners. With her services and those of Joe Lascola's California K9 Kitchen, California residents now have a way to meet the specific dietary needs of allergy-prone dogs.

### Sources:

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